

The 1917 Break and Its Aftermath: Ukrainian Academia's Perception and Representation of the Revolutionary Events (2007–2017)¹

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The author of this review is not a student of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 herself. My interest in Soviet history and Western historiography undoubtedly influenced my approach and the interpretation advanced in this article. This is *an outsider's review*, the author of which has not aspired nor pretended to provide exhaustive coverage of the publications from the period. I certainly make no authoritative estimations, nor do I draw authoritative conclusions.

Rather, I see my part just as Geoff Eley saw his when he participated in the discussion between Sovietologists of different generations on the pages of the *Russian Review* in 1986–1987. Having focused his own studies on Nazi history, he was able—as an outsider—to see the methodological limitations of the approaches applied by those who studied Soviet history as well as to provide broader perspectives on the challenges they faced and the research problems they raised.² Therefore, when examining scholarly and public history publications from the decade between the two jubilee anniversaries of the 1917 revolutionary events, I will focus primarily on methodological and conceptual issues, which allows me to frame academic views on these events within a broader context of the study of the (Ukrainian) 20th century.

Revolutionary Events from Past to Present

In their article from 2010, Vladyslav Verstiuk and Vitalii Skalskyi examined the role of the revolutionary events of the early 20th century within the current Ukrainian politics of memory. They concluded that these were not amongst the priorities of memory politics: the 2007 jubilee celebrations were restricted to a small number of official actions at the central and local levels. The scholars also mentioned that there was no public demand for more historical knowledge on these events and no public projects devoted to them.³

1 The original version of the paper was presented during the “Regional Revolution(s)—1917 and Its Consequences in the Province” workshop held by Justus-Liebig-University Giessen on November 9–10, 2017. I am deeply grateful to the workshop participants for their comments on the paper draft.

2 Geoff Eley, “History with the Politics Left Out—Again?” *Russian Review* 45.4 (1986): 385–94.

3 Vladyslav Verstiuk and Vitalii Skalskyi, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia 1917–1921 rr. u politytsi formuvannia natsionalnoi pamiaty v 2007–2010 rr. [The Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 in

They found the major reason for this lack of political and popular interest to be a “time factor”: the revolutionary events were too distant from the present agenda.⁴

Only a few years later—in 2017—the situation changed dramatically and the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 was suddenly very much present in the political and public landscape. As an example, several major online projects were launched through 2016–2017 that helped make the revolutionary events a popular topic of public history: a joint project by weekly *Delovaia stolitsa* and *Likbez: Istorichnyi front* called “Our Revolution, 1917–1921” (http://www.dsnews.ua/nasha_revolyutsiya_1917); a project by *Istorychna Pravda* (*Ukrainska Pravda*, of which it is part, is the most popular online daily media platform in Ukraine) called “The Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921” (<https://www.istpravda.com.ua/themes/rev100/about/>), which promised to show “how the foundations of modern Ukrainian statehood were laid”; and a project by RFE/RL in Ukraine, similarly entitled “The Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921” (<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/p/6183.html>). Book presentations, film screenings, and national and local projects to recover and restore “places of memory,” etc., were all constituents of the jubilee celebrations. The President’s decree of January 22, 2016 moreover declared 2017 to be “the year of the Ukrainian Revolution.”⁵

Examining the official jubilee messages themselves is enough to find reasons for the increased salience of the revolutionary events, which started 100 years ago, in the public domain of contemporary Ukraine. In his appeal of March 17, 2017 to the Ukrainian people to mark the occasion of the Revolution’s 100th anniversary, President Petro Poroshenko was unequivocal: “All of Ukrainian life’ has developed on the foundations laid by the Ukrainian National Revolution.” However, he continued:

Today, we do not so much celebrate, as examine mistakes made by our far predecessors... Today, just as 100 years ago, Ukraine is defending its own independence from a Russian aggressor. We have to remember the outcomes of inner discord and must not repeat the tragic mistakes that led to the defeat of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, the major ones being national disagreements under the conditions of external aggression.⁶

the Politics of the Formation of National Memory in 2007–2010],” in *Problemy vyvchennia istorii Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv*, ed. Vladyslav Verstiuk, issue 5 (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2010), 19–20.

4 Verstiuk and Skalskyi, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia 1917–1921 rr.,” 6.

5 Decree of the President of Ukraine № 17/2016, “Pro zakhody z vidznachennia 100-richchia podii Ukrainskoi revolutsii 1917–1921 rokiv [On the Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–2021],” accessed July 15, 2019, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/172016-19736>.

6 “Zvernennia Poroshenka z nahody vidznachennia 100-richchia podii Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–21 rokiv (povnyi tekst) [Poroshenko’s Appeal on the Occasion of the Hundredth Anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–21 (full text)],” *Tyzhden.ua*, March 17, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://tyzhden.ua/News/187859>.

In his address to the Verkhovna Rada on the same day, Volodymyr Viatrovych, head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, called on politicians to remember the past events that laid the foundations for today's key national institutions: the Ukrainian Parliament, the Ukrainian government, the Ukrainian army, the Ukrainian diplomatic corps, and the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. In the context of the ongoing war with the Russian Federation in the East of Ukraine, he stressed, it was even more important to “talk about its [the Revolution's] tough lessons. They are all the more relevant as Ukraine now, just as 100 years ago, is resisting Russian aggression. *Our century-long war for freedom still continues.*”⁷ On another occasion, he expanded upon this to state that the Ukrainian experience of national state building “is an important tool in the present political confrontation with the Russian Federation. It enables [us] to prove that Ukraine is not an accidental political formation and that Ukraine is truly one of the key states in Eastern Europe.”⁸

The governmental plan for centennial activities in 2017–2021 outlines steps towards popularizing the history of the Ukrainian state and the National Liberation Struggle, with an aim to promote the patriotic upbringing of Ukrainians and the formation of their national identity.⁹ During one of his meetings with high-school students, President Poroshenko even pointed to the “patriotic duty” of historians, calling on them to “help their country” by “controlling the degree of historical discussions [regarding the revolutionary events]” and thereby contributing to the “preservation of national unity.”¹⁰

To complete this overview on the renewed significance accorded to these historical events, I will quote a definition suggested by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory: the Ukrainian Revolution is called

a self-sufficient historical phenomenon with its own original specific features... In the course of the Revolution, Ukrainian people for

