



## **Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program**

### **Final Research Report Template**

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#### **Final Report**

#### **Working Title**

*Cultures of Politics and Urban Revolution in Late Imperial Kiev*

#### **Topic of Research**

My dissertation examines the evolution of urban politics and identities in Kiev, 1870-1914. For most of its millennium-long existence, Kiev has found itself a contested city: prior to the nineteenth century, the Kyivan Rus', its Mongol conquerors, the Polish-Lithuanian confederation, and the Cossack Hetmanate had all laid claims to the city's rich cultural heritage and exploited its economic and demographic resources. By the nineteenth century, the Russian imperial authorities too had begun an orchestrated campaign to reclaim Kiev as "the mother of Russian cities." But at the very moment that the Russian state's claims on the city became more important than ever, the imperial bureaucracy also invited its subjects to participate in the governing process. The municipal self-governance statute of 1870 introduced limited democracy to the city, allowing its wealthiest residents to elect a city council (Duma) that managed infrastructural issues and cultural institutions within city limits. As the local Duma struggled to put a "modern" face on the booming city—paving streets, constructing sewers, erecting streetlights—the character and inhabitants of Kiev continued to change. Industrialization and the rise of mass transport attracted masses of Jews and

Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants from the villages that surrounded the city, transforming a city that had always been located along a cultural fault line into a paradigm of diversity. Ghettos grew up on the margins of the city more quickly than they could be regulated and impoverished workers and artisans now brushed shoulders with the plutocratic city fathers on the city's grand boulevards.

As Kiev elites struggled to respond to the challenges of urban modernity, politics, too, began to change. Some elites, coalescing around semi-official or non-official groups or voluntary societies, began laying their own claims to the loyalty of the masses. Liberal Jews sought to educate and reform their less wealthy co-confessants, arguing that Kiev, which was excluded from the Pale of Settlement, could arise as a center of Jewish enlightened thought. The remnants of the Polish *szlachta* (landed nobility) argued that the city could serve as the center of a resurrected Commonwealth. "Ukrainophiles"—who ran the gamut from Polonized Germans to the descendants of Cossack military elites—found inspiration in the language and culture of peasants, which they argued could serve as the core of a political program distinct from either Great Russian imperialism or Polish insurrection. Meanwhile, an increasingly vocal group of conservatives denounced the "subversive" activities—though not the populist tactics—of Jews, Poles, and nationally conscious Ukrainians, arguing that Kiev's diverse residents must be taught to respect the Holy Triad of Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality.

Coalescing in the 1870s, these elite interest groups grew stronger and more radical as their lobbying methods became more sophisticated and their constituencies expanded. Indeed, by the first years of the twentieth century, plebeian residents of Kiev were "learning politics" for themselves; in the strikes and street demonstrations that culminated in the revolutionary upheaval of 1905-6, workers and artisans took to the streets to demand that their "class interests" be recognized by educated society—even as they fractured into political positions that had already been defined by elites (e.g., Zionists, political anti-Semites, etc.). Rather than stabilizing political discourse, the inclusion of the working classes in the voting pool following the creation of a national Duma in 1905 further radicalized Kiev's political scene. By 1907, the city had become a major center of Ukrainian nationalist agitation as well as the headquarters of the empire's infamous right-wing movement. My dissertation seeks to identify the turning points in the development of local political thought, and explores which rhetorical strategies and identities proved most effective in mobilizing public opinion as urban politics were subsumed in larger, pan-imperial debates about nationality and governance.

## **Preliminary Conclusions**

In my two-and-a-half months in the archives, I've completed the bulk of the research for two chapters of my dissertation, coming to some surprising conclusions that have allowed me to reconceptualize my project along the way. My first chapter looks at the formal institutions—in particular, the City Duma—established by the urban self-governance decree. A number of studies have

juxtaposed the “liberal cities” of late imperial Russia with the “conservative state,” arguing that an ethos of public service (and even political liberalism) crystallized in urban self-governance, empowering the educated society that it represented at the expense of the state. I expected to find the same in my research, and was able quickly to identify the relevant documents in the Municipal Archive of Kyiv, which contains a full complement of City Duma records.

However, the more I read, the more I noted a disjuncture between organized politics and less formal modes of participation that were nevertheless creating and bolstering ethnic, religious, and national identities. On the one hand, I was surprised to find that the members of the Duma themselves were not terribly interested in playing politics; they rarely showed up to meetings, and often left prolonged debates before votes were taken! Furthermore, while I expected ethnic, linguistic, and religious issues to play a central role in the Duma’s debates, I was surprised to find that the issues that most captured the delegates’ attention were those of self-interest: how to increase their own incomes (for example, by raising rents on the properties they owned and cutting the taxes they owed) and their public profiles (by honoring themselves with titles and awards). Jewish merchants allied with Russian and Polish landlords in the Duma, finding more common ground in their economic interests than differences in their language and customs. In other words, the well-off city fathers defined themselves according to their economic class, and against the masses.

