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My Own Distinguished People: An Analysis of Carpatho-Rusyn Autonomy Movements

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Alexandra Susanna Benc

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

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Abstract

What factors must a stateless nation possess in order to gain political autonomy? This question is explored through the perspective of Carpatho-Rusyns, an East Slavic stateless nation with a largely unknown, yet rich and distinct, history and culture. Throughout modern history, the Rusyns have made three significant attempts to gain political autonomy and become a semi-independent entity. I argue that stateless nations that possess high levels of the elements of political opportunity structure, cultural maintenance, and economic functioning are more likely to succeed in their efforts to gain political autonomy than those stateless nations who do not. Each of these factors interact with each other to produce a level of success or failure during the autonomy movement. I begin by providing a historical background of Carpatho-Rusyns. I then examine the concepts of state and nation, diaspora relations, and autonomy. I follow with an examination of each of the three periods in which Rusyns made a significant attempt to gain political autonomy and analyze their level of success through their levels of political opportunity structure, forms of cultural maintenance, and economic functioning. Each of these periods have a different level of success or failure depending on the value of each factor and their subfactors.

Introduction

The *state*, as defined by Max Weber, is “a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (1946).” A state describes an accepted government with the legitimate authority to impose laws on its constituents. It functions to maintain security and order within their borders as protecting those borders from external threats.

While the state has an objective function, the idea of a nation is much more abstract. A.D. Smith defines a *nation* as, “a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and public rights and duties for all members (2001, 13).” Members of a nation often share a particular ethnicity and are conscious of unity and interests, leading to an institutionalization of their culture. Perhaps this is one of the most telling factors of a nation – it differentiates itself from other ethnic groups as they claim sovereignty. The individuals within the nation often feel that the history and culture associated with the geographic region is a major facet of their being, and therefore feel a strong sense of national identity, so much so that they are willing to make legitimate political petitions to their government or other governments to be recognized for it. There is a need to focus on the political and social transformations that take place once this nation feels unified and will consciously act in its name (Kuntzsch, 2009). This is the basis of what sets nations apart from ethnic groups.

Nations are usually associated with a particular territory, however, *stateless nations* combine terms to describe a nation that does not possess its own state or the features of a state, such as a recognized government or borders. Stateless nations have usually made efforts to gain

this legitimacy as it argues it should be a state or possess some form of sovereignty. Regardless of geography, those who are a part of these stateless nations feel a connection to the territory of a stateless nation and believe the geography and the history that has occurred there constitutes a part of their collective identity.

This is the case for the Carpatho-Rusyn people, an East Slavic stateless nation with origins in the Carpathian Mountains of Europe. Carpatho-Rusyns, who are also referred to as Rusnaks, Carpatho-Russians, Ruthenians, or just Rusyns, have inhabited the northern regions of the Eastern Carpathians since the Early Middle Ages. While Rusyns have never possessed an enduring and internationally recognized territorial state, the group has maintained an identity distinct from that of the larger powers that have ruled over them throughout their history, which has influenced and motivated them in their efforts to gain political autonomy.

Autonomy is defined by Paul Robert Magocsi as self-rule that, “assumes that a representative organ of a particular territory or region has the right to issue laws and decrees which become valid for that given territory. An autonomous region is not sovereign but exists within the framework of a higher legal-administrative body...a legal-administrative entity of a lower entity (2015, 578).” Defining this term is important as many stateless nations, such as the Carpatho-Rusyn people, overall have no desire to become a completely sovereign entity. In this sense, a larger governing power would still have authority over the Rusyns, but the autonomous facet would be able to function with semi-independence.

The Carpatho-Rusyns have made three significant pushes to gain political autonomy for their stateless nation –in 1848, in the interwar period of 1918 to 1939, and finally, in 1991. This thesis seeks to assess the most notable conditions that factor into a stateless nation’s level of success in gaining political autonomy, and to situate the case of the Carpatho-Rusyns within that

context. Each of these factors vary in their role in success (or failure) depending on the time or place. This is made clear as I analyze each significant push for autonomy through the lens of these factors.

Significant populations of Carpatho-Rusyns currently live separated by state borders in which some are recognized as Rusyn and some are not. Others have fallen out of touch with their ethnic heritage as a Rusyn, especially in the diaspora. This reality cannot be analyzed in isolation – it is only understood through the examination of the centuries-long tumultuous past of the group.

Background and Historical Context

The most populous communities of Rusyns currently occupy four regions, each with different names: the Lemko region of southeastern Poland, the Prešov region of northeastern Slovakia, the Transcarpathian *oblast* of western Ukraine, and the Maramures of north-central Romania (Magocsi, 2015, 579). Rusyns have inhabited regions of the eastern Carpathian Mountains since the Early Middle Ages. The official population of Rusyns worldwide is 75,000 to 110,000, although some speculate the actual number could be much higher at 1.2-1.6 million. As has historically been the case with stateless groups, Rusyns have been reluctant to identify themselves or have simply not been recorded by their governments. Therefore, it is impossible to know the exact number of Rusyns that exist today (Magocsi, 1995). Three-quarters of Rusyns are found within the borders of Ukraine's Transcarpathian oblast.

Rusyns possess their own language, which belongs to the Slavic branch of the Indo-European language and is classified as an Eastern Slavic dialect. The Rusyn language has significant influences from the Old Church Slavonic liturgical language; in fact, the only written evidence of East Slavic inhabitants of the Carpathian Mountains in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries is in Church Slavonic (Kushko, 2007, 114). Because of the other significant ethnic populations in the same region, dialects are heavily influenced by Polish, Slovak, and Hungarian vocabulary. However, Rusyn is written using the Cyrillic alphabet, which is reflective of the fluid nature of their stateless ethnic belonging. Paul Robert Magocsi, the leading expert in Carpatho-Rusyn literature, states that, "The very language or series of dialects that Rusyns speak reflect the influences of both cultural spheres. Thus, while their speech clearly belongs to the realm of East Slavic languages, much of their vocabulary, pronounciational stress, and even syntax is West Slavic (1992, 99)." Attempts to codify a Rusyn literary language did not occur until the late

1800s, and at present, there have been no serious attempts to do this for states with minority populations of Rusyns such as Hungary or Romania (Kushko, 2007, 128). Many Rusyns use the term “*po nashomu*,” which is roughly translated to “people like us who speak our language,” to describe the dialect due to their identification with various states throughout their history (Crispin, 2006, 4).

Historical Background: Pre-1848-1918

While the term Rusyn, which will be used interchangeably with Carpatho-Rusyn in this thesis, is derived from the word *Rus'*, the origin of the Carpatho-Rusyns is not exclusively related to the Kievan Rus'. Rusyns are rather considered to be descendants of the Early Middle Ages tribes of White Croats. Initial settlements were most likely sparse as the flora and fauna of the region is an ever-changing environment, and the forests in the Carpathian Mountains were too thick to pass through easily, let alone settle and control, in the early medieval period (Lane, 2001, 690). There are Carpatho-Rusyns that contend that their land is the “Uhrheimat,” or original homeland, of all Slavs as their origin is still somewhat ambiguous (Best, 2013, 9).

The year 1453 was a clear turning point in the lifestyles of Carpatho-Rusyns and the region in which they inhabited as a whole. After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, the status of Carpatho-Rusyns, who were already living as serfs under their respective governments, was further reduced. This was exacerbated by the ongoing rivalry between Transylvania and Habsburg-ruled Royal Hungary, which divided Rusyn communities due to ever-shifting state boundaries. As a result, Carpatho-Rusyn villages were caught in the midst of the conflict and suffered from ensuing disease, famine, and destruction throughout the 16th and 17th century (Magocsi, 2015, 80).

Throughout the 1500s, Orthodox Christian Rusyns experienced less freedoms in Hungary and Poland due to the predominance of Roman Catholicism. Even though the Union of Brest (1596) and the Union of Uzhorod (1646) led to the creation of the Greek Catholic Church – to which many Rusyns converted and were provided with far more cultural and social benefits under Catholic rulers – they remained serfs to Hungarian and Polish landlords until 1848 due to their ethnic minority status. These conversions to Greek Catholicism mostly occurred throughout the 17th and 18th centuries and played an important part in the first push for autonomy, especially in 1772 when the Habsburg Empire acquired portions of land that, for the first time, encompassed all Carpatho-Rusyns within one state.

