What Is Ukrainian Forum?

In the days before Instagram, Substack, and YouTube, intellectuals published longer, carefully crafted, and thought-provoking texts in journals of opinion. Today such journals, especially in the Ukrainian context, are in short supply. *Ukrainian Forum* takes its inspiration from the "thick journals" of the past, such as Drahomanov's *Hromada* and Franko's *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*. We hope to help address the deficit of serious, in-depth discussion of Ukrainian affairs, symbolized by the empty chamber of the Verkhovna Rada pictured on our cover.

Ukraine, Ukrainians, and Ukrainian society and culture are gravely endangered. It is time to think, and think deeply, about the challenges facing the nation. Ukraine's overwhelming problem is the Russian invasion. Some will argue that since the invasion, all of Ukraine is united. One wishes that were true, but the history of independent Ukraine suggests a far more complicated picture.

Indeed, the idea for this journal and its first issue emerged from observing the Ukrainian chaos that Mykhailo Minakov explores in profound philosophical terms in one of the opening articles. In everyday political life, this chaos has manifested itself in the swings of Ukraine's ideological pendulum, whose various causes and consequences are examined by the contributors to this issue.

Consider the successive transformations of Ukraine's political leadership: from Leonid Kravchuk, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and an opponent of the People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh); to Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of independent Ukraine; to the cosmopolitan Leonid Kuchma of his first presidential term; to Leonid Kuchma, the author of *Ukraine Is Not Russia*; to Kuchma, who designated Viktor Yanukovych as his successor; to the Orange Revolution and Viktor Yushchenko; to Yanukovych; then to Euromaidan and everything that followed.

This pendulum, whose swings seemed to have subsided under Kuchma's multi-vector foreign policy, has swung with ever-increasing amplitude over the past twenty-three years – from the outright betrayal of Ukraine's national interests by members of the Yanukovych-Azarov government, who were Russian citizens, to the present-day ideological extremes rooted in the most radical tenets of Ukrainian ethnonationalism, examined in detail by Anna Ivanova in her article.

Such internal instability has weakened the country and, more importantly, continues to weaken it. Nationalist ideological extremes are now provoking a backlash that threatens to send the Ukrainian pendulum swinging back in the opposite direction or, at the very least, to generate internal civil conflict during or after the devastating war against an external enemy.

Within what might be called the intellectual opposition, whose arguments on many issues are difficult to dispute, there is growing support for the view that Ukrainian cultural and linguistic foundations of Ukraine's statehood should play a secondary role in the country's industrial and post-industrial reconstruction and development. These experts also acknowledge that a lack of consensus on linguistic and cultural issues could alienate Galicia.

Other voices defend one of the most characteristic tenets of the pro-Russian ideological extreme: the notion of Russians and Ukrainians being the same nation.

These developments underscore the need for a Ukrainian center – not merely a compromise between competing camps, but a coherent understanding of Ukrainian statehood and national identity capable of bringing together people with different historical experiences, cultural traditions, and political views.

The position of *Ukrainian Forum* is that Ukraine needs to develop such a central Ukrainian ideology. Before shaping its political landscape along the conventional ideological spectrum, Ukraine must establish a principle of cultural and linguistic coexistence – one based on respect for speakers of all languages and bearers of all cultures, while giving fundamental priority to the development of the Ukrainian language and culture. That development, however, must be nonconfrontational, pursued

through positive measures and on a nondiscriminatory basis.

The extremist movements that have long competed to define Ukrainian national identity, as discussed in the articles by William Jay Risch and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, must cease to determine Ukrainian politics. Only then can Galicia flourish in a future Ukraine, Russian speakers feel that their rights are respected regardless of the region in which they live, and the country have a chance to achieve stability regardless of its external environment.

Only on a foundation of cultural and political tolerance can Ukrainian political pluralism, discussed by Lucan Way in his article, truly develop. And on this foundation, Ukraine may finally be able to rebuild the economic and social foundations that have yet to recover from the destruction of the Soviet project and that continue to struggle amid the global crisis of Western democratic capitalism described by Volodymyr Ishchenko.

This is not to suggest that the contributors to this issue share a single interpretation of Ukraine's problems or agree on their solutions. They approach these questions from different historical, political, philosophical, and economic perspectives. *Ukrainian Forum* seeks to make serious disagreement possible, to ask difficult questions without placing them beyond discussion, and to help develop the intellectual foundations of a more stable, inclusive, and democratic Ukraine.

This is the pilot issue of *Ukrainian Forum*. In the future, we hope to issue the journal quarterly, but it may take an issue or two before we get on track. We will be soliciting some contributions but very much welcome independent submissions.

What kind of submissions? Each issue of Ukrainian Forum will have a thematic focus. The next two issues will explore "Decolonization and Decommunization" and "War and Peace." But our pages are not limited to these themes: we also welcome thoughtful contributions on other subjects. The present issue offers two examples. David Marples provides a sweeping overview of developments in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion, while Marco Carynnyk, in *The Palace on the Ikva*, offers a moving elegy for all victims of violence in Volhynia in 1939–1941.

Send us letters to the editor at *ukrainianforum.org@gmail.com* engaging the articles we publish; we will invite the authors to respond. We want to generate discussion.

House Style

For English-language articles we use American English. The arbiter of our spelling is the Merriam-Webster dictionary, which is online. On many points of style and particularly on references, we follow the Chicago Manual of Style.

We take this opportunity to thank Alan Rutkowski, who has proofread and copyedited some of our texts.

In Ukrainian-language texts, we follow the rules in effect before the adoption of the 2019 revision of Ukrainian orthography. The shortcomings of the 2019 reform, which we believe are numerous, deserve a separate linguistic study. In our view, like many other developments since 2014, this reform was largely driven by a poorly thought-out desire to break away from the Russian and Soviet legacy.

Some of the changes introduced in 2019 revive conventions from the Ukrainian orthography adopted in 1928, commonly known as *skrypnykivka*. This orthography was far from universally accepted by Ukrainian linguists at the time, and archival documents also raise questions about the procedures through which it was adopted. Not every rule abolished in 1933 was necessarily linguistically justified, just as not every change introduced that year was necessarily detrimental to the Ukrainian language.

We believe that the 2019 reform revived some controversial conventions without adequately taking into account their prevalence in contemporary Ukrainian usage. For these reasons, *Ukrainian Forum* retains established spellings such as *проєкт* rather than *проєкт* and prefers *ґ* to *г* when transliterating the Latin *g* in foreign proper names in cases where both variants are now permitted.