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Tatiana Zhurzhenko

BORDERLANDS INTO BORDERED LANDS

Geopolitics of Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine

With a foreword by Dieter Segert

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List of Abbreviations

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
BUMAD	"Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova Against Drugs" UNDP Project
CDC	Community of Democratic Choice
CFE	Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Commonwealth
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
KGB	Komitet Gosudarsvennoi Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIS	New Independent States
ODED-GUAM	Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OUN	Orhanizatsiia Ukrainskykh Natsionalistiv (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists)
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

SEA	Single Economic Area
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPA	Ukrainska Povstanska Armiia (Ukrainian Resurgent Army)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWCC	Ukrainian World Coordination Council
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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Foreword

Ukraine *en route* to where?

Among the features of the post-socialist transformation of Eastern Europe over the past two decades have been the conflicts over collective identities. Sometimes these have led to military confrontations between new nations, at great human cost. In the case of Ukraine, the identities of the various regions, and the related conflicts over the country's geopolitical orientation towards either "Eurasia" or Europe, clash peacefully, yet constantly.

The re-interpretation of national history plays an important role in all post-socialist conflicts over political identity. Not only in the Balkans is there too much history per square metre. In Ukraine, too, the interpretation of national history has been used as a political weapon, particularly by Viktor Yushchenko, who became president after the Orange Revolution of 2004. Yet it is not only politicians that are involved in these conflicts, but also historians, journalists, writers – in short, intellectuals. In a constructivist understanding of international politics, such as that offered by Tatiana Zhurzhenko in the present book, these symbolic struggles are themselves part of the debate over possible futures.

The following study offers a perspective on an important conceptual (discursive and political) context of post-Soviet relations between Russia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet states. Although foreign policy at core revolves around economic and power interests, the verve, the emotional effort, and the obstacles facing real-politics cannot be understood without studying the conflicts over cultural identities. The book begins by sketching the discourse on Eurasia, which first emerged among intellectuals in Russian émigré circles during the interwar period, and which in the post-Soviet ideological vacuum after 1991 influenced the debate among Ukrainian and Russian elites with renewed strength. The Soviet and post-Soviet discourse on "Eastern

Slavic Unity" and the "Great Patriotic War" is retraced in a similar way. Particularly interesting are Zhurzhenko's references to the shifting interpretations and instrumentalizations of these myths in the present day.

The first part of the book, having discussed this intellectual discourse, goes on to chart the geopolitical options for Ukraine, especially in relation to Russia. This is followed by an analysis of the relations between Ukraine and Belarus, a subject that until now has received little attention in the scholarly literature. Here, too, there is a discussion of the images of the other and their role in the debate over the future of the nation. The author shows how the relation to the neighbouring country and its path of development becomes an argument for or against particular domestic alternatives.

In the second part of the book, the main axis of the study becomes visible: an analysis of the borders between the new nation-states, with the emphasis on the new border between Russia and Ukraine. Drawing on the distinction used in border studies between "hard" and "soft" borders (the latter being "narrative constructs"), the author discusses the real production and symbolic construction (legitimation) of this border, along with its significance for both states' re-orientation towards each another. "Narratives of security" and "narratives of integration" both play a role in this symbolic production of the border.

The first chapter in this part also focuses on EU security interests in the Ukrainian border regime, analysing the development of a concomitant policy, particularly following the EU enlargement in 2004. The result, as we learn from the study, is that Schengen standards are shaping the entire Ukrainian border regime, including in the east.

Large stretches of the Ukrainian-Russian border run through heavily populated areas that traditionally have close economic ties. The study describes how the installation and modernization of the border regime and of a regime of trans-border cooperation is closely connected to the construction of new identities, thus becoming the object of conflict between political camps in Ukraine. Ukrainian discourses about borders are variously identified as pro-Russian, Ukrainian nationalist and pro-European, Russian discourses as nationalist, imperialist and liberal. In the third chapter, the author analyses a

particular cross-border region (that between Kharkiv and Belgorod,) and the central role of regional economic elites in the shaping of the Euroregion "Slobozhanshchyna".