Under Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II, the status of the Uniate Church was gradually enhanced, and cultural centers were established in the eastern region of Uzhhorod and the western region of Prešov. In this period of time, maintaining an identity as Carpatho-Rusyn was so accepted that the Rusyn language was taught in normal schools, and records show that Habsburg authorities carried out censuses within the region that prove their presence (Lane, 2001, 690). Benefits were awarded to Rusyns and other minority peoples living within the Habsburg Empire during this time, but the wave of Pan-Slavism that washed over the region in the 1830s called on those groups to culturally and politically cooperate in order to advocate for their own sense of national identity. Doing this was vital to the survival of Rusyn culture as the group was also working against the pulls of Hungary’s “Reform Era” and early years of Magyarization.

Magyarization policies officially began in the 1870s, and many elite members of the Rusyn community welcomed the change in nationality as it provided political advantages in the region. Those who began to emigrate to the United States were able to create institutions and

communities in the diaspora that enabled them to stay connected to their identity. According to Paul Best, "...beginning in 1880, masses of Carpatho-Rusyns...were recruited to the burgeoning mines and factories of eastern North America. Maybe half the Rusyns left their mountain homes" during this time (2013, 10). The largest wave of migration occurred in the first two decades of the twentieth century for the Carpatho-Rusyns. Before 1914, over 225,000 Rusyns emigrated to the United States. In the first fourteen years of the century, 71% of this group were young men (Magocsi, 1993, 11). Most Rusyns relocated to urban areas of the northeastern regions such as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio where they often lived communally and found work in coal mines and steel mills, or the tri-state factory area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut (Carpatho-Rusyn Society). As these cities provided jobs, small communities of Rusyns developed. This shift in the extent of the Rusyn diaspora population from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century was perhaps one of the most significant influences in the Rusyn's second push for autonomy, as the advancements in transportation, communication, and quality of life also assisted in political coordination and mobilization.

1918-present

The onset of World War I and World War II halted the emigration and socioeconomic growth rate for many Rusyns. The Carpatho-Rusyn territory was drawn into the middle of World War I as Austria-Hungary fought against Russia, and the fighting amongst these larger powers led to village destruction, shifts in state loyalty, and loss of life. World War I began at a time when thousands of Carpatho-Rusyns had already emigrated to the United States and established communities, churches, and fraternal organizations. Although aspects of life were repaired and during the interwar period, the "Rusyn question" was not again raised until the end of World

War II, this time by leading figures in the region's Orthodox church to Premier Joseph Stalin. Petitions were offered to Stalin that the autonomous territory would be joined to the Soviet Union, however, the request fell on deaf ears as "Moscow did not need yet another 'republic' within the Soviet fold (Magocsi, 2015, 584)." Many Rusyns themselves did not support a Soviet-supported Rusyn territory, and while leading representatives had previously joined forces to fight for autonomy (Magocsi, 2015, 582). Rusyn-Americans were shocked to find that Subcarpathian Rus' was to be incorporated into the Soviet Union in June of 1945 – ceded by a provisional Czechoslovak parliament without Rusyn representation – and were working to liquidate the Greek Catholic Church.

Magocsi writes that, "Within less than a year Transcarpathian Ukraine, designated simply Transcarpathia, was reduced to the status of an oblast like any other within the Soviet Ukraine (2018, 87)." Even though Rusyn-Americans petitioned the United States State Department and the newly organized United Nations, as well as convene a special Carpatho-Russian Congress to politically protest the Soviet Union, the most they could do to make a tangible difference was to deny finances or resources to Soviet-held territory. Rusyn-Americans lacked in government representation within the United States and Eastern Europe, which again proved to be a barrier difficult to cross. Because they had no strong, unified political voice that was cohesive across the Atlantic, it was easy for larger state powers with a seemingly infinite amount of resources to take advantage of their smaller, less educated, and more passive numbers.

Initially, the many technological advances that the new Communist regime brought to the small agricultural Rusyn villages were alluring. Reports that new factories, electricity, free health care, and improvements in the educational system excited villagers and shifted their mindset away from an almost exclusive dependence on agriculture. However, the removal of traditional

aspects of Carpatho-Rusyn life, the erasure of privately-owned land, and outlawing the claim to a Rusyn nationality eventually revealed the many negative facets of Soviet Communism (Csernicsko and Ferenc, 2014, 409). On a regional level, the genocide, ethnic cleansing, and mass migration patterns during World War II effectively simplified the ethnic map of the region. Smith and Cordell observe that, "...the notion of collective minority rights all but disappeared from the European agenda. In fact, it was...assumed that the issue had ceased to be of any importance or relevance to the modern world (2007, 341)." For decades, national or minority identities were suppressed, undiscussed, or erased under socialist governments. Annegret Haase reflects that, "Minorities...did not admit their ethnic or religious identity when it differed from the majority, stopped using their language in public, and felt neglected compared to the majority. At the same time, those that were a part of the diaspora often hid their identity from others, especially in Western countries, during this time period, which led to the loss of passing ethnography down to younger generations. Stateless nations with unrecognized boundaries especially suffered as individual cross-border contacts were essentially impossible (2017, 222)."

Czechoslovakia's new Communist policymakers rejected any idea of a Rusyn autonomous territory, and within a few years accepted the view that the population was – and should only be – recognized as Ukrainian (Halemba, 2015). A decade after this new regime began, in the 1960s, Rusyns who were desperate to escape poverty and suppression began to claim their identity as Slovak in order to migrate to Czechoslovakia, where conditions were better (Magocsi, 2018, 93). Several thousand Rusyns made this choice to claim an alternative and more official "political" identity, rather than maintain their ethnic identity as Rusyn, in order to seek a more comfortable lifestyle. Those who remained in Ukraine received little external help. Magocsi writes that overall, "Rusyn political involvement in Europe was essentially a first-generation phenomenon.

Since World War II, the vast majority of the older immigrants and their descendants were basically apolitical and had virtually no concern with the fate of the homeland when it was part of the communist-ruled Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union (2005, 92).” At the same time, United States leaders frankly took no interest in the plights of Eastern European minority populations during this time – their agenda was focused around missions that were on a national, ideological scale. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Rusyns consolidated to make another push for autonomy, but it was failed to be recognized by the Ukrainian government.

Currently, people in the homeland who identify as Rusyn struggle to agree on fundamental visions for autonomy, especially in the case of an official national language (Magocsi, 2015, 583). Rusyn organizations, such as those that are media or cultural, often operate with a dual nature: for example, in Ukraine, there are cultural organizations that reflected both “distinctly Rusyn” and “Rusyn-Ukrainian” orientations, and each village and town has their own dynamic in which one orientation is more visible than the other. Data collected by Kristina Cantin from individuals living in the region show that while people identify as Rusyn, they also feel an affinity to a larger Ukrainian, Slovak, or Polish entity, and experiences both of these as belonging to a larger East Slav whole. Furthermore, it is clear that the “structural boundary-making factors and actions of state-level politicians...do influence the identification possibilities of [these] people,” as Cantin found in her study that there is a contrast between the celebration of Rusyn culture between those in Slovakia and those in Ukraine – Rusyns in Slovakia are more prideful about being Rusyn than Rusyns in Ukraine (Cantin, 2013, 860). Literature does not provide an in-depth analysis of how the Carpatho-Rusyn diaspora, especially in the United States, relates to this spectrum of identities. However, it can be speculated that because of their

rapid assimilation to American culture and the minute size of the Carpatho-Rusyn region, they may too feel they have an identity to a larger, more general East Slav land.

Literature Review

Stateless Nations

Stateless nations create and maintain certain institutions to preserve and propel their history and culture, and furthermore, to validate the group in the eyes of the regional and international state community. Institutions can include entities such as governing bodies, religious groups, or cultural centers. They are essential in preserving both intangible pieces of culture, such as statutes or authoritative documents, and tangible parts of culture, such as dress, music, religion, and language.

Stateless nations maintain institutions so organized that they have the ability to petition for some form of legitimate governmental recognition. Many nations have undergone campaigns to gain political independence or sovereignty from the state or states of which they are a part. This process includes creating a separate governing body and set of laws, as well as the members of the nation becoming citizens of a completely new entity that would gain varying degrees of formal recognition or acceptance from states within the international community.

