

The Ukraine Conundrum

In Ukraine, there is an apparently irresolvable ethno-political conflict that has fractured the country along linguist, religious and cultural lines and that has generated political unrest and violent armed confrontations. The Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the eastern part of the country favour economic, political, and cultural ties with Russia; and the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians in the western part of the country favor economic, political, and cultural ties with the West. Given the comparative strength of both sides in the dispute, it promises only internal political upheavals, economic dislocations -- if not economic stagnation -- and a growth of hatreds, intolerance, and paramilitary fighting. What is to be done?

One promising solution would be to divide the Ukraine along the Dnieper River into two separate countries: a West Ukraine (a Ukrainian-speaking, Ukrainian Catholic nation oriented towards the West); and an East Ukraine (a Russian-speaking, Russian Orthodox nation oriented towards Russia). It would put an end to the political unrest and the para-military warfare between the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian insurgents through resolving the critical economic/cultural/geopolitical orientation issue, would resolve a divisive language issue, and would increase the prospect of the two new countries succeeding in reforming their respective economies. It would lead also to a strengthening of the distinct religious character of each nation, and its moral character through the teachings of a national church, and would promote the growth of a strong national consciousness and pride capable of invigorating efforts, within each new state, to eliminate the all-pervasive corruption that exists within government and business in the current Republic of Ukraine -- a corruption born of the amoral Communist Party dictatorship (1922-1991) that actively suppressed the Christian churches and their religious/moral teachings, and introduced a policy of russification that alienated Ukrainians from their government.

With financial aid from Russia for East Ukraine and from the European Union for West Ukraine, the citizens of both new countries would benefit greatly over their present situation within Ukraine. One presumes that Russia would be pacified with the establishment of an allied country -- East Ukraine -- closely associated with Russia, economically, culturally, and politically, and with both new countries being declared neutral countries under a United Nations mandate and forbidden to have nuclear arms within their borders. The Crimea -- which Russia annexed In March 2014-- would be exempt from any United Nations neutrality mandate as it is now, once again, an integral part of the Russian nation with its strategically important Black Sea naval installations within Russian territory.

Once the new nations of West Ukraine and East Ukraine were established, the linguistic/religious minority in each new country would be free to migrate to the nation sharing their own language, religion, and culture. The minority members who chose to remain in their existing communities, would be expected to speak the language of the majority in public communications while receiving a guarantee of religious and linguistic toleration in the new state constitutions. With both of the historic national religions -- the Ukrainian Catholic and the Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate)-- being Christian churches and sharing Christian values, the maintenance of civil rights and a toleration for others ought not to be an intractable problem for the peoples within either of the two new states.

If need be, a resettlement program could be instituted, under the auspices of the United Nations, to aid members of the respective linguistic/religious minority communities to remove and re-establish themselves in the new nation which shares their historic cultural values. A division of Ukraine into two independent countries would constitute yet another recognition of the principle of national self-

determination based on ethnicity – language, religion, and culture --in recognizing that, historically, the Ukraine provinces were divided politically and culturally between the Austro-Hungarian Empire (western Ukraine) and the Russian Empire (Eastern Ukraine).

In Europe, there is a recent precedent for a peaceful division of a multi-ethnic state into two separate independent nations. In December 1992, the parliament of the federal republic of Czechoslovakia voted to grant the Slovaks their own independent nationhood, which resulted in the establishment of the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia. Following a peaceful separation, both new countries now have their own distinct national culture, language, and heritage, and are noteworthy for their high standard of living, educational attainments, religious toleration and civil liberties, as well as for good government within a flourishing representative democracy.

For Ukrainians of both language/religious communities, the founding of two separate nations under the auspices of the United Nations would hold out the promise of a better future for each independent nation as opposed to a status quo of endless political unrest, outbreaks of violence and paramilitary warfare, and social and political chaos. Moreover, the Ukraine is faced, in its present state, with the ever-threatening prospect of either having to endure a bloody and destructive civil war, or a Russian military occupation of the eastern Ukraine if the para-military warfare and violence continues to escalate within that sector.

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Composed September 2017

Posted September 2019