In the third part, the author summarizes the results of a field study in five villages (three in the Kharkiv region, two in the Belgorod region) in 2003 and 2004. She describes the empirical methods used in order to obtain her results. Among the list of questions used in this research are those asking into the history and the identity of the villagers, their trans-border economic interests and their perception of the Ukrainian-Russian border. Zhurzhenko selects a sample of research objects that differ in their historical and ethnic characteristics. Her own contradictory identity as Ukrainian citizen whose mother tongue is Russian is also discussed in this context.

The observations and the interpretations of the conversations and interviews visualize the evolution of new borders (and, connected with this, the formation of the different national identities of the populations on both sides the border). For me, a particularly significant discovery of the field study was how much the sustainability of the various processes of symbolic construction depends on the economic success of the village or the region. "The new border represents the irreversibility of the post-1991 political and social changes, thus separating not only Ukraine from Russia, but also the present, real Ukraine from an imagined Soviet Union." On the basis of the results of the field study described, the book concludes by analysing how in one of the villages (Udy), "Russians" become "Ukrainians" – in other words how the process of nation-building takes place at the local level.

The book can be highly recommended to students of East European Studies, especially post-Soviet Politics. Its approach is informed by an intimate familiarity with the scholarly literature on border studies across the humanities and social sciences, combined with a politological analysis of the relations between Ukraine and its two northerly and easterly neighbours, Belarus and Russia. The book provides an insight into the intellectual and political discourse that frames the dispute over new, post-Soviet identities in this region. It also presents the results of an interesting field study on life on the Ukraine-Russia border. Where is the Ukraine heading today? Is it en route to Europe, or to a Russia-dominated Eurasia? Might it act as an important bridge if in the future Russia draws closer to Europe? Which of these political

alternatives to opt for will not only be decided at the level of rational politics; symbolic constructions and their public reception will also play an influential role. This book reveals in detail this interplay of politics and collective identities.

Dieter Segert
Vienna, February 2010

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we had in these regions, the valuable firsthand information we collected and the intensive intellectual exchange made these journeys unforgettable. The results of our joint common project were presented at the Eighth BRIT International Conference in Lublin (2006) and at the workshop *Dynamiques transfrontalières et politiques de voisinage aux confins de l'Europe* at the University Paris X Nanterre (2006).

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porary Ukrainian Studies in the University of Ottawa (2005). For the purpose of this publication I have significantly rewritten, re-edited and updated all chapters in 2009. Most of this work was done at the Institute for Political Science of the University of Vienna, where I am currently an Elise Richter Research Fellow.

I have used an adapted Library of Congress system for transliteration, ignoring diacritical marks and soft signs. Certain Anglicisms have been retained (Crimea, Dnieper, etc.). The names of persons who publically use a Romanized version of their names are usually rendered in the orthography used by these persons.

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Tatiana Zhurzhenko
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Introduction

1 *Remapping Eastern Europe: the geopolitical context*

This book was prepared for publication during 2009 – the year when a united Europe commemorated the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. While Berlin became the epicentre of political and cultural events celebrating the regained German unity, similar festivities also took place in many other sites along the former Iron Curtain which used to divide the European continent into "East" and "West". Political speeches, academic conferences, art and photo exhibitions reminded the Europeans of a border that has disappeared but remains in the collective memory as a symbol of political oppression, ideological blindness and mutual hostility. With the process of integration, the national borders within the European Union change their political status, their functions and their attached symbolic meanings – they become places of encounter, communication and exchange; they are seams where Europe, in words of Karl Schlögel, "grows together".