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- 7 Volodymyr Viatrovych, “Dosi tryvaie stolitnia viina Ukrainy za svobodu [Ukraine's Century-Long War for Freedom Still Continues],” *Radiosvoboda.org*, March 18, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28377544.html>. Italics are mine.
 - 8 Ihor Siundiukov, “1917: revoliutsiia yak zasterezhennia. Uroky podii 100-richnoi davnyiny v suchasnomu ukrainskomu konteksti [1917: Revolution as a Warning. Lessons of the 100-Year Old Events within the Contemporary Ukrainian Context],” *Day.kyiv.ua*, February 16, 2017, accessed July 14, 2017, <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/tema-dnya-podrobnyi/1917-revoluciya-yak-zasterezhennia>.
 - 9 “Uriad zatverdyv plan zakhodiv z vidznachennia 100-richchia podii Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv [The Government Approved Action Plan on the Celebration of the Hundredth Anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921],” *Ukrainskyi instytut natsionalnoi pamiaty*, accessed July 14, 2019, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/uryad-zatverdiv-plan-zakhodiv-z-vidznachennia-100-richchya-podii-ukrainskoi-revolutsii-1917-19>.
 - 10 Dmytro Shurkhalo, “Yak vidznachaty stolittia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii ta Natsionalno-vyzvolnoi borotby 1917–1921 rokiv? [How Should We Celebrate the Centennial of the Ukrainian Revolution and National Liberation Struggle of 1917–1921?],” *Radiosvoboda.org*, January 12, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28229487.html>.

the first time in the 20th century created an independent national state... [A correct] understanding of the Revolution's achievements and [also] reasons for its defeat should become an important lesson for national state building in independent Ukraine.¹¹

General Characterization of the Field

Given the political relevance of the hundred-year-old historical events, tellingly summarized in the above quote by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, it is unsurprising that scholarly research in the field is very much dependent on the present situation and often on a particular scholar's political engagements and his/her ideological views. Writing well before March 2014, Oleksandr Mykhailiuk was unequivocal:

The [revolutionary] theme is especially relevant because it is possible to draw direct parallels between the revolutionary period of the early 20th century and present days. Almost every study in the field draws parallels between the processes of the revolutionary period and the contemporary period [and] justifies its own relevance by mentioning the role of historical lessons in the building of the national state today.¹²

Since March 2014, scholars have been directly comparing the Bolsheviks' war against Ukraine in 1917–1921 and today's "hybrid war" launched by the Russian Federation; they therefore write about a "century-long war/struggle" for Ukrainian independence and statehood.¹³

In his emotional address to readers of the 2017 thematic issue of *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal*, Volodymyr Morenets focuses on Russian imperial policies, which have not changed over the century, and calls on us to "look back only to understand

11 "Metodychni rekomendatsii do 100-richchia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv [Guidelines to the Hundredth Anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–21]," *Ukrainskyi instytut natsionalnoi pamiaty*, accessed July 14, 2019, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/methodicmaterial/metodichni-rekomendatsii-do-100-richchya-ukrainskoi-revolyutsii-1917-1921-rokiv>.

12 Oleksandr Mykhailiuk, "Kontsepsiia 'Ukrainskoi revoliutsii': pro et contra [The Concept of the 'Ukrainian Revolution': Pro et Contra]," *Humanitarnyi zhurnal* 3–4 (2009): 3.

13 See, for instance: Vladyslav Verstiuk, "Vid 'Velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny na Ukraine (1917–1920)' do 'Narysiv istorii Ukrainskoi revoliutsii' i dali: transformatsiia doslidnytskoi paradyhmy [From the 'Great October Socialist Revolution and the Civil War in Ukraine (1917–1921)' to the 'Sketches of the History of the Ukrainian Revolution' and Further: Transformation of the Research Paradigm]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 3 (2017): 20; Stanislav Kulchytskyi, "U zhovtni 1917 roku peremohla bilshovytska kontrrevoliutsiia v omanlyvomu vyhliadi radianskoi revoliutsii [In October 1917 the Bolshevik Counterrevolution Won Under the Guise of the Soviet Revolution]," *Ukrainskyi tyzhden* 4 (480), January 26, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://tyzhden.ua/History/183933>.

the present.”¹⁴ Presenting his own reflections on “one hundred years of the Ukrainian Liberation Struggle” in the same issue, Serhiy Kvit expands on the “tragic collision of orientations” as one of the major reasons for the Liberation Struggle’s defeat a century ago.¹⁵ He also notes that throughout history, Ukrainians would “revolt against injustice itself” and that their struggles for national and social emancipation were closely correlated.¹⁶ He finishes the paper by drawing attention to the historical lessons of the past events, and particularly to the idea that:

Now, like a hundred years ago, Ukrainians need to create not an alternative movement, not a partisan detachment, and not to take vengeance for injustice. It is about building a modern effective state to which all citizens can delegate their certain rights and responsibilities, hoping for its resolve in protecting national interests and for its effective professionalism.¹⁷

The selection of particular research issues has also been affected by the present situation. The most telling example is a post-2013 increase in the number of studies on Crimea,¹⁸ which is especially true in public history. An intertwining of the 1917–1921 events in Crimea and the rest of Ukraine is an underlying theme in many such publications.¹⁹ In his contribution to the 2017 collective monograph, *Soviet Ukraine: Illusions and Catastrophes of the “Communist Paradise” (1917–1938)*, Hennadii Yefimenko

14 Volodymyr Morenets, “A Word of Welcome From the Editor-in-Chief,” *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 4 (2017): v, accessed July 14, 2019, <http://kmhj.ukma.edu.ua/>.

15 Serhiy Kvit, “One Hundred Years of the Ukrainian Liberation Struggle,” *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 4 (2017): 147, accessed July 14, 2019, <http://kmhj.ukma.edu.ua/>.