At the same time, I was surprised to find that ethnic and national identity was emerging as a hot topic among the lower ranks of high society—professors, bureaucrats, and intellectuals who did not belong to the city’s upper crust, but nevertheless enjoyed a favorable social position. These individuals not only controlled many of the city’s cultural resources, but also understood the necessity of reaching out to its growing ranks of proletarians and winning them over to the various causes they espoused. It was these individuals who comprised the local Archeological Commission and Geographic Society, which not only documented Kiev’s ancient history, but also construed this culture as distinctly “Ukrainian”—that is, not Russian. Many of the same individuals were behind schemes in the 1870s and 80s to rename city streets, erasing the traces of Poland’s centuries-long rule of the Ukrainian territories, and to erect a monument to the Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytskyi. This last monument in particular spoke to a growing interest in national identity, and will constitute a major portion of this chapter. Originally envisioned as a testament to Ukraine’s unity—and a pedagogical tool to proliferate patriotism among the people—the statue was to portray Khmelnytskyi trampling the “enemies” of Ukraine: a Jesuit, a Polish noble, and a Jew. The blueprints elicited protest from other members of the commission (and indeed, from the Church and the imperial authorities themselves!), who countered that a monument to Ukraine’s historical specificity should refer to tolerance, not violence.

The second chapter that I researched during the duration of my IREX grant concerns the 1905 revolution in Kiev. Since it chronicles twists and turns in the cooperation and mobilization of peasants, workers, and intellectuals, this chapter is the most complex in the entire dissertation. Still, I was able to gain

important insights into how the revolution (and the reaction that followed it) worked in Kiev. Again, violence has emerged as a major theme of this chapter: I will argue in my dissertation that the horrible pogrom that followed the October manifesto of 1905—which granted basic civic rights to the tsar’s subjects—helped to consolidate national identities in Kiev. As both right-wing intellectuals and the plebeian press united to denounce Jews as the motive force of revolution and political disorder, other groups began defining themselves by referring their own political convictions as well. For nationally conscious Poles and Ukrainians, a stance against anti-Jewish violence began an important component of their group identity. Conversely, right-wing intellectuals endeavored to define “true Russians” as those against the upheavals and political chaos that they argued had been perpetrated by Jews. Although much research remains to be done to bring this chapter to fruition, I expect to argue that the connections made between political conviction and national identity served as the major turning point in Kiev’s local politics—and helped funnel municipal and regional issues into national political disputes.

### **Relevance and Contribution to Field**

My research touches on a number of important issues that have only recently begun to be re-examined in light of the archival sources that have become available since the fall of the Soviet Union. First, it centers on the fact that Imperial Russia was a multi-ethnic empire, and endeavors to describe the characteristics and contours of local community in Kiev—an approach that has been very fruitful in studies of other locales in past years. The questions I ask in this context include: Who comprised the city’s elite, and how did they understand their community? As the masses became politically conscious and active, how did they define themselves *vis-à-vis* educated society? What categories—religion, language, ethnicity, class, gender—mattered as the residents of a diverse city tried to decide where they fit within the empire? Second, my research touches on the political culture of Imperial Russia, another “growth field” in recent years. Was there something “different” about the way that politics were understood and practiced in Russia compared to Western countries? How is civil society to be theorized in pre-revolutionary Russia? What role did violence play in defining communities and shaping politics? Finally, I hope that my research will shed light on the growth of right-wing thought and politics in the last years of the empire. Several works in the 60s and 70s examined this theme, but I have the benefit of having access to archival sources not previously at the disposal of earlier generations of western historians.

### **Research Methodology and Site**

I have conducted research at several archives and libraries in Kyiv, Ukraine. Working in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, I have drawn on the records of the Governor-General, judicial organs, and voluntary associations. In the Municipal Archive of the City of Kyiv, I have worked with

election records, protocols of the City Duma, and documentation concerning guilds and state-ascribed estates. At libraries in Kyiv, I've worked with newspapers, rare books, and manuscripts. More broadly, I've engaged with a variety of sources, ranging from visual to demographic to bureaucratic sources to memoirs.

### **Recommendations for US Policy Community**

Living in Kyiv, which remains a diverse city at the center of a struggle about what constitutes Ukrainian identity, I have witnessed in person disputes quite similar to those that split the city a century ago. Kyiv is still a contested city—a locale identified by the current Ukrainian government as the center of the “new Ukraine” and by Russians reminiscent for the lost empire as a heartland of Slavic religion and culture. In a multi-ethnic, politically contentious context, my research emphasizes the role of civil society in determining the fate of these conflicts. It is important that the US policy community not only support grass-roots organizations promoting democracy and transparency in governance, but also groups working to achieve greater dialogue and tolerance among various ethnic and religious groups. Ukraine’s remarkably free press serves as one venue for these discussions, but my research drives home the importance of supporting the activities of organizations that specifically address this problem. Secondly, I’ve discovered that many of the most contentious debates in the city—both a century ago and today—revolve around the commemoration of historical events. As Ukrainians continue to argue over the legacy of the Russian empire, Soviet Union, and World War II, it would behoove the US policy community to support fora in which these contentious debates can be freely and civilly aired.