The success of a new Europe "without borders" is only one side of the story, however. At the margins of the European continent the collapse of communism brought about the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the break-up of Yugoslavia. For the new independent states, national borders not only represent an important attribute of state sovereignty and a symbolic link between the nation and its territory; here borders are crucial elements of national security and, to use Friedrich Ratzel's term, "power barometers" in relations with neighbouring countries. Border disputes, territorial conflicts and separatist movements make it difficult to imagine the political map of the post-Soviet space as finally settled. But even if the new borders are legitimized by international treaties, territorial and border issues often reflect the renegotiation of the power balance between neighbours, a changing geopolitical status or national identity problems. Post-Soviet borders have a pre-history as administrative boundaries of the former Soviet republics; but as international borders they are "young" and often lack symbolic power or, in the words of Claus Eder, "narrative plausibility". Competing geopolitical ambitions of the

EU and NATO, on the one hand, and of Russia as a re-emerging great power, on the other, add to the political tensions that surround border issues. In fact, in the last two decades, borders in the post-Soviet space – in particular in its European part – served as unique laboratories where processes of nation and state building overlap globalization and European enlargement.

The texts collected under this cover mainly deal with the Ukrainian-Russian border after 1991, but are not restricted to this subject. It is rather the processes of re-mapping, re-narrating and re-bordering the Western post-Soviet borderlands that are of interest for me. Covering Ukrainian-Russian and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainian-Belarusian relations, the book addresses the emergence of new borders and the transformation of collective identities in the processes of post-Soviet disintegration and nation building. Since 1991, national identities in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus have been re-narrated and new national borders established and legitimized; former Soviet republics search for their place on the geopolitical map of the European continent and re-discover each other as neighbours, competitors and partners facing similar challenges. At the same time, the new borders are often politically contested by controversial attempts to re-establish an albeit imagined former unity, like a common "East Slavic" or "Eurasian" geopolitical and geo-cultural space. The Ukrainian-Russian border in particular became a site (and an indicator) of conflict between two integration projects – the European and the post-Soviet one. Although the EU's enlargement ambitions are quite limited when it comes to Ukraine, the prospect of EU accession plays an enormous symbolic role in Ukrainian foreign and domestic politics. Without advancing further east geographically, the European Union influences the geopolitical status and regime of Ukraine's eastern border. Most Ukrainian experts and politicians consider the still porous and non-demarcated border with Russia to be a sign of unfinished nation building, an indicator of power imbalance in bilateral relations and an obstacle for European integration. Meanwhile, certain functions of the EU's external borders (such as the monitoring and prevention of illegal migration) have been delegated to the Ukrainian-Russian border. The same is true for the Ukrainian-Moldavian border, where in 2005 the EUBAM Project (European Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, 2005-09) was implemented with the aim of enhancing the capacities of the border guard and custom services of both countries. In the framework

of the new European Partnership initiative launched May 2009 in Prague Ukraine and Belarus agreed on the delimitation and demarcation of their common border. The EU will provide technical and financial assistance for this project.

However, the role of these "new" borders appears quite different in the context of the post-Soviet integration projects initiated and led by Russia. Cross-border cooperation between the Ukrainian and Russian border regions is seen as a "small-scale integration", which is supposed to complement more ambitious integration projects such as EurAsEC or the Single Economic Area (SEA). In the discourse of post-Soviet integration the new borders appear artificial, dividing the "natural" unity of the "East Slavic civilization" and undermining the historically proven "brotherhood". From the Russian point of view, Ukraine's integration into NATO and EU institutions would inevitably turn the border between the two countries into a new dividing line cutting Russia off from the rest of Europe.