Other stateless nations, however, rather aim for political autonomy. Paul Robert Magocsi defines *autonomy* as self-rule that “assumes that a representative organ of a particular territory or region has the right to issue laws and decrees which become valid for that given territory. An autonomous region is not sovereign but exists within the framework of a higher legal-administrative body...a legal-administrative entity of a lower entity (2015, 578).” Defining this term is integral as many stateless nations overall have no desire to become a completely sovereign entity. In this sense, a larger governing power would still have authority over the stateless nation in question, but the autonomous facet would be able to function with semi-independence.

Indeed, while the binding of a stateless nation is found in the shared history and ethnicity of its individuals, one of their ultimate goals is to seek political recognition from those around them. Mylonas and Shelef argue that byproduct of the competitive environment in which these political movements are embedded may alter the group's rhetoric about the extent of the desired national state to meet immediate political challenges. While the movements of stateless nations are fundamentally political organizations, nationalist and cultural "myths" intertwine to increase the cohesion, unity, and mobilizational capacity of the groups as they resonate regardless of their artificiality. These legends and stories about the group has the power to influence opinions on what goals of the group are valuable and how they can be achieved (2014, 760). Others acknowledge the significance that nationalist and cultural myths can possess, but argue that while it enhances the mobilization of group discontent, it can hinder more permanent settlements as it has little to do with concrete political aims (Zimmerman, 2015, 45). Cultural beliefs can influence political aspirations, and political legitimacy has the potential to strengthen ones cultural sense of self. It is clear that the political and cultural spheres of a stateless nation are often intertwined in these processes.

Other literature seeks to examine other vehicles of success for these stateless nations. Kuntzsch argues that the success and survival of stateless nations are better understood through the use of violent strategies pursued by radical nationalist groups. Although the use of violence is ethically problematic, nationalists must present the nation as a victim of government oppression and their actions as a legitimate form of self-defense. This strategy has been proven successful by the Kosovo Liberation Army and Front de libération du Québec groups (2009). On the other hand, Moltchanova describes how if each state or non-state actor has an equal right to self-determination under the law, stateless nations are supplied with a legal framework that allows

them to assure their existence through peaceful and legitimate means. Because of this, “justifications of terrorism do not apply...the members of national groups cannot legitimately claim that they either have a just cause for asymmetrical warfare or that terrorism is their last resort in the response to a supreme emergency (2005, 206).” This “moderate” form of protest and, “...deliberate avoidance of violence [may] open a limited space for interaction with a non-democratic regime without repression and this in turn may encourage potential supporters to join activities,” as seen with the Kosovo Serb movement in the 1980s (Vladislavjevic, 2002). The contrast of these arguments presents that there is no clear framework for stateless nations to successfully gain political autonomy, especially when each group operates under different social, political, and economic positions at the time or location of their movement. The relationship between the objective and subjective, or the socio and technical, is thought-provoking and complex, and this partially explains the factors behind why gaining autonomy has been a long pathway for many stateless nations.

Diaspora

In its most basic form, a diaspora is a scattered population that has deviated from their original geographic homeland. It can be defined as “an imagined community of emigrants and their descendants dispersed from a professed homeland (Vertovec, 2009).” While descendants of emigrants have not personally experienced living in the homeland, they can still feel that their identity is associated with the geographic location of their ancestors. Furthermore, the homeland is professed by the diaspora itself, not by a state or another entity with governmental authority. Determining *who* gets to define the components of the diaspora is meaningful, and in this case, the diaspora does not have to belong to a geographic location that has internationally recognized

boundaries. Alexandra Alonso and Harris Mylonas discuss the positive relationship between literature on diasporas and the interpretation and use of the term, both in academic and in policy debates. Some use it as a term of endearment, while others problematize it, and some broaden its meaning while others employ it to describe a specific marker of identity such as ethnicity or religious group (2019, 484).

A diaspora of a state or nation may not seem of much significance in a modern, globalized age – however, their importance has proliferated within the last thirty years. Over half of all UN member states have developed some type of formal governmental institution dedicated to their diaspora, with a surge in this trend beginning in 1990. Alonso credits this to a regrowth in optimism regarding the relationship between migration and development – as cash transfers from emigrants to the homeland, “expanded to outstrip overseas development aid, interest grew in the potential for policy makers to harness... the resources of emigrants and their descendants (2014, 43).” In a broader sense, states use their diaspora engagement initiatives, according to Alonso, “...to help achieve an international ‘win-win-win’ outcome from migration, in which migrants exercise the freedom to move and benefit themselves materially (2014, 46).” The rise in diaspora prominence among states and their intergovernmental organizations has led to wider discussions on the topic, and, subsequently, challenges and modifications to the minutiae of the definition itself.

There are multiple factors that influence whether origin states decide to engage with their diasporas. The characteristics of the diaspora as a whole are especially significant: how big is the diaspora population? Are they geographically dispersed, or concentrated in specific areas in which their proximity encourages active engagement? Does the diaspora have the means to financially contribute to their origin state, and, furthermore, does the government have the

capacity to appeal to diaspora “elites” for investments? These are all aspects that an origin state will note when they consider the level of diasporic engagement. Other factors that influence state engagement of diasporas include the political nature of the regime in the origin country, as well as the role of the diaspora in its domestic or international affairs. The official and societal perceptions of emigration is also noteworthy: does the population look favorably upon the diaspora, or do they view them as disloyal? Is there a strong reliance on the emigrants’ economic investments and remittances? If so, states are much more likely to actively engage them to continue these transactions.

There is limited analysis as to why the *other* half of states lack some sort of policy regarding their diaspora, and this presents a multitude of critiques on the literature regarding state and nation diasporas. Alonso notes that the literature on state-diaspora relations is mostly single case and qualitative studies. While this has allowed analysts to establish common and meaningful terminologies and typologies to categorize diasporas and policies, there is still a need for more study, especially with comparisons of policy. Delano specifically comments on the need for comparing the roles of both origin and destination contexts, the experiences of migrants and non-migrants, and the experiences of groups included and excluded in official conceptions of diasporas within the literature. Furthermore, more quantitative studies are necessary, however, this is difficult as data on diasporas and their policy is either unavailable or unsuitable for broad-sample comparisons. Delano encourages a stronger influence of international norms, forums, and dialogues on migration and diaspora policies to remedy this issue, as they will proliferate and promote a more productive conversation and action toward development (2014, 52).

External factors also play a significant role in determining level of diaspora engagement. In an increasingly normative world, international norms mediating aspects of the state-diaspora relationship guides origin homelands in their policies toward the diaspora. Over half of UN member states maintain a type of formal governmental institution dedicated to their diaspora. These initiatives can either reinforce or undermine the relationship between the government and its citizens in the homeland as domestic policies are projected beyond territorial borders, but the international image of the nation-state could face a negative response if they are passive about their entire community. Alexandra Alonso believes all of these factors are significant in determining activity between a diaspora population and their homeland.

The relationships between state and diaspora are clear, but how do they differ from a nation and their diaspora? Many aspects between the two can clearly be shared, such as the idea of *transnationalism*. Alonso and Gamlen believe transnationalism is significant as it considers the “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states,” and it is “especially common across East and Southeastern Europe where current national boundaries reinforce ‘national homogenization’ within former Soviet administrative boundaries that cut through ethnic groups...[this shows that] state recognition of diasporas does not necessarily imply state capacity to engage or protect them...by prioritizing some groups over others, it may also reproduce existing exclusions among race, class, or gender lines (2019, 47).” Alonso and Gamlen provide the example of Russia’s justification of their 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula as they believe they have a responsibility to protect Russian “compatriots” wherever they live. To the authors, this reveals how many, “...enfranchising states have been not democracies but autocracies concerned about self-legitimation and surveillance of expatriate communities, rather than rights (2019, 48).”

The literature specifically regarding a unique relationship of stateless nations and their diaspora is sparse. The resource disparity between states and stateless nations is an additional factor to consider. States have the financial ability to implement diaspora engagement programs as well as international recognition and legitimate territorial authority that many stateless nations do not. This is because stateless nations may claim borders that are incongruent with those that are state-drawn and legitimate to other state actors. This complicates attempts at engagement as individuals that are a part of the diaspora may not officially claim that specific territory as part of their identity.