16 Serhiy Kvit, “One Hundred Years,” 146.

17 Serhiy Kvit, “One Hundred Years,” 152.

18 See, for instance: Andrii Ivanets, “Krymske pytannia v politytsi Ukrainskoi Narodnoi Respubliki periodu Dyrektorii (kin. 1918–1921) [The Crimean Question in the Policies of the Ukrainian People’s Republic under the Dyrektorii (Late 1918–1921)]” (PhD Diss., Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2016); Serhii Hromenko, *Zabuta peremoha. Krymska operatsiia Petra Bolbochana 1918 roku [A Forgotten Victory. The Crimean Operation of Petro Bolbochan of 1918]* (Kyiv: K. I. S., 2018); Serhii Hromenko, ed., *Nash Krym: nerosiiski istorii ukrainskoho pivostrova [Our Crimea: Non-Russian Stories of the Ukrainian Peninsula]* (Kyiv: K. I. S., 2016), 101–62 (Chapter 3 “U vykhori revoliutsii [In the Whirlwind of the Revolution]”).

19 See, for instance: Vitalii Skalskyi, “Shcho spilne ta vidminne v ukrainskomu ta krymskotatarskomu natsionalnykh rukhakh u 1917 r.? [What Is Common and Different in the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar National Movements in 1917?],” in *Istoriia Krymu v pytanniakh i vidpovidiakh*, ed. Valerii Smolii (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2015), 300–03; Dmytro Shurkhalo, “Krymskotatarskykh i ukrainskykh revoliutsioneriv yednalo prahnennia peretvoryty postimperskyi prostir [Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian Revolutionaries Were United by a Common Desire to Change Post-Imperial Space],” *Krym.Realii*, April 16, 2017, accessed on July 14, 2019, <https://ua.krymr.com/a/28432344.html>.

traces the Bolsheviks' actions in Ukraine during the revolutionary period. He openly admits that the only reason to include the so-called "case of *Kryvdonbas*," or a short-lived half-mythical "Soviet republic" in the region of Donbas and the *Kryvorizkyi* iron basin, in his study, is to address the present Russian propagandistic messages regarding this region.²⁰

Despite their political relevance and significant presence in the public realm since 2014, the revolutionary events have not become the most popular research topic in twentieth-century Ukrainian history. Unquestionably, the top research topics in the coverage period remain the Great Famine (*Holodomor*), World War II, Stalinist repressions, etc. In Olena Boiko's study of the Ukrainian Revolution coverage in *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, she writes about the topic's boom of popularity in the 1990s:

1992 was a breakthrough year in terms of publications on the Ukrainian Revolution. Given that this period of Ukrainian history was silenced or falsified before [during the Soviet period], each new study on the Liberation Struggle became a valuable scholarly contribution. All scholars... became true pioneers in the study of the 1917–1921 history of the National Liberation Struggle of the Ukrainian people.²¹

1996, the 130th anniversary of Mykhailo Hrushevsky, one of the major figures of the Ukrainian Revolution, and 1997, the 90th anniversary of revolutionary events, in her view, became other milestones in the study of the topic, generating a wave of scholarly publications.²² The decrease of academic interest in the following years was only logical, and quantitative analysis confirms this tendency. 18 items (articles, reviews, document publications, etc.) on the issues and figures of the Ukrainian Revolution were published in the journal in the jubilee year of 1997. By contrast, only 9 articles were published in the journal in the jubilee year of 2007 and 9 publications (including a review article) were devoted to the events in the jubilee year of 2017.

It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that the revolutionary period of the early 20th century now attracts insignificant scholarly interest. In addition to the many articles and monographs written, the Institute of the History of Ukraine publishes a series called *Issues in the Study of the History of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921*.

20 Hennadii Yefimenko, "Spodivane narodovladdia: iliuzii ta realii 'pershykh sovitiv' (lystopad 1917–kviten 1918) [An Awaited Democracy: Illusions and Realities of the "First Soviets" (November 1917–April 1918)]," in *Ukraina Radianska. Iliuzii ta katastrofy "komunistychnoho raiu" (1917–1938 roky)*, ed. Hennadii Yefimenko (Kharkiv, 2017), 95.

21 Olena Boiko, "Problemy vyvchennia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii (1917–1921 rr.) v 'Ukrainskomu istorychnomu zhurnali' [Issues in the Study of the Ukrainian Revolution (1917–1921) in the *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 6 (2017): 88.

22 Boiko, "Problemy vyvchennia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii," 89.

The series was founded in 2002, with 11 issues published thus far.²³ Additionally, many academic conferences are held on the topic, especially around jubilee dates.

When providing a general characterization of the field, one would conclude that Ukrainian academia remains largely isolated from Western historiography. This was stressed by Yaroslav Hrytsak in his 1999 seminal article “The Ukrainian Revolution, 1914–1923: New Interpretations”:

Ukrainian and Russian post-communist historiographies still suffer from [the heritage of] several decades of isolation from world scholarship. This is, for instance, reflected in the low levels of scholarly sophistication and in historians’ ignorance of the studies of their Western colleagues. Furthermore, writings by local historians very often reflect their political engagements.²⁴

The situation has not changed drastically over the next two decades. With some exceptions, particularly among the scholars of the younger generation, researchers avoid the application of Western methodological and theoretical approaches and concepts and/or discussions with Western scholars, even though they acknowledge these scholars’ impact on their own reconsideration of the revolutionary events.²⁵ Classical studies on the 1917 Revolution by the “totalitarian school,” such as Richard Pipes’ and Edward Carr’s,²⁶ as well as by scholars of Ukrainian origin, such as Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky’s and John-Paul Himka’s,²⁷ still remain their major references.

It is also noteworthy that contemporary Ukrainian academia is still dependent on Soviet historiography, with its powerful concept of the “Great October” or “Great October Socialist Revolution.” The need to deconstruct this concept and to counteract the “Great October” myth is seen by many scholars as an important research task—perhaps even their primary aim. Olena Boiko defines the challenge:

23 The journal archive is available online: http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?&I21DBN=EJRN&P21DBN=EJRN&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=JUJ_all&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=1-&S21COLORTERMS=0&S21STR=revol.

24 Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia, 1914–1923: novi interpretatsii [The Ukrainian Revolution, 1914–1923: New Interpretations],” *Ukraina moderna* 2–3 (1999): 256.