It is the "new" Eastern Europe, the borderlands between Russia and the enlarged EU – Belarus, Moldova, and to some extent the Caucasus region, but first of all Ukraine – which are at stake in this conflict between two centres of power on the European continent. And while the attraction of the EU as a "soft power" lies in the European model of democracy, respect for human rights and appeal to civil society, Russia still uses traditional instruments of "hard power" for persuading its neighbours to the advantages of post-Soviet integration. The 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine became a revealing illustration of this persisting geopolitical competition projected into the domestic politics of post-Soviet states as a conflict between pro-Russian and pro-European orientations. In 2009 the Eastern Partnership program was initiated by the EU in order to facilitate cooperation and provide the foundation for new association agreements with six post-Soviet countries – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. While the promotion of human rights and the rule of law are the priorities of this new initiative, it is obviously aimed at countering Russia's influences in its "backyard". Strengthening democratic institutions and capacities of the new independent states (including border management) serves as an instrument of European "post-modern" geopolitics. Meanwhile, recovered from the shock of the "Colour Revolutions", Moscow is also learning to use "soft power" instruments such as NGOs and

youth movements. The Russian-speaking population of Ukraine's eastern borderlands, where hybrid identities and double loyalties are widespread, is a target of this new Russian politics. As long as the architecture of security in Europe remains incomplete, EU-Russian relations will not be settled and their zones of influence are disputed; the symbolic status of the Ukrainian-Russian border in the national and international politics will have to be contested and re-negotiated.

While writing this book, however, I was not driven by the national security considerations central to most analysts writing about post-Soviet borders. In the case of the Ukrainian-Russian border, this "security discourse" usually focuses on its strategic role, on the threats and disadvantages for Ukrainian foreign policy resulting from its "unaccomplished" status. Nor was I inspired by nostalgia for the lost Soviet unity or by the pan-Slavic visions shaping the discourse of post-Soviet integration. Rather, the idea of this book was to approach the post-Soviet borders as a construct produced by different political actors through various narratives; to go beyond the dominant discourses of security and integration and demonstrate their role in the processes of border construction. In doing so, I address not only the elitist discourses produced by politicians and intellectuals, but also the narratives of ordinary people living near the new border and experiencing it in their everyday lives. In addition, I use a regional scale of analysis to understand the role of the border in the political strategies of the regional elites, the uses of border issues and cross-border cooperation in region making, in power negotiations with the centre and in re-shaping relations with the neighbouring states. Here once again I try to take some distance from the affirmative discourse and move beyond the positivist analysis of the advantages of and obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

Although "border studies" are flourishing, the Ukrainian-Russian border has rarely been addressed in academic literature. The classical historical work of Hiroaki Kuromiya on the Soviet Donbas,¹ recent studies by the political scientists Jessica Allina-Pisano² on the post-Soviet land reform in the

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- 1 Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s-1990s*, New York: Cambridge University Press 1998.
 - 2 Jessica Allina-Pisano, *The Post-Soviet Potemkin Village: Politics and Property Rights in the Black Earth*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2008.

Black Earth region, Kerstin Zimmer³ on power elites in Donbas and Peter Rodgers on school education and identity in Sumy, Luhansk and Kharkiv⁴ have analyzed the political and social transformations in the Ukrainian-Russian borderlands. However, they do not focus on the border or on the processes of border construction.⁵ My intention was to fill in this research gap and apply new approaches and concepts developed in the relatively young field of border studies to the Ukrainian-Russian case. The lack of academic interest in the Ukrainian-Russian border is particularly visible in comparison to the western border of Ukraine, which has attracted the attention of Ukrainian and international scholars from economists and political scientists to historians and anthropologists.

The lack of interest in the eastern border can be itself an object of analysis; it seems to be a symptom of a deeper problem, having to do with the symbolic hierarchy and the hegemony of discourses. Western Ukrainian border regions actively re-brand themselves as a "bridge" or a "gate to Europe", and the border with Poland, Slovakia and Hungary – the new EU members – today embodies Ukraine's strategic choice. In contrast, the Ukrainian-Russian borderlands appear as part of a non-differentiated, stagnating, ambiguous "post-Soviet space"; they are either ignored or bear rather negative connotations. Ukraine's border with Russia seems not fascinating enough for researchers: in their eyes it offers neither cultural contrasts and historical conflicts nor interesting projects and civic initiatives. And the way the border is presented in public discourse reduces it to a "security problem". In contrast, this book makes the very ambiguity of the Ukrainian-Russian border a subject of inquiry.