In the case of Poland, political transitions to a more democratic society have erased negative relations between border region institutions such as churches and have positive relations with neighboring states such as Ukraine. Societal implementation of independence have formed a, “very specific basis for reshaping inter-ethnic relations” within and without Poland. Haase notes it could be argued that, “actors within official contracts [such as Poland and Ukraine] show a willingness to view past conflicts pragmatically and devote priority to establishing good-neighborly relations, whereas at the local level there are still major obstacles to the normalization of inter-ethnic relations (2005, 221).” Indeed, the “Treaty between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine” declares that neither state has any intention to advocate for border changes, and refuse violence as a means to solve potential conflicts. This again contributes to the idea that states have a much less complicated experience in finding the legitimacy and resources to address their constituents compared to their stateless nation counterparts.

While success of an engagement process between a stateless nation and their diaspora may seem unattainable, Delano and others that have contributed to diaspora literature have found that the objectives of “sub-state actors” can actually lead to more positive reactions from their target

populations. She argues that, “Informal arrangements of diaspora engagement are often more successful at reaching the intended population, particularly when there are weak governing structures at the state level (2014, 485).” While motivations of stateless nations and other “sub-state actors” are often more meaningful to their diasporas, it will not matter if they do not have the resources to communicate effectively with their far-reaching populations in the first place. For example, transnational entities such as Euroregion’s are, “...hindered by a lack of financial support, acceptance, and transparency both within and without their larger states. In this vein, the potential to form a platform for ethnic and cultural dialogue is essentially unused (Haase, 2005, 222).” However, if a stateless nation has the resources necessary to legitimately and positively connect to a state, then it may work to their benefit. Keating argues that external interactions are actually of importance to stateless nations in their quests to gain autonomy, as external policy for non-state governments serves to secure support for cultural development and legitimizes nation-building as it places them in the wider family of nation-states or autonomous entities (2005, 708).

The United Nations, as well as other international organizations, have strongly advocated linking migration to the current international development agenda as they have strong implications in channeling developmental benefits of migration back to their origin states. In his survey, Ruben Ruiz-Rufino finds that having political parties that defend the interests of ethnic minority interests, including that of their diaspora, generated greater satisfaction than *not* having it. However, it is not enough for countries to provide the “bare minimum” – or, in other words, to simply provide political representation is that voice is ineffective in the larger government. Ruiz-Rufino comments that, “...in Ukraine...none of the major legal texts regarding the elections of political participation even mention the existence of ethnic minority groups (2013, 104).”Having

an organization with the capacity for active mobilization, as well as means of acknowledging ethnic political demands, increases satisfaction with democracy (2013, 110).

Overall, diaspora literature of stateless nations is lacking, and it can be implied, according to Delano, that much of this is due to typologies adopting a state-centric approach to their studies (2019, 486). While many factors clearly influence a stateless nation's autonomy status, concrete literature regarding their successes or failures is overall absent. One thing is for certain: those who are a part of stateless nations, both in the homeland and the diaspora, maintain a strong sense of pride in their clearly unique culture and identity still exist and will continue to fight for established recognition and eventual self-rule.

Political Opportunity Theory

Political opportunity theory, also known as political opportunity structure, is a theory-based approach that argues that the success or failure of movements is influenced primarily by certain social factors. The theory assumes that success comes from openings within the political structure that increase the likelihood of goal achievement, rather than from social movements themselves (Zimmerman, 2015). Different scholars emphasize different aspects of the theory throughout the literature, but it almost always includes the degree of popular access to the political system, level of political repression, stability levels of elite members within the movement, and the presence of external allies in the homeland and diaspora (Tarrow 1989, Lichbach 1998). It is difficult for actors to anticipate a shift in the existing system that may create an opportunity for them to be successful, therefore, they must be equipped with short-term strategic calculations (Krisei, 1995). This is because political opportunity structure is based on resources that are "external" to the group – they are not driving the events that create the

opportunity but can merely react to them (and are more likely to be successful under a specific set of conditions).

The degree of popular access to the political system is one aspect of political opportunity structure (POS). Are citizens educated on the current political situation in their territory? Do they have the resources to make ethical political decisions, or the freedom to partake in aspects of the political process? And furthermore, are they unsatisfied *enough* with the current political regime that they are willing to mobilize and encourage others to do the same? Vladislavjevic notes that, "...ordinary people in most periods lack resources to seriously contest the power of political elites and only changes in opportunities may reduce this imbalance of resources and trigger collective action (2002, 773)." All of these considerations are relevant to the degree of popular access to the political system and can change throughout time and place based on the amount of communication and technology available for those citizens to do so.

Another factor to consider is the stability of political alignments within the system. "Political processes, institutions, and alignments thus set the context for the strategic interaction of a movement with its allies and opponents in civil society and the state (Lichbach, 1998, 88)." If political alignments are unstable, this creates a greater opportunity for social movements to make more of an impact. Elites within the system that are aligned with one another in their interests is another factor and be considerable in this case as they can provide organizational expertise or offer protection from repression. This is especially important in non-democratic states where ordinary people do not have access to the same resources (Vladislavjevic, 2002). These elites can also be a voice for the people and use their platform to mobilize them, whether it is to become more involved in their culture, the political process, and so on.

One critique of political opportunity structure is that it lacks in operationalization (Meyer 2002). Critics have noted that there is a gap between the POS model and the reality of social movements because of its broad framework. The POS model has been countered most prominently with the collective action research program (CARP), a rationalist's competing approach that collective endeavors often involve public good and Prisoner's Dilemma elements, as well as predicting that less than five percent of supporters of a cause will actually become involved in it. These theorists also, "...recognize that groups always contain within-tradition conflicts which have major impacts on collective action...[and] the effects of the key operative and inoperative CA processes. This leads to the intended consequences of group mobilization: new institutions, policies, and programs desired by dissidents that help re-legitimize the social order (Lichbach, 1998)." While scholars have attempted to synthesize political opportunity structure and collective action research (Lichbach 1998), it is noted that there is a difference between structure and agency.

Recently, there have been attempts to link political opportunity structure to ethnic mobilization. Hooghe (2005) analyzed this relationship with ethnic groups in Belgium and concluded that ethnic associations are currently too fragmented to be able to agree on a clear political agenda, or become a powerful political actor outside of concentrated urban areas such as Brussels. This study revealed that, "the literature on ethnic mobilization, and the research tradition on social movements, have largely ignored one another (1988)," and that the application of this concept must be further developed.

Cultural Maintenance

For this paper, I adopted Matsumoto's definition of culture, which describes the term as, "the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next (1996, 16)." In this sense, culture is such as much an individual psychological construct as it is a social, group construct, as individual differences can be observed among people in the degree to which they adopt and engage in the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that, by consensus constitute their culture (1996, 18)." Cultural maintenance is simply the degree to which a certain group preserves and sustains its own culture. This can and must be done in several different ways.

Language can be an important aspect of cultural maintenance. Some believe language to be the, "...most important element that defines a people, or that it is, in essence, the very embodiment of a people (Magocsi, 2005, 215)." Spoken language, the language taught in schools, and the language of publications encompass lifestyle and communication and is often passed down from generation to generation. Those who speak a language that is *not* the official language of the state or nation, or the majority language, may face a unique set of implications. For example, goals to insert these territorial economies, "...into the global trading order requires a command of state-wide and international languages. Language is thus an important factor in the minority-national /global interface (Keating, 1997, 701)." Not having a grasp of the majority language may stifle a group's effort toward being legitimized in the world order, among other shortcomings. However, that is not every stateless nation or ethnic group's goal. In his observation of Chechens of Jordan who speak Chechen among other members of their ethnic group, Dweik concluded that their positive attitude toward both their ethnic language and homeland allows them to view the language as a symbol of their identity and, in turn, strengthens

a sense of cultural maintenance. This is also bolstered by factors such as the existence of cultural islands and close neighborhoods, as well as the use of the language in the home and community from a young age (Dweik, 2000).