25 See, for instance: Verstiuk, “Vid ‘Velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi,’” 16–17.

26 See, for instance: Stanislav Kulchytskyi, “Rosiiska (russkaia) revoliutsiia 1917 r.: realnist i mif [The 1917 Russian Revolution: Reality and the Myth],” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2 (2007): 5–6, 17; Hennadii Yefimenko, “Komunizm vs. ukrainske natsiietvorennia v Radianskii Ukraini (1917–1938): sprianiia, poboivannia chy vymushene zamyrennia [Communism vs. Ukrainian Nation Building in Soviet Ukraine (1917–1938): Assistance, Fear or Forced Reconciliation],” *Problemy vyvchennia istorii Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv: Zbirnyk naukovykh statei*, ed. Vladyslav Verstiuk, issue 8 (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2012), 117.

27 See: Verstiuk, “Vid ‘Velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi,’” 5.

The concept of the “Great October” provided no room for the Ukrainian National Revolution. It considered that the democratic national liberation movement took place under the guidance of the Bolshevik party and was an ally in the class struggle of the working people for socialist revolution. Meanwhile, the bourgeois--nationalistic movement led by the Central Rada played the role of “bourgeois-nationalistic counterrevolution.” According to the unwritten rules of Soviet historiography, opponents of the Bolshevik party and Soviet power had no chance of becoming the subjects of historical investigations. Therefore, during the Soviet period, studies of the Ukrainian National Revolution remained unresearched under an ideological ban. Those aspects of the National Liberation Struggle that could not be silenced were treated from a class perspective and characterized very negatively.²⁸

Therefore, historians now attempt “to restore the history of the Revolution, create its original concept, and release it from the layers and myths of the ‘Great October Socialist Revolution’” (in Vladyslav Verstiuk’s words)²⁹ or, as defined by Stanislav Kulchytskyi, “to deconstruct the historical myths of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which were created by several generations of communist politics and propagandists.”³⁰

In 2015, Hennadii Yefimenko wrote about the “immortal myths of Soviet historiography” and the ever urgent need to “overcome” and “reconsider” them.³¹ He also spoke to the vitality of those Soviet myths when mentioning that Ukrainian historians avoided those topics that were, in their view, “over-researched” before 1991.³² Therefore, the Bolsheviks’ activities in Ukraine, the emergence and early days of the Soviet Ukrainian Republic, socio-economic issues of the period, etc., remain little studied. This, in turn, does nothing to help with deconstruction as Ukrainian scholars cannot provide their own—based on archival sources—interpretation of events and phenomena familiar from Soviet historiography.³³

If one were to generalize about the nature of scholars’ particular interest in the revolutionary period, it would be political history, and especially that of the Ukrainian

28 Boiko, “Problemy vyvchennia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii,” 84.

29 Verstiuk, “Vid ‘Velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii,” 8.

30 Kulchytskyi, “Rosiiska (russkaia) revoliutsiia 1917 r.,” 4.

31 Hennadii Yefimenko, “Nevmyrushchi mifolohemy radianskoi istoriohrafii (na prykladi vidnosyn mizh USRR ta RSFR v 1917–1923 rr.) [Immortal Myths of Soviet Historiography (Based on the Example of Relations between the USRR and the RSFR in 1917–1923)],” in *Svitlo i tini ukrainskoho radianskoho istoriopysannia: Materialy mizhnarodnoi naukovoï konferentsii, Kyiv, 22–23 travnia 2013 r.* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2015), 31.

32 Yefimenko, “Nevmyrushchi mifolohemy radianskoi istoriohrafii,” 33.

33 Yefimenko, “Nevmyrushchi mifolohemy radianskoi istoriohrafii,” 37.

Central Rada (the bibliographical index of 2001 mentioned 1,500 entries on it³⁴) and Skoropadskyi's Hetmanate. They are interested in military history and diplomatic history (which also includes relations between the Ukrainian People's Republic and the West Ukrainian People's Republic), as well as the regional and local history of the revolutionary period (the latter especially in recent years). Ukrainian revolutionary leaders (primarily Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, though to a lesser extent Pavlo Skoropadskyi, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, and Symon Petliura) as well as the "heroes of Kruty" become the heroes of numerous historical publications. Scholars' attention to personalities is addressed by Vladyslav Verstiuk in his 2017 review article ("The Revolution of 1917–1921 in Various Formats"): "[Ukrainian] scholars have tried to fill the history of the Revolution with as many personalities as possible."³⁵

In the same review article, Vladyslav Verstiuk also points to the recent broadening of the research field: "Together with state building and political issues, [researchers have started to] actively study the social, military, cultural, and religious [history of the Ukrainian Revolution]."³⁶ Scholars working in the fields of memory studies and the politics of memory (e. g., Vitalii Skalskyi,³⁷ Serhii Vlasiuk³⁸), imagology (e. g., Vitalii Skalskyi,³⁹

34 Vladyslav Verstiuk, "Ukrainska Tsentralna Rada: period stanovlennia [The Ukrainian Central Rada: The Formative Period]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2 (2007): 23.

35 Vladyslav Verstiuk, "Revoliutsiia 1917–1921 rr. u riznykh formatakh (hortaiuchy chysla 'Ukrainskoho istorychnoho zhurnalu') [The Revolution of 1917–1921 in Various Formats (Review of the Issues in the *Ukrainskyi Istorychnyi Zhurnal*)]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 6 (2017): 120.

36 Verstiuk, "Revoliutsiia 1917–1921 rr. u riznykh formatakh," 120.

37 Vitalii Skalskyi, "Ukrainska Tsentralna Rada: mistsia pamiaty [The Ukrainian Central Rada: Places of Memory]," *Problemy vyvchennia istorii Ukrainiskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv*, ed. Vladyslav Verstiuk, issue 7 (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2012), 5–13.

38 Serhii Vlasiuk, "Pamiat pro vyzvolni zmahannia 1917–1921 rr. na Halychyni ta na Donbasi v suchasni Ukraini [Remembrance of the Liberation Struggle of 1917–1921 in Galicia and Donbas in Modern Ukraine]," *Naukovi zapysky Natsionalnoho universytetu "Ostrozka akademiia." Seriia "Istorychni nauky"* 25 (2016): 133–38.