3 Kerstin Zimmer, *Machteliten im ukrainischen Donbass – Bedingungen und Konsequenzen der Transformation einer alten Industrieregion*, Münster: LIT 2006.

4 Peter Rodgers, *Nation, region and history in post-communist transitions. Identity Politics in Ukraine, 1991-2006*, Stuttgart: Ibidem 2008.

5 Vladimir Kolossov and Olga Vendina, "Social gradients, identity and migration flows (by the example of Belgorod and Kharkiv oblasts)", *Migration and Border Regime: Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine*, Kyiv: National Institute for International Security Problems 2002, pp. 21-46 (in Russian); Olga Vendina and Vladimir Kolossov, "Partnership that Bypasses Barriers", *Russia in Global Politics*, no. 1 (2007).

2 *Frontiers, boundaries and borderlands: the conceptual framework*

Borders, borderlands and the construction of borders are the key concepts of this book. Widely used in various academic disciplines (international law, political geography, history, anthropology, political science), the notion of "border" is far from being well defined and unequivocal. Therefore a brief theoretical introduction is needed here to outline my approach. In other words, after having situated this book (geo)politically, I will now try to position it conceptually. While particular theories and methodological issues are discussed in the respective chapters, here I would like to discuss the key concepts and their applicability to the post-Soviet borders, in particular to the Ukrainian-Russian border.

If we start with the question of terminology, such notions as "border", "boundary" and "frontier" are often used as interchangeable in academic literature. However, historically they have considerable nuances. *Frontier* implies etymologically "in front", an area which is "ahead of the hinterland"; it is often called the foreland, or borderland, or march.⁶ In his classic work of border research, Ladis Kristof noted that "in its historical origin the frontier was (1) not a legal concept, and (2) not, or at least not essentially, a political or intellectual concept. It was rather a phenomenon of 'the facts of life' – a manifestation of the spontaneous tendency for growth of the ecumene."⁷ It was in a similar sense that the concept of frontier was introduced by Frederic Jackson Turner in relation to American history: a transition zone with a dynamic character.⁸ The American frontier had analogues in world history.⁹ According to Andreas Kappeler, this notion can be applied to the early modern Russian state and its south and east margins: as a geographic frontier (between forest and steppe), as a social frontier (between settled and nomadic cultures), as a military frontier (between different military formations) and finally as a reli-

6 Ladis K.D. Kristof, "The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1959), pp. 269-282.

7 Kristof, "The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries", p. 270.

8 Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1935 (1893).

9 Hans-Heinrich Nolte, "Deutsche Ostgrenze, russische Südgrenze, amerikanische Westgrenze. Zur Radikalisierung der Grenzen in der Neuzeit", in: Joachim Becker and Andrea Komlosy (eds.), *Grenzen Weltweit. Zonen, Linien, Mauern im historischen Vergleich*, Vienna: Promedia 2004, pp. 55-74.

gious and cultural frontier (between "civilization" and "barbarism").¹⁰ In the pre-modern state, "frontier was quite literary 'the front': the *frons* of the *imperium mundi* which expands to the only limits it can acknowledge, namely, the limits of the world. Thus, the frontier was not the end ('tail') but rather the beginning ('forehead') of the state."¹¹ Similarly, the French term for state border, *frontière*, was borrowed from the military vocabulary and in the 16th and 17th centuries still "referred to the idea of movement, advance, clash, repulse".¹² Later, with the formation of the modern French state, the notion of *frontière* absorbed the meaning of *limite* (border in the juridical sense).¹³