Other literature focuses on the role language plays in the ethnic group. For the Malaysian Sindhis, the group does not feel that they require a language-based identity. Through the use of an extensive questionnaire, it is observed that their maintenance is rather based on other entities of culture such as religion, kinship and social ties, and awareness of a persecuted past (Khemlani-David, 1974). Analysis of ethnic minority groups in Australia show that other factors of culture such as a collectivist family orientation supported language maintenance for some groups, while others were more reliant on ethnic schools and other community structures (Hudson et. al., 2001). Each of these groups are comparable to the Rusyns in that they have been in existence for several centuries and have a distinct identity that is maintained in spite of being surrounded by other groups. These cases present the idea that language use or preservation is not *necessary* for strong cultural maintenance. However, this implication does not diminish the level of importance language can often possess among the members of a stateless nation or ethnic group, and this level of importance can shift over time.

Language use and maintenance can differ for those in the diaspora, as subsequent generations can develop a duality in which they feel ethnically connected to both the country in which they were raised and the country from which their ancestors arrived. The Hungarian community in Queensland, Australia is shown to maintain high levels of traditional language use. Hungarians attach great value to their language and intergenerational language maintenance is bolstered by a strong sense of a Hungarian identity. Furthermore, the development of dual identities, or identifying as Australian *and* Hungarian, does not necessarily lead to language shift. This dual

identity can be an positive rather than a negative force in the development of bilingualism (Hatoss, 2003). In another research study, the Armenian diaspora in Lebanon was shown to have a decrease in ethnic language competence due to lack of exposure to the language. The data presented that while the older interviewees lamented this reality, the younger interviewees accept it as natural. Indeed, "...generational disparities in attitudes and perceptions demonstrate that along with the significant changes in the way different generations of Armenians grasp the meaning of...their ethno-cultural identity, there are also considerable differences regarding feelings of loyalty to their ancestral language, homeland, and heritage (Jebejian, 2007)." These contrasting studies present another instance of how language is viewed differently depending on the culture.

Vehicles of cultural preservation are also essential in culture maintenance, and this includes aspects of culture such as education, strong cultural societies, functioning religious institutions, publications such as books and newspapers, and an overall sense of national organization among the community. This is not an exhaustive list of examples but all of these are certainly important in maintaining culture. Population diffusion is another important element of cultural maintenance because this can bolster *or* tarnish a sense of national organization. If a population is *too* diffused and doesn't have adequate tools to communicate or are not regularly interacting with other members of their group, they are more likely to fall away from their people. In the sense of language, when people within a diaspora regularly use their ethnic language, generations can develop a duality in which they feel ethnically connected to both the country in which they were raised and the country from which their ancestors arrived. Regardless of identifying with diaspora or homeland in maintaining culture, remaining connected as a group is important in propelling the culture forward, and it can be done through these aspects.

This, like economies, can also differ depending on the border structure of the stateless nation. Stateless nations located within one state border can use a more consolidated approach to working with the larger state government to develop policies or institutions directed at the stateless nation community. If a stateless nation is spread across multiple state borders, each state may implement different policies or allocate different sums of finances toward cultural institutions and programs. This is clear in the case of the Rusyns, where certain states such as Slovakia view the Rusyns as a legitimate, distinct stateless nation group, while Ukrainians view their Rusyn population as a sub-ethnic group of Ukrainians and therefore do not engage with the populations to create a strong sense of cultural maintenance. Overall, are stateless nations with high levels of cultural maintenance more likely to be successful in their attempts to gain autonomy? Lichbach notes that cultural frames, “principally affect community solutions, such as common values, because culture defines preferences and beliefs (1998).” This, in addition to the evidence embedded in the literature regarding the topic, presents the idea that culture and cultural maintenance *is* necessary for stateless nations (or any group) to be successful in reaching community solutions.

Economic Functioning

Stateless nations maintain economies which operate within the bounds of their state economy and the larger international economy; they are not separate entities. However, the specific cultural norms and values of the stateless nation can influence its economic functioning and output. This culture may also have economic effects by fostering collective identity, thereby facilitating the production of public goods. It may encourage the maintenance of collective

identity in the face of the international market (Keating, 1997, 701). This, in turn, influences a stateless nation's push for autonomy.

Keating argues that economic change and free trade undermine arguments against nationalism because it implies a lessened dependence on the state of which they are a part. This promotion of the "local" economy depends on the ability of the group to mobilize resources behind its development. For example, Quebec's "Quebec Inc." project was created in the 1960s as a coalition of government and business actors committed to expanding Quebec's presence in the North American economy. However, in Scotland, local business ownership declined throughout the 20th century, leaving them increasingly dependent on British industrialization and policy. Scotland is also lacking in its own institutions of self-government, which limits their role (Keating, 706). A balance must be found in promotion of the group's economy, as integration into the global economy would make them subject to costly trading rules, so it is clear that analyzing capacity of the group must be realistic.

There is little analysis of the impact of the economy on autonomy movements before the 20th century. However, present autonomy movements may provide implications regarding factors of possible importance. Peitzker et. al. notes that European regions currently seeking autonomy are among the wealthiest in their respective states and outperform the national average in terms of per capita income. This is necessary because the undertaking of this movement is almost always accompanied by the risk of creating a weakened economy. However, "...these risks have decreased for smaller countries; paradoxically, this is especially due to European integration. After all, access to the single European market and the option of eurozone membership reduce some of the fundamental disadvantages that would otherwise be faced...(Peitzker et. al., 2015, 2)."

Could this integration into the greater system be compared to state or regional integration into the industrial market in the 19th century? Considering that those states who were most industrialized were the most economically prosperous at this time, this may be a reasonable parallel to draw. However, Peitzker et. al. argue that even if the region was granted immediate membership of the single European market and the eurozone, there would be a number of potential financial disadvantages such as higher costs of borrowing, financial burdens from the assumption or distribution of “legacy debt,” and a disruption in trade (Peitzker et. al., 2015). The stateless nations that have succeeded in gaining any political leverage, “...tend to be economically or otherwise privileged, so they have tools to strengthen their political power, over and above their electoral weight (Hooghe, 2005, 986).”

Furthermore, these successful economies of stateless nations, such as Quebec or modern European stateless nations, are often concentrated within one state border. Those stateless nations that possess a community transcending multiple state lines have a much more complicated operating procedure as they must work within the bounds of each of their states, who may not be willing to coordinate or cooperate for this population. Those who only operate under one state economy clearly have a much more consolidated system, which streamlines the path to success. The same cannot be said for those that do not have advanced levels of industrialization or trade as well as economic mobility under multiple state borders. It is clear that stateless nations must attempt to reach their goals through different procedures depending on their border structure.

The aspects of political opportunity structure, cultural maintenance, and economic functioning all consistently interact to produce varying levels of success in a movement. The level of political legitimacy that a stateless nation can gain through the political opportunity

structure can influence how much they can improve their sense of culture or economic functioning. Strong economics can create political legitimacy or access to cultural improvements across the territory. Cultural maintenance can make a group feel more unified behind a common goal and can impact their pushes to strengthen their place in the political and economic realms. Each of these values are fluid and depend not only on the time and space, but external factors that may influence their impact. Each member of a group is affected by these three factors and their sub-factors. The three groups mainly examined in this thesis are the elites of the group, the general population of the group, and the groups diaspora.

Methodology

Research Design and Case Selection

The purpose of this study is to assess the factors that have stifled the attempts of the Carpatho-Rusyn stateless nation in gaining political autonomy. I chose to study the Carpatho-Rusyns because I myself am Rusyn. My mother's ancestors emigrated to the United States from the Slovak village of Kamienska, and my father's ancestors emigrated to the United States from the southern Poland and the northern Slovak village of Jarabina. I was raised in the Carpatho-Rusyn Orthodox Church and celebrated my cultural heritage with my family and friends from a young age. While my personal connection was a motivating factor for me to choose this study, the Carpatho-Rusyns are also a vastly understudied group, which also motivated me to conduct research. Although they are located in the heart of Europe, they are largely unrecognized, especially to those outside of Europe. Their political plight throughout history is both similar to other groups and unique in its own ways.