39 Vitalii Skalskyi, "Obraz podii Ukrainiskoi revoliutsii (1917 r.) v ukrainomovni presy Avstro--Uhorshchyny ta SSHA [The Image of the Events of the Ukrainian Revolution (1917) in the Ukrainian-Language Press of Austro-Hungary and the US]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zbirnyk* 13.2 (2010): 178–92; also his, "Obraz Tsentralnoi Rady u svidomosti selian na pochatkovomu etapi Ukrainiskoi revoliutsii [The Image of the Central Rada in the Eyes of the Peasants in the Early Stages of the Ukrainian Revolution]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 1 (2008): 46–59; also his, "Ukrainska Tsentralna Rada: suspilni ochikuvannia ta spryiniattia (berezen 1917–kviten 1918 rr.) [The Ukrainian Central Rada: Public Expectations and Perceptions (March 1917–April 1918)]" (PhD Diss., Institute of History of Ukraine NASU, 2011).

Ivan Basenko⁴⁰), and the history of ideas (e. g., Hennadii Koroliiov⁴¹) have recently started to research the revolutionary events. Their studies, however, do not seriously alter the general historical representation of the period. The economic history of the period remains almost completely neglected, with Hennadii Yefimenko's studies being a notable exception.⁴²

To observe the current state of affairs in the field, one might wish to review the materials of scholarly conferences devoted to the Revolution's centennial. Here is just a representative sample: the all-Ukrainian conference called "The Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921: Preconditions, Processes, Consequences, and Lessons" (Medzhybizh, March 24, 2017); the international conference titled "Revolution, Statehood, Nation: Ukraine on the Road to Self-Affirmation" (Kyiv, June 1–2, 2017);⁴³ the conference on "The Ukrainian Nation in Its Struggle for Identity Preservation and Statehood Revival (1917–2017) Dedicated to the Hundredth Anniversary of the Ukrainian People's Republic" (Kyiv, June 19, 2017);⁴⁴ the international conference called "Question Marks in the History of Ukraine: Revolutionary Processes in the Counties of Central and Eastern Europe" (Nizhyn, September 28–29, 2017);⁴⁵ and the international conference dedicated to "The Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921: Historical Legacy and Statehood Tradition"

40 Ivan Basenko, "Obraz nimtsiv u presi Kyieva za doby revoliutsii (liutyi–zhovten 1917 rr.) [The Image of the Germans in the Kyivan Press during the Revolutionary Period (February–October 1917)]," *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Istorychni nauky* 169 (2015): 30–35; also his, "The Perception of Germany in the Kyivan Press: From Ukrainian People's Republic to the Hetmanate (November 1917–December 1918)," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 4 (2017): 53–66, accessed July 14, 2019, <http://kmhj.ukma.edu.ua/>.

41 Hennadii Koroliiov, "Ideia federalizmu yak paradyhma istorychnoi perspektyvy doby Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rr. [The Federalist Idea as a Paradigm of the Historical Perspective of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 5 (2010): 103–16; also his, "Ideia avtonomizmu v uiavlenni diiachiv ta suchasnykiv doby Tsentralnoi Rady [The Autonomist Idea in the Perception of the Leaders and Contemporaries of the Central Rada]," *Problemy vvychennia istorii Ukrainskoi revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv* 7 (2012): 126–47.

42 See, for instance: Hennadii Yefimenko, "Bilshovytskyi tsentr i Radianska Ukraina: ekonomichni aspekty natsionalnoi polityky Kremliia u 1917–1925 rr. [The Bolshevik Centre and Soviet Ukraine: Economic Aspects of Kremlin National Policy in 1917–1925]," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2 (2009): 96–109.

43 Conference proceedings are available online: http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?C21COM=2&I21DBN=ELIB&P21DBN=ELIB&Image_file_name=book/0013421.pdf&IMAGE_FILE_DOWNLOAD=0.

44 See the conference announcement at: <http://memory.gov.ua/announce/19-zhovtnya-naukova-konferentsiya-ukrainska-natsiya-u-borotbi-za-zberezhenya-identichnosti>.

45 See the review of the conference at: <http://www.ndu.edu.ua/index.php/ua/novini-universitetu/item/1300-do-100-richchia-ukrainskoi-revoliutsii-v-ndu-vidbulas-mizhnarodna-naukova-konferentsiia>.

(Lviv, October 20, 2017);⁴⁶ as well as many local conferences devoted to revolutionary events in particular regions of Ukraine. The conference titles themselves suggest that their participants focused on the familiar topics of “state/statehood,” “politics,” “national identity,” “historical lessons,” and “historical legacy,” etc. Furthermore, many narrowly-focused conferences were held in the centennial year, particularly those devoted to the military history of the period⁴⁷ and various personalities.⁴⁸

In the course of my review, I have found only one mention of “re-conceptualization” or “rethinking” in a conference title: the conference of the German-Ukrainian Historical Commission, “Rethinking the 1917 Revolution: War, Revolution, and Statehood in Ukraine” (Kyiv, September 29–30, 2017) addressed the much neglected social history of the period and also raised the issues of terminology and periodization as well as the (re)conceptualization of the revolutionary events.⁴⁹

Conceptualizations of the Revolution

Back in 1999, Yaroslav Hrytsak called upon his colleagues to “learn new theoretical approaches” and start to “conceptualize.” “The overcoming of simplistic interpretation and presenting history of the Ukrainian Revolution in all its complexity and unity will be very much a difficult and ambitious task for the next generations of historians.”⁵⁰ He saw the revolutionary events in Ukraine as part of several simultaneous conflicts and processes: World War I; the Russian Revolution, which started in February 1917, and the Russian civil war; the rise of the Ukrainian movement; the Ukrainian civil war between socialists and their opponents; and the peasants’ war “against all.”⁵¹ More than a decade afterwards, the vast majority of studies in the field remained factual, with scholars largely avoiding conceptualizations of the issues they studied, and they still demonstrated little progress in analyzing the revolutionary events in “all their complexity.”

46 See the conference review at: <http://www.nas.gov.ua/EN/Messages/News/Pages/View.aspx?MessageID=3548>.

47 For instance: the conference on aviation in the revolutionary period held on April 12, 2017 (<https://nau.edu.ua/ua/news/2017/4/naukovo-praktichna-konferentsiya-aviatsiya-v-roki-ukrainskoi-revolutsii-1917%E2%80%931921-rr.html>).