The term *boundary* "indicates certain established limits (the bounds) of a given political unit, and all that which is within the boundary is bound together, that is, it is fasten by an internal bound."¹⁴ To put it roughly, a boundary is a frontier which has become a demarcated line; it implies stabilization and peace instead of expansion.¹⁵ To use Kristof's helpful metaphor, the frontier is a manifestation of centrifugal forces, while the boundary indicates centripetal forces; the latter marks "the outer line of effective control exercised by the central government".¹⁶ If the frontier is a historical phenomenon, the boundary is more of legal and political development, and if the frontier is about integration and communication, the term "boundary" implies quite the opposite meaning: delimitation and separation. In medieval Europe an exact territorial delimitation was scarcely possible, because different legal claims by secular and clerical powers often overlapped the same territory. The feudal land properties were full of enclaves and exclaves and therefore did not represent homogeneous territorial entities. In this sense, the idea of the bound-

10 Andreas Kappeler, "Rußlands Frontier in der Frühen Neuzeit", in: Ronald G. Asch, Wulf Eckart Voß and Martin Wrede (eds.), *Frieden und Krieg in der Frühen Neuzeit. Die europäische Staatenordnung und die außereuropäische Welt*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink 2001, pp. 599-613; here p. 600.

11 Kristof, "The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries", p. 270.

12 Lucien Febvre: "Frontière. Le mot et la notion", *Revue de synthèse historique*, no. 45 (1928), pp. 31-44, cited in: "Einleitung", in: Eva Horn, Stefan Kaufmann and Ulrich Bröckling (eds.), *Grenzverletzer. Von Schmugglern, Spionen und anderen subversiven Gestalten*, Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos 2002, pp. 7-22; here p. 13.

13 Febvre in: Horn et al., *Grenzverletzer*, p. 14.

14 Kristof, "The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries", p. 270.

15 Cf. Stephen B. Jones, "Boundary Concepts in the Setting of Place and Time", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1959), pp. 241-255; here p. 250.

16 Kristof, "The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries", p. 272.

ary as a clear continuous line defining the limits of state authority is quite new. This is an attribute of a modern state exercising authority over a given territory and conducting a policy aimed at homogenizing the population living on this territory. In international relations the idea of the boundary as a line delimitating exclusive territorial/political communities goes back to the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which initiated a new political order based on the concept of a sovereign state.

In this book I prefer the term "border" to both "boundary" and "frontier" for various reasons. In fact "border" is the most popular term, often used as a synonym for the latter two. Its meaning cannot be reduced to legal and technical aspects and it has no specific historical or ideological connotations; the term also refers to the political, social and cultural aspects of territoriality. "Border" usually combines both meanings discussed above: as a dividing line it assumes delimitation, demarcation and separation, while at the same time, as a zone of interaction, it signifies communication and integration. The new post-Soviet borders, which used to be largely irrelevant administrative boundaries two decades ago, are now subject to demarcation on the territory. As an attribute of the newly acquired state sovereignty they have to be strictly controlled and technically modernized to fulfil their function of separation, both in terms of security and national identity formation. At the same time, post-Soviet borders remain zones of intensive traffic and communication and, in many cases, zones of ongoing assimilation and integration; they continue to produce hybrid and overlapping identities.

The opposition between frontier and boundary is of course only analytical. The nature of borders is ambivalent and historically changing; their interpretations reflect the spirit of a particular epoch and the constellation of certain political forces. The idea of territorial sovereignty combined with the principle of national self-determination adopted in 1918 was built into the fundament of the new international order established in Europe after World War I. The idealist political principles promoted by Woodrow Wilson sought to create a stable system of international relations based on the rule of law and on fair and legitimate borders. However, this ambitious attempt to redraw the borders on the European continent according to principles of national self-determination and sovereignty failed to secure stable peace. Revisionist forces in the interwar Europe used, among others, the organicist and evolu-