This thesis employs a qualitative research design in order to examine the hypothesis. While it analyzes the Carpatho-Rusyn autonomy attempts through various factors, using a qualitative research design was the best fit for this thesis as it enabled me to draw subjective conclusions rather than attempt to make implications based on quantified evidence. I will assess the success the of autonomy attempts of the Carpatho-Rusyns through three factors, each with a number of subfactors. The first factor is political opportunity structure, which is evaluated through four sub-factors: degree of popular access to the political system, level of political repression, the stability of elite members of the movement, and the presence of external allies, all both in the homeland and the diaspora. The second factor is cultural maintenance, which is evaluated through the use of the ethnic language, vehicles of cultural preservation, and

population diffusion, all both in the homeland and the diaspora. The third and final factor is economic functioning, which is assessed through the local level of industrialization, trade with outsiders, and the potential for individual economic mobility. Because this thesis does employ a qualitative design and is more subjective, I use the sub-factors to create some level of standardization between all three time periods. These sub-factors are analyzed across time and space: in looking at each attempt, they are compared to other entities at that same period of time, *and* they are compared to the other two pushes for autonomy. I gathered information on these factors through extensive research. My knowledge of Carpatho-Rusyn history that informs much of this discussion could not have been possible without P.R. Magocsi, the leading expert and author in the Carpatho-Rusyn field. I was also assisted by other scholars on different aspects of the Rusyn nation as well as surrounding regions and groups.

One limitation of this study was that I cannot speak, read, or write Rusyn or many of the languages in which articles about them are written, such as Slovak, Polish, and Ukrainian. While I do have an intermediate level of proficiency in the Russian language, there were not many articles in Russian that were of relevance. Because of this, I could not reference perspectives not in English, which are arguably of importance because they are more likely to be of those experiencing a Rusyn lifestyle.

The effects of COVID-19 were also a limitation of this study. I was most hindered by the cancellation of the Studium Carpato-Ruthenorum, a month-long summer program at the University of Prešov in Slovakia exclusively on Carpatho-Rusyn language, ethnography, and culture. Because of the cancellation, I was not able to personally or professionally connect with many of the leading experts in the field who teach at the Ruthenorum, as well as interact with the authentic, living Rusyn culture in Eastern Europe. In addition to this cancellation, I was

hindered by the cancellation of in-person university classes, which would have given me more opportunities to connect with my professors and fellow honors capstone peers about the thesis. Although I still had virtual access to these individuals, meetings were less frequent compared to the first two semesters of the project. Nevertheless, I was still able to gain valuable insight from each of them as well as all of the scholarly articles to which I had access.

A final limitation within my study is that the available range of literature on Carpatho-Rusyns is minimal. It was incredibly difficult to locate articles of a scholarly nature on Carpatho-Rusyns that would allow me to consult varying perspectives on the region. Those articles and books that I was able to use were extremely helpful in terms of helping me to learn more about the history and culture of Rusyns, and this is clear throughout the thesis as these authors are cited many times. This thesis may have been able to be more comprehensive if the available literature was not lacking in terms of critical analysis, differing perspective, and also scholarly.

My hypothesis is that stateless nations that maintain high levels of cultural maintenance, economic functioning, and facets of the political opportunity structure are more likely to be successful in their attempts to gain autonomy than those stateless nations that do not. My independent variables are the factors of political opportunity structure, economic prosperity, and cultural maintenance and their sub-factors. My dependent variable is the level of autonomy. The chart below (Table 1) provides a succinct overview of each of the sub-factors during the period of time. I then describe each of them in detail in the next three chapters.

	1848	1918-1939	1990s
Political opportunity structure	-degree of popular access to political system: low -level of political repression: moderate -stable elites: moderate -presence of elite external allies: low	-degree of popular access to political system: moderate <i>-more in diaspora, less in homeland</i> -level of political repression: moderate -stable elites: high -presence of elite external allies: high	-degree of popular access to political system: high -political repression: moderate <i>-more in homeland, less in diaspora</i> -stable elites: high -presence of elite external allies: moderate
Cultural maintenance	-language spoken: yes -vehicles of cultural preservation: no -diaspora/ diffused population: no	-language spoken: yes -vehicles of cultural preservation: high -diaspora/diffused population: yes	-language spoken: somewhat -vehicles of cultural preservation: moderate -diaspora/diffused population: yes
Economic functioning	-industrialized local economy: no trade with outsiders: no -individual economic mobility: low	-industrialized local economy: moderate -trade with outsiders: no -individual economic mobility: moderate <i>-more in diaspora, less in homeland</i>	-industrialized local economy: moderate -trade with outsiders: no -individual economic mobility: moderate <i>-more in diaspora, less in homeland</i>
Level of Success	No success in gaining autonomy. <i>However, movement was a catalyst for elites to develop vehicles of cultural maintenance that would strengthen the next movement.</i>	Qualified success in gaining autonomy. <i>Not granted desired level of autonomy until state government was weakened by Nazi Germany – and the system was short-lived due to the onset of World War II.</i>	No success in gaining autonomy. <i>State government would not acknowledge the legitimacy of the vote for autonomy although it took place in a free and fair election.</i>

Table 1

Failure to Achieve Autonomy: 1848-1850

Political opportunity structure

Degree of popular access to political system: low

Level of political repression: moderate

Stability within elites: high

Presence of elite external allies: low

Cultural maintenance

Language spoken across homeland: yes

Clear vehicles of cultural preservation: no

Diaspora/diffused population: no

Economic functioning

Industrialized local economy: no

Economic mobility: low

Trade with external entities: no

Success in achieving autonomy?: no

The Revolutions of 1848 were the first clear opportunity for Carpatho-Rusyns to gain political autonomy as ethnic minorities rejected the supremacy of the Habsburg Empire and pushed to carry out the agendas of their own peoples after decades of increasing nationalism. Leaders across the region convened at the Slavic Congress of 1848 to assert their claims to nationality under Habsburg rule. At this time, Rusyns existing in the province of Galicia, a Habsburg-controlled Polish region where Lemkos (as well as other ethnic populations like Poles and Jews) resided, were the only Rusyns to be represented at the council. The Rusyn Sobor and

the Supreme Ruthenian Council had the goal of supporting a Russian orientation to preserve their nationality, but others at the Congress, such as the Poles, felt threatened by this prospect. The Rusyn delegates countered this with demands to divide Galicia into an eastern, Rusyn half, and a western, Polish half. This was rejected and resulted in a Polish-Rusyn compromise that, “...stipulated that Galicia would remain undivided [in terms of nationality] until appropriate decisions were taken by the local Diet, both nations having equal rights, especially language-wise; the official language in regional offices and schools would be one spoken by the majority of inhabitants of that region (New World Encyclopedia).” Though this was not a direct petition to the Habsburg Empire regarding autonomy, the compromise proves that Rusyns had a stake in the politics of the region as a distinct group.

Elsewhere, other political leaders simultaneously aimed to maintain Rusyn culture through language preservation. Adolf Dobrians’kyi, a mining engineer from central Slovakia, also participated in the Slavic Congress of 1848 and became a “political leader” for Rusyns throughout the region as a whole. Dobrians’kyi worked with activists in Prešov to create a memorandum outlining a distinct “Rusyn crownland” in which Rusyns of Hungary, Galicia, and Bukovina would be united. Although this was rejected, Dobrians’kyi was able to secure a position as civil commissar and use his influence to submit a second petition ten months later in October of 1849. This petition was signed by thirteen Rusyn civic activists, and while it left out demands to unite with those in Galicia and Bukovina, it did include requests to introduce the Rusyn language into schools, governments, and public signs within the administrative unit (Magocsi, 121-23, 2005). The Austrian imperial government *did* approve the demands of Dobrians’kyi and appointed him as administrator of the new Uzhorod District. However, the entity only lasted from October 1849 to March of 1850. While this district only lasted for several

months, “its very existence implanted in the mindset of local civic and cultural activists the view that Carpatho-Rusyns were a distinct people deserving of autonomy (Magocsi, 2015, 580).”