48 For instance: the conference on the 150th anniversary of Mykhailo Hrushevskyi’s birth (http://hrushevsky.nbu.gov.ua/cgi-bin/hrushevsky/person.exe?&I2iDBN=ELIB&P2iDBN=ELIB&S2iSTN=1&S2iREF=10&S2iFMT=elib_all&C2iCOM=S&S2iCNR=20&S2iP01=0&S2iP02=0&S2iP03=ID=&S2iCOLORTERMS=0&S2iSTR=0002646) or the conference on Volodymyr Vynnychenko (<http://museumlit.org.ua/?p=6574>).

49 See the conference program at: http://www.duhk.org/fileadmin/data_duhk/documents/170920_Program_Conference_DUHK.pdf.

50 Hrytsak, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia, 1914–1923,” 255.

51 Hrytsak, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia, 1914–1923,” 254.

The now-dominant concept of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 was formed under the major influence of Ukrainian *émigré* historiography back in the 1990s. Vladyslav Verstiuk metaphorically explained the shift from the Soviet to a Ukrainian—national—interpretation of the revolutionary events: “After the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine, the color gamut of the events of 1917–1921 gradually started to lose its solid red: it was acquiring new blue-and-yellow colors [the colors of the Ukrainian flag] that eventually completely replaced the red one.”⁵² A term often used in parallel, and also borrowed from the Ukrainian diaspora, is “Liberation Competition/Struggle” (*vyzvolni zmahannia*) or “National Liberation Competition/Struggle” (*natsionalno-vyzvolni zmahannia*). The core concept is an understanding of the revolutionary events as a separate phenomenon (separate from the Russian one) and as a national revolution whose major aim was the restoration of Ukrainian statehood. “Ukrainian historians examine the revolutionary events in Ukraine mainly through national discourse: they interpret the Ukrainian revolution as large-scale events related to the struggle of the Ukrainian nation for the restoration and affirmation of its state.”⁵³ The latter term, in the view of Serhiy Kvit, also “has a substantial romantic implication, which, to some extent, poeticizes the attempts of Ukrainians to found and consolidate their state at the beginning of the 20th century. This poetization pays attention to the process, rather than to the result, which has to be concrete.”⁵⁴ In the view of Stanislav Kulchytskyi, “Liberation Struggle is a more precise term because ‘revolution’ is a change of power. In Ukraine, power has shifted several times over the course of a few years.”⁵⁵

Whichever concept is used, it remains too restricted and vulnerable to criticism, first of all because it artificially isolates the events in Ukraine from a number of processes of which they were constituent, as noted by Hrytsak. Similarly, the exclusive focus on nation building attempts, for the most part, does not allow one to observe the social conflict of the period. John-Paul Himka, back in 1994, named “national” and “social” as being indissoluble components of the Ukrainian Revolution:

These two [national and social] revolutions were often intertwined: many of the Ukrainian national leaders were avowed socialists and the Bolsheviks made their concessions to the Ukrainian national idea. But more often, and more unequivocally as events unfolded, the two revolutions, or the two aspects of the same revolution, confronted one another head on. Both competed for the crucial support of the peasantry in Ukraine, with mixed and interesting

52 Verstiuk, “Vid ‘Velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii,” 15. Also see: Vladyslav Verstiuk, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia: metafory, predmet, interpretatsiia [The Ukrainian Revolution: Metaphors, Subject, Interpretation],” in *Ukraina-Rosliia: dialoh istoriohrafii. Materialy mizhnarodnoi naukovoï konferentsii* (Kyiv; Chernihiv, 2007), 128.

53 Verstiuk and Skalskyi, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia 1917–1921 rr.,” 5–6.

54 Kvit, “One Hundred Years,” 145.

55 Shurkhalo, “Yak vidznachaty stolittia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii?”

results. Both competed for the support of the intelligentsia as well, with results just as mixed and interesting. And, of course, individuals from the same strata, caught up in the confusing whirlwind of revolution, often switched sides several times.⁵⁶

Many Ukrainian scholars criticize the concept of the Ukrainian National Revolution as being too restricted. Oleksandr Mykhailiuk, for instance, calls upon researchers to “overcome the restrictions of national narrative” because “the revolutionary process in Ukraine... cannot be reduced to the National Liberation Struggle.”⁵⁷ Back in 2007, Vladyslav Verstiuk stated: “After long consideration, contemporary Ukrainian historians, as I see it, have almost completely given up the identification [of the Ukrainian Revolution] with the Liberation Struggle. Today, the Ukrainian Revolution is understood in broader terms: it also includes issues related to the affirmation of the Soviet power.”⁵⁸ A review of publications from the coverage period suggests that such an estimation of the general state of the field is somewhat overoptimistic; political and military studies of the National Liberation Struggle still dominate the field, as already noted above.

Few scholars overcome the conceptual restrictions in their work and present the events of the Ukrainian Revolution as being inseparably linked to the events of the Russian Revolution or, still more rarely, as an outcome of the turmoil wrought by war. Stanislav Kulchytskyi and Yaroslav Hrytsak moreover stress that the Ukrainian Revolution was not only part of the revolutionary events in the Russian Empire but of those in the Habsburg Monarchy as well, because of their reign over West Ukrainian lands in the period. “Speaking in geographical terms, the Ukrainian Revolution was not only part of East European [events] but also of those of Central Europe. This sets the uniqueness of this Revolution,” in the words of Hrytsak.⁵⁹

Those scholars who approach the Ukrainian Revolution as part of a large-scale, multilayered conflict on the ruins of the Russian Empire draw primary attention to the 1917 February Revolution and its impact in Ukraine.⁶⁰ They also examine the activities

56 John-Paul Himka, “The National and Social in the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921. The Historiographical Agenda,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 34 (1994): 95.

57 Mykhailiuk, “Kontseptsiiia ‘Ukrainskoi revoliutsii,’” 16.

58 Verstiuk, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia: metaphory, predmet,” 131.

59 Serhii Hrabovskyi, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia: vytoky, prychny, problemy [The Ukrainian Revolution: Origins, Reasons, Issues],” *Radiosvoboda.org*, April 11, 2007, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/962390.html>.