tionist ideas of the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel. He argued that a strong state follows the imperative of territorial expansion, the natural tendency of the state organism seeking to enlarge its *Lebensraum*. According to Ratzel, "the frontier is, as the peripheric organ of the state, the bearer of its growth and its security, conforming to all changes of the state organism".¹⁷ This expansionist concept of the border was instrumentalized by Nazi politics in Europe and thus politically compromised. The system of post-WWII international boundaries was more stable and hardly changed until 1989 as the threat of a global nuclear conflict between the two superpowers had made territorial revisionism a taboo. The system of post-war boundaries was stabilized through the enemy-friend logic.¹⁸ The Iron Curtain, a clear-cut boundary between East and West, can serve as an example for an almost perfect separation and isolation unique in human history. At the same time both systems could hardly hide their expansionist ambitions which sometimes provoked local military conflicts in other parts of the world. Not by accident, in the Cold War era the concept of frontier was used again to reflect the opposition between the two ideological systems and hostile political blocks. Ladis Kristof suggested in 1959 that the very principle of territorial sovereignty is undermined by the opposition of political blocks, because class and ideological loyalties override the loyalty to the nation state.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, barbed-wire fences and concrete walls were removed, but the "border of prosperity" between Western and Eastern European states still persists.¹⁹ The process of European integration has been changing the nature of state boundaries once again. Supranational institutions limit the national sovereignty of the EU member states and the processes of regionalization and globalization render EU internal borders less relevant. New traffic routes, transport corridors and networks determine the

17 Friedrich Ratzel, "Die Gesetze des räumlichen Wachstums der Staaten", cited in: Stephen B. Jones, *Boundary Concepts*. Ratzel uses the German term *Grenze*.

18 Mathias Bös and Kerstin Zimmer, "Wenn Grenzen wandern. Zur Dynamik von Grenzverschiebungen in Osten Europas", in: Monika Eigmüller and Georg Vobruba (eds.), *Grenzsoziologie: Die politische Strukturierung des Raumes*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag 2006, pp. 157-184; here p. 172.

19 Andrea Komlosy and Joachim Becker, "Grenzen und Räume – Formen und Wandel", in: idem (eds.), *Grenzen Weltweit*, pp. 21-54; here p. 33.

geography of Europe more than state boundaries.²⁰ To Karl Schlögel this post-modern European territoriality in some aspects reminds of a pre-modern one: "Powerful forces are working to overcome the old borders... The map that is emerging does not bear much similarity to the one on the classroom wall I grew up with: with the variously coloured nation states, with the provisional borders of post-war Europe marked either in thick or hatched lines. The new map is more reminiscent of early modernity, of the trade and pilgrimage routes, of the links between holy cities and routes of world communication."²¹

The Soviet bloc collapsed, but the border between the two political blocs did not disappear completely. With EU and NATO enlargement it was shifted to the east; it now separates the new EU members and their Eastern neighbours.²² The new external EU border is technically superior to the former Iron Curtain, but its permeability varies significantly for various nationals and different social groups. Visa regimes and a strictly regulated access to EU labour markets are meant to keep the citizens of the new independent states "out". At the same time new political incentives such as association agreements and regional cooperation programs seek to turn the new Eastern European states into a "ring of friends" – EU satellite states sharing democratic principles and providing security along the Schengen borders. In this way the former Soviet republics along the eastern border of the EU represent a "frontier" in the almost classical sense: a transitional area to be "civilized" and assimilated to Western political values. At the same time, Russia also sees these territories through the frontier lens: as its former Western borderlands which it had to give up, but over which it still hopes to regain political and economic influence.

3 *Nation-building, nomadic borders and shifting identities*

It seems that in the modern era, the stability of political boundaries on the European continent has been an exception rather than a rule. While some borders have remained unchanged for centuries, many others – particularly in

20 Cf. Karl Schlögel, "Europe tests its boundaries", *Eurozine*, www.eurozine.com/articles/article_2004-11-24-schloegel-en.html (last accessed February 7, 2010).

21 Karl Schlögel, "Places and strata of memory. Approaches to Eastern Europe", *Eurozine*, www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-12-19-schloegel-en.html (last accessed February 7, 2010).

22 Komlosy and Becker, "Grenzen und Räume – Formen und Wandel", p. 34.