Political Opportunity Structure

The developments in 1848 were significant in terms of political representation for Rusyns and contributed to their first push for autonomy. Although the initial goal of orienting themselves with Russia and dividing Galicia was not fulfilled at the Slavic Congress of 1848, it showed that Rusyn leaders were coordinating to carry out political aims and could legitimately advocate for themselves on a state level. In fact, it is claimed that petitions were created and signed by individuals throughout the region for the division of Galicia. The exact number of signatures is unknown, and scholars admit that the manner in which the petition was recorded by contemporaries was “ambivalent” as many of the forms contain no more than long lists of names, or a cross instead of a signature as many did not yet know how to read or write. While the Galician population mostly contained peasants with a low level of literacy, which was enough to put the significance of the petition in favor of partition into doubt, these claims still present the possibility of some level of political mobilization across the general populace (Osterkamp, 2016).

The compromise also allowed Lemko Rusyns in Galicia to preserve their language, one of the most prevalent manifestations of culture and clear indicators of a distinct nationality, within their region. It also protected their right to speak, teach, and publish the language. These initial developments regarding language standardization paved the way for improvements even at the local level, as those who held political office in regions such as Galicia were able to allot funding for Rusyns and enabled them to create entities such as, “...political parties, civic organizations,

cultural societies, and a wide range of newspapers and other publications (Magocsi, 2005, 132).” This shows the clear interconnectivity of culture and political goals.

Magocsi reflects that even though Carpatho-Rusyns achieved significance in their short-lived autonomous territory, this only, “...made an impression and remained in the collective consciousness of educated Carpatho-Rusyn society (2005, 127).” Other, “ordinary” Rusyns were overall lacking in terms of the degree of popular access to the political system. Throughout the 19th century, the majority of Rusyns lacked the knowledge required to legitimately become part of the political process for autonomy or even understand what was at stake. However, it was this same point when a clear sense of identity crystalized for the elites within their community, and those individuals responded to this by creating works that diffused throughout the region over the next several decades and helped Rusyns reach a greater level of success in their second major push for autonomy. These high levels of unity among the elite members of Rusyn society played a major role in the extent of the group’s success. For example, Dobrians’kyi had support from Slovak local and national activists, the Greek Catholic Bishop of Prešov, and the Supreme Rusyn Council in his memorandum to Emperor Franz Joseph (Magocsi, 121, 2005). This was the first significant instance of Rusyns from multiple districts coming together to achieve a set of common goals based on their sense of nationality.

This coordination can be juxtaposed with the vulnerability of the existing political system, another factor of political opportunity structure which played a role in success. These elites, especially Dobrians’kyi, “...entered public life at a time when their Hungarian rulers were completely subordinated to Vienna and at a time when the Austrian imperial government felt it advantageous...to give token support and encouragement to...peoples within their realm [including Carpatho Rusyns] (Magocsi, 128, 2005).” Furthermore, the “Spring of Nations”

promoted national awakenings across the European continent and weakened the monarchy's hold on their subjects. However, there was little to no presence of elite allies on a state or monarchy level that advocated for the Rusyns, which is where the group fell short. While many Habsburg leaders advocated for Rusyn freedoms within their own kingdom, they were unwilling to end its territorial unity.

Cultural Maintenance

Overall, low levels of cultural maintenance during 1848 contributed to the short-lived, disunified autonomous region of 1849. Most spoke some dialect of Rusyn, which was culturally significant (Magocsi, Rusinko), and the population was hardly diffused as motivations for emigration had not yet appeared. At the same time, Rusyns did not yet create tangible institutions for promotion of their distinct cultural identity, and most lived in small isolated villages that did not allow for communication among average Rusyn communities. Magocsi describes the cultural base of the Rusyns as "rudimentary" during this time period (2005). Rusinko argues that there were four major factors that halted Rusyns from reaching full autonomy in regards to culture development: inadequacy of education, lack of national organization, paucity of books, and scarcity of nationally minded individuals (2003).

Rusyns did possess two influential political and cultural leaders that ignited cultural developments, both shortly after the Spring of Nations and over the next several decades. Dobrians'kyi worked closely with the Greek Catholic priest Aleksander Dukhnovych to promote a distinct Rusyn identity to those of a lower socioeconomic class. Dukhnovych published school textbooks on Rusyn language and grammar and established a literary society that sponsored several publications, each encompassing different forms of text such as literature, poems, and

plays. Dukhnovych was a Russophile, which meant that he considered Rusyns to be a branch of the Russian nationality, but used Rusyn as the standard language in his writing, therefore making his ideas more accessible to the population within the region. At this point, many still could not read or write at an advanced level and had never formally studied the Rusyn language, but Dukhnovych's works were intended for, "schoolchildren and semi-literate peasants (Magocsi, 2005, 125)." Dukhnovych worked individuals who represented different identities within the Rusyn population, among them priests, student, and even women. It is noted that, "Their literary sophistication and artistic technique were uneven, but they were united by patriotic and poetic enthusiasm, and in this respect, their work fulfilled Dukhnovych's goal of manifesting the soul of the Rusyn people (Rusinko, 1999)."

Furthermore, closer analysis of Dukhnovych's literary work reveals that he understood the "liminal" nature of Rusyn culture, but also that it was still essential to create external relationships for the nation's survival (Rusinko, 1999). The efforts of Dobrians'kyi and Dukhnovych presents the interconnected nature of politics and culture. Through their literary works, Dobrians'kyi and Dukhnovych were able to simultaneously create high levels of cultural maintenance among the population *and* the foundations of political mobilization that would continuously increase in the next several decades. These eventually led to entities such as village reading rooms, and *bursas*, self-governing educational and cultural societies aimed at promoting Rusyn culture, which were particularly formative for young people. While all of these were vehicles through which Rusyns were encouraged to maintain a distinct identity, these developed too late to make an impact on the autonomy movement of 1848 – rather, the movement itself was a catalyst for these evolutions throughout the latter half of the 19th century.

Economic Functioning

Many Rusyns lived simple lifestyles as farmers or herders due to the isolated, rural areas in which they resided. Rusyns remained serfs to Hungarian and Polish landlords until 1848 due to their ethnic minority status. Even after their liberation from serfdom, this status allowed little economic mobility, and as a result, most remained agricultural workers to the same landlords for many more years. Much of their plight was also dependent on topography – those who lived in high, arid mountain villages were more prone to conditions of poverty as a result of subsistence-level farming and consistent poor harvests. In contrast, those who lived in the foothills of the mountains were able to both experience better climate conditions and more versatile agricultural technologies (Magocsi, 2005).

Similar to cultural maintenance, low levels of economic prosperity hurt the Rusyns in their attempt to gain autonomy. Regardless of location, Rusyn serfs were emancipated just a few months before Dobrians'kyi made an individual push for autonomy, which gave them no time to rise in socioeconomic class status. In addition, the regions in which Rusyns lived were still unindustrialized at this time. Their rural lifestyles could not compete with regions elsewhere in Europe, and no elite members of the Rusyn community possessed the economic influence to garner expensive resources for the movement. Furthermore, Rusyns were not interacting with other regions in terms of trade. All of these factors combine to display that the Rusyn economy did not contribute, and in fact, may have hurt, the group's push for autonomy in 1848.

Overall, the Rusyns failed to gain autonomy during this time. They had low values of each factor and their subfactors. While a consolidated population who spoke the same language was significant in that they were connected under the same larger powers, elite, educated Rusyns were the only group within this population to have clear goals to reach autonomy. The failure to

gain autonomy in 1848 does not negate the amount of progress that they made in such a short amount of time, however. The movement ignited the first instance of significant movement toward cultural consolidation and inspired many Rusyns to become involved in local politics. Rusinko mentions that the many successes that the Rusyns made during this period need to, “...be judged today in the context of a century’s experience of national cultural liberation (2003, 112).” It is clear that the movement was a failure in the sense of reaching the end goal as Rusyns did not attain their immediate goal of autonomy, but it *did* act as a catalyst as the group instead made long-term developments over the next several decades that set them up for a stronger push at the end of World War I.

Qualified Success in the Interwar Period

Political opportunity structure

Degree of popular access to political system: moderate

Stability or elites: high

Presence of allies: high

Level of political repression: moderate

Cultural maintenance

Vehicles of cultural preservation: high

Language spoken: yes

Diaspora/diffused population: yes

Economic functioning

Individual economic mobility: moderate

Trade with external entities: no

Level of industrialization: moderate

Success in achieving autonomy?: yes

Throughout World War I, Carpatho-Rusyns in the homeland and the diaspora closely followed military and political developments, which allowed them to organize their political activity and eventually petition for autonomy when it was over. This was another instance of political opportunity that the Rusyns faced – only this time, they were prepared to act on it as a unit.