60 See, for instance: Olha Skorokhod, “Liutneva revoliutsiia: reaktsiia naseleennia na zminu vлады ta vybukh revoliutsiinoi stykhii v Kyievi [The February Revolution: Kyiv Residents' Attitude Towards the Change of Power and the Revolutionary Explosion],” *Mahisterium. Istorychni studii* 28 (2007): 23–29; Mykhailo Kovalchuk, “Liutneva revoliutsiia 1917 r. v Ukrainskii provintsii [The 1917 February Revolution in the Ukrainian Province],” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 4 (2007): 91–102.

of the Bolsheviks, presenting them as actors in Ukraine and not solely as an “external hostile force” or “intervention,” as suggested by the Ukrainian Revolution concept. Thereby, they finally answer Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky’s call to be “intellectually honest and see things as they are” and admit the existence of “communism as a Ukrainian political current.”⁶¹ The key question these scholars ask is that of why the Bolsheviks appealed so much to the masses; they answer it by highlighting their skillful use of slogans on nationalism and modernization.⁶² In the words of Hennadii Yefimenko:

[The Bolsheviks’] national slogans, which did not always correspond with—and often, directly contradicted—their strategic vision of the solution to the national question... became a decisive factor that made communism a “lesser evil” in the eyes of the majority of the most active leaders of the national liberation movement, compared to other possible alternatives.⁶³

“Communism was presented as the highest achievement of Western European thought... The communist-Bolsheviks... appeared to be a party of the future, championing industrialization.”⁶⁴ In these bodies of academic work, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic is considered to be one of the results of the revolutionary events, making it a subject meriting historical investigation.⁶⁵

The most original alternative description of the revolutionary period is the concept of *the 1917 Russian Revolution* advanced by Stanislav Kulchytskyi in his many articles

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- 61 Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky, “Shcho robyty? [What to Do?],” in Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky, *Istorychni ese*, vol. 2 (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1994): 446–47.
- 62 For instance, see: Mykhailo Kovalchuk, “Uchast voiakiv-ukraintsiv u sprobakh likviduvaty bilshovytskyi perevorot 1917 r. [The Participation of Ukrainian Soldiers in the Attempts to Liquidate the 1917 Bolshevik Coup D’état],” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 1 (2009): 116–27; Stanislav Kulchytskyi and Hennadii Yefimenko, “Spetsyfika radianskoho ladu (1917–1923 rr.) [Specific Characteristics of the Soviet System, 1917–23],” in *Istoriia derzhavnoi sluzhby v Ukraini*, vol. 2, eds. T. V. Motrenko and V. A. Smolii (Kyiv: Nika-Tsentr, 2009), 158–59; Yefimenko, ed., *Ukraina Radianska. Iliuzii ta katastrofy*, 8–60.
- 63 Yefimenko, “Komunizm vs. ukrainske natsiietvorennia,” 116.
- 64 Yefimenko, “Komunizm vs. ukrainske natsiietvorennia,” 117.
- 65 See studies by Hennadii Yefimenko and Stanislav Kulchytskyi, including those mentioned in this review. And also: Oksana Klymenko, “Pryhaduvannia’ Zhovtnevoi revoliutsii: orhanizatsiia ta sposoby zbyrannia spohadiv (1920-ti rr.) [‘Reminiscence’ of the October Revolution: Organization and Methods of Memoir Gathering (1920s)],” *Molodyi vchenyi* 2.17 (2015): 88–91; also her “Sovetskie politicheskie prazdniki v 1918–1929 gg.: prazdnovanie Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii v USRR [Soviet Political Rituals in 1918–1929: Celebrating the October Revolution in the USRR],” in *Konstruiruia “sovetskoe”? Politicheskoe soznanie, povsednevnye praktiki, novye identichnosti: Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii studentov i aspirantov, 20–22 apreliia, Sankt-Peterburg* (Saint–Peterburg: Izdatelstvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2012), 78–83.

and his monograph, *The 1917 Russian Revolution: A New Look* (2003; 2008). His research aim, unsurprisingly, is not only to “deconstruct the Soviet myth of the Great October” but also to provide a new perspective for the study of the Ukrainian Revolution.⁶⁶ The latter is possible, he claims, if events at the centre and outskirts of Romanov’s former empire are seen as a single revolutionary process that simply had regional and national peculiarities. “Contemporary Ukrainian historians do not pay attention to the events taking place in 1917 in Petrograd. They focus their attention on the events in Kyiv. The Ukrainian Revolution, however, cannot be understood without consideration of the events at the imperial centers.”⁶⁷ The key points made by Kulchytskyi are outlined below.

The Soviet historiographic view of two revolutions—the February Revolution (as a “bourgeois-democratic” movement) and the Great October Socialist Revolution—is mistaken. There was one Russian Revolution, which started in February 1917 and ended in January 1918 when the Bolsheviks closed the Constituent Assembly. Afterwards, a completely different process—the Bolshevik “revolution from above” or “communist revolution”—began.⁶⁸

The correct title for the events would be *the Soviet Revolution* because the soviets (*sovety*) of workers’ soldiers’ and peasants’ deputies, which represented the most radical interests of the masses, became the leading—destructive—force in the revolutionary process. The Bolsheviks emerged as a leading—winning—force of the revolution because they became leaders among the soviets by leveraging their slogans. “The Bolsheviks had their own slogans in the revolution. But they were quick to realize the need to assign the slogans of the soviets of soldiers’ and workers’ deputies, which were the most powerful [revolutionary] force.”⁶⁹

Lenin’s strategy for the revolution presumed taking control over the soviets from within. Afterwards, he planned to overthrow the power of liberal democracy and establish their own—Soviet—power. When the Bolsheviks chose this strategy, they cared little for the soviets, only for themselves. Capturing control over the soviets was one of the elements of [their] dictatorship... The Bolsheviks did not plan to tolerate the representatives of other parties in

66 Kulchytskyi, “Rosiiska (russkaia) revoliutsiia 1917 r.,” 5.

67 Stanislav Kulchytskyi, *Rosiiska revoliutsiia 1917 roku: novyi pohliad* [*The 1917 Russian Revolution: A New Look*] (Kyiv: Nash chas, 2008), 5.

68 Stanislav Kulchytskyi, “Narodzhennia radianskoho komunosotsializmu v Rosiiskii revoliutsii 1917 r. (desiat korotkykh tez) [The Birth of Soviet Communo-Socialism in the 1917 Russian Revolution (Ten Brief Theses)],” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 1 (2017): 74–75, 77–78; also his, *Rosiiska revoliutsiia 1917 roku*, 6–8.

69 Stanislav Kulchytskyi, “Vladimir Lenin: pohliad z 2017 roku [Vladimir Lenin: A Look from 2017],” *Ukrainskyi tyzhden* 32 (508), August 10, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://tyzhden.ua/History/197918>. See also: Kulchytskyi, *Rosiiska revoliutsiia 1917 roku*, esp. 18–22, 32–40, 57–62.

the soviets. The power of soviet organs was to become a natural element of [the Bolsheviks'] dictatorship.⁷⁰

The Bolshevik leaders (mainly Lenin) were pragmatic populists and this was the major reason for their victory; they skillfully manipulated the social aspirations of the masses and the national aspirations of the former empire's outskirts.⁷¹

The so-called Bolshevik revolution was in fact a "mutation of the revolutionary process in Russia" and could be defined as "counterrevolutionary":

The communist revolution in Russia, which began in spring 1918, had nothing in common with the 1917 Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik revolution stretching for two decades (1918–1938) became possible because of the October *coup d'état*. The October *coup d'état* within the context of the Russian Revolution was indeed a mutation of the revolutionary process.⁷²

Other terms that we find associated with the revolutionary events include: "Spring of Nations,"⁷³ the "Bolshevik *coup d'état*" or "October *coup d'état*," "Ukrainian October," the "wrong revolution" (as defined by Petro Kraliuk),⁷⁴ etc. It is evident that scholars' political/ideological views have a major impact upon their perceptions and portrayals of the past. For instance, Andrii Zdorov, in his publications and primarily his monograph *The Ukrainian October: The Workers' and Peasants' Revolution in Ukraine (November 1917—February 1918)*, advances the concept of a "Ukrainian October" based on his idea that the establishment of Bolshevik rule in a given period corresponded fully to the "aspirations of the revolutionary masses" in Ukraine.⁷⁵

70 Kulchytskyi, *Rossiiska revoliutsiia 1917 roku*, 37–38.

71 For instance: Stanislav Kulchytskyi, "Yak vozhdzi bilshovykiv proryvalisia do vlady [How the Bolshevik Leaders Broke into Power]," *Ukrainskyi tyzhden* 21.497, May 25, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://tyzhden.ua/History/193049>.

72 Kulchytskyi, *Rossiiska revoliutsiia 1917 roku*, 74. See also: Kulchytskyi, "U zhovtni 1917 roku peremohla bilshovytska kontrevoliutsiia."

73 For instance, such a definition of the revolutionary period is advanced in the collective monograph: *Natsionalne pytannia v Ukraini XX—pochatku XXI st.: istorychni narysy* [*The National Question in Ukraine in the 20th—Early 21st Centuries: Historical Sketches*], ed. Valerii Smolii (Kyiv: Nika-Tsentr, 2012): 109–94.

74 Petr Kraliuk, "Nasha 'nepravilnaia' revoliutsiia 1917–1920 godov [Our 'Wrong' Revolution of 1917–1920]," *Zerkalo nedeli* 11, March 25–31, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, https://zn.ua/history/nasha-nepravilnaya-revoluciya-1917-1920-godov_.html.

75 Andrii Zdorov, *Ukrainskyi Zhovten: Robitnycho-selianska revoliutsiia v Ukraini (bystopad 1917—liutyi 1918 r.)* [*The Ukrainian October: The Workers' and Peasants' Revolution in Ukraine (November 1917—February 1918)*] (Odesa: Astroprint, 2007). See also the review of this

The revolutionary events of the early 20th century consistently attract academic attention, despite not becoming a top research topic of Ukrainian historiography over the coverage period. A certain decrease in research interest logically followed the study boom of the 1990s, while the Russian aggression in the East of Ukraine has revitalized interest in these past events on the part of academics as well as the Ukrainian politicum, media, and general public.

The dominant historiographic view of these events can be summarized using the following terms: “Ukrainian,” “nation/national,” “state/statehood,” “independence,” “national liberation,” “liberation movement,” “national identity,” “(experience of) nation/state building,” “external aggression,” “lessons of the past,” “inner discord (as major reason for the defeat of the Liberation Struggle),” “to deconstruct the myths of Soviet historiography,” “to counter the Great October myth,” etc. Parallels between these events and the present situation, which were commonplace ever since Ukrainian historiography began defining its own—national—view on the past in the early 1990s, have only been reinforced with the current war in the East of Ukraine.

It would be misleading, however, not to mention that yet another tendency is observable in the publications from 2007–2017. Some academics studying the revolutionary events have been reconsidering traditional approaches, applying Western methodologies, and studying them as a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon playing a role in many processes, events, and conflicts of that era and region. Interestingly enough, in my view, the most persuasive indication of this shift can be found in the guidelines of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory on how to celebrate the Revolution’s centennial, quoted in the first section of this paper. The authors of this document admit that in addition to “national liberation,” the Ukrainian Revolution also aimed for “social liberation.”⁷⁶ Appendix 2, “12 myths of the Ukrainian Revolution,” which the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory seeks to deconstruct, is also telling. Apart from Soviet/Russian historiographic myths and propagandistic messages (from the “Great October” to the supposed anti-Semitism of Ukrainian revolutionary leaders), it also lists Ukrainian historiographic myths on the “heroes of Kruty” and on Mykhailo Hrushevskyy as the first Ukrainian president.⁷⁷



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monograph: Hennadii Yefimenko, “Shcho take Ukrainskyy Zhovten’? [What is the ‘Ukrainian October’?],” *Ukraina moderna* 14 (2009): 247–65.

76 “Metodychni rekomendatsii do 100-richchia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii.”

77 “Metodychni rekomendatsii do 100-richchia Ukrainskoi revoliutsii.”

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