At the same time, the government of Budapest created Rus' ka Kraina, an autonomous entity within Hungarian borders in an effort to retain Rusyn-inhabited lands within Hungary, desperate

to retain the borders of the prewar kingdom (Kupensky, 2019). Current literature agrees that “the Rus Land” was compelled to transform the republic into a Bolshevik-ruled entity as the leaders of the new independent republic of Hungary feared for lack of legitimacy and punishment after defeat in World War I. The territory included land in both present-day Slovakia and Ukraine and would be comprised of five counties (Magocsi, 2015, 581). Rus’ ka Kraina was nonetheless created, but did not become the territory for the majority of Rusyns.

At the same time, the Czechoslovak countered the Hungarian’s offer to the Rusyns with Ruskinko: a similarly autonomous Rusyn entity within the borders of Czechoslovakia if they would join them in their new state. Through his connections as a legal representative for General Motors, Rusyn-American advocate Gregory Zhatkovych was able to secure a meeting with United States President Woodrow Wilson to discuss Rusyn aspirations in 1918. Zhatkovych’s initial proposal to President Wilson was a memorandum that suggested the creation of a completely independent Carpatho-Rusyn state. While Wilson rejected this proposal, he *did* agree to the establishment of an autonomous entity within the newly formed Czechoslovakia. News of this “Scranton Resolution” spread among the Rusyn-American community, who eventually had the opportunity to indirectly vote for this plan through delegates of their leading brotherhood organizations, and received 68% of the vote. Even more exciting was the initial cooperation of newly installed Czechoslovak President Tomas Masaryk, who was actually the individual to suggest the referendum be held.

In the end, the Rusyn people chose the Czechoslovak option after meeting at the Central Rusyn National Council in May of 1919 (Magocsi, 2015, 581). This autonomous territory would not encompass all of Carpatho-Rus’, which was why leaders around the region were also coordinating, establishing numerous national councils that influenced and informed each other

throughout the peacemaking processes of post-World War I. A majority of Rusyn-Americans as well as local leaders in the Old Country were extremely satisfied with this new Rusyn province in the state as they expected it to soon become a “third state” within Czechoslovakia.

This newly established Carpatho-Rusyn region within Czechoslovakia was the most decisive for the community as up to 70% of Rusyns in the homeland were citizens there. Furthermore, it is clear that, “The expectation was that Carpatho-Rusyns would receive full autonomy in a Czechoslovak federation (Magocsi, 2005, 178).” At this time, Carpatho-Rusyns were confident that they had the organization and determination required to maintain any autonomous political entity – but, as before, larger powers had other intentions. As more and more time passed from the decision that made in 1918, the Czechoslovak government eventually decided that Rusyns were not “politically mature” enough to effectively maintain their own government and transition from provisional to autonomous. The reality in Subcarpathian Rus’ was such a contrast from what was originally promised that Zhatkovych resigned from his position as governor of the region less than one year later.

Perhaps much of Zhatkovych’s frustration stemmed from his experience in the American political system, as when he initially made agreements with President Wilson and President Masaryk, he assumed that Subcarpathian Rus’ would be comparable to a state within the United States. However, it was never specified that the region required its own representative government and governor. Instead, it was directed by a Czech vice-governor who was always appointed by the central government in Prague. Even when the administrative structure of the Czechoslovak government was revised almost a decade later in 1928, governors of the region, just as Zhatkovych before them, were not much more than figureheads (Magocsi, 2005). This

was particularly frustrating to leaders both within the region and those in the United States as they felt fully capable of administering Subcarpathian Rus'.

Those within Subcarpathian Rus' enjoyed many freedoms, yet still pushed for their promised autonomy, throughout the interwar period. This came to a head at the end of 1938. Magocsi describes that, "In the wake of the Munich Pact and a weakened Czechoslovakia, the central government in Prague conceded to demands of the leaders...(2005, 271)." Subcarpathian Rus' proceeded to endure a tumultuous five months filled with constant exchanges of power, threats of violence, and conflicting interests. This began when Subcarpathian Rus' was granted an autonomous government, but this endeavor only lasted two weeks after the frustrated Premier Andrei Brodii attempted to annex the region into Hungary and was subsequently dismissed along with the rest of the cabinet. A week after new Premier Avhustyn Voloshyn was installed, the agreements of the new Vienna Award cut off Subcarpathian Rus' administrative centers and two largest cities from the rest of the region's inhabitants. As a result of this, Hungary attacked Subcarpathian Rus' multiple times in an attempt to destabilize international boundaries that frustrated them during the interwar period (Magocsi, 2005).

Weakened by both physical and cultural attacks and faced with inevitable occupation by Hungary, the Subcarpathian Rus' government symbolically declared their independence as the state of Carpatho- Ukraine one day before it was overtaken by the Hungarian Army. Carpatho-Rusyns would go on to be broken up under multiple states during World War II and after absorbed into the Soviet Union.

Political Opportunity Structure

Magocsi writes that, “Even when it was clear that their permanent home really was to be the United States, the Old-World experience with politics in which the fate of Carpatho-Rusyns was usually decided by others led many of them to maintain a negative and pessimistic view of the political process (2005, 83).” This, coupled with lack of education and representation, meant that there was no true advocate for the rights and advancement of Rusyns and other Slavic minorities, with whom they were often lumped together, in the United States. This is why Rusyns turned to the politics of their homeland. It is noted that after World War I and throughout the interwar period, Rusyns gained a sudden political self-confidence and had no desire to fall back on the politics of other nationalities, but rather, were motivated to further their own interests (Fedinec, 2011). The degree of popular access to the political system was significantly increased during this period of time, especially in the diaspora. This is made clear in those who emigrated to the United States and created communities, and eventually, formed churches and fraternal societies.

These organizations enabled diasporic Rusyns to still have popular access to the political system and events impacting their homeland. This was done through things such as collecting money for those affected by World War I in the “Old Country,” or publicizing accounts of their struggles for other Rusyn-Americans to consume. Many also joined industrial or labor unions because of their work in steel mills or coal mines, and it was here that a sense of class-consciousness, social and ethnic solidarity, and national awareness grew (Silvestri, *The Medium*). All of these vehicles engaged Rusyn-Americans in the popular political process and played one of the greatest roles in the process the group undertook to attempt to achieve autonomy.

While the sheer percentage of involvement was significant, the presence of elite Rusyns who advocated for autonomy played an equally important role. The American National Council of Uhro-Rusins were other Rusyn-American political elites that united the many smaller associations and societies in the summer of 1918. This council actually engaged the Rusyn-American populace in their political workings by voting, as their representatives, regarding President Wilson's plan for Rusyn autonomy within Czechoslovakia. This was a clear marker of political organization and coordination among Rusyn national organizations. The American National Council of Uhro-Rusins also appointed Gregory Zatkovich as their face of the movement. Zatkovich was not only young, charismatic, and well-connected, but made tangible political strides for Rusyns immediately following World War I – after meeting with President Woodrow Wilson, he led a delegation at the Paris Peace Conference and was able to secure the “Czechoslovak solution.” These convenings also display the presence of elite external allies that Rusyns had gained. Zatkovich's advocacy work was significant as it was on an international, intergovernmental stage. It was because of his work that Zatkovich was appointed to be the first governor of Subcarpathian Rus' in 1920.

The amount of popular political involvement in the diaspora is a contrast to those in the homeland at the beginning of the movement. It is noted that, “At that time, the vast majority of Ruthenians were peasants and transhumant pastoralists, still more attached to their localities and Orthodox Christianity than to the concept that they constitute a separate nation (Kamusella, 2009).” With shifting state borders after World War I (and eventually World War II), level of political repression or freedom was often unclear to the average Rusyn in the homeland. Those in the diaspora were aware of their freedoms as Rusyn-Americans which enabled them to actively advocate for autonomy. Overall, the sheer process of working with elites on an international

scale reflects how greatly the political opportunity structure subfactors grew in value compared to that of 1848.

Cultural Maintenance

There are several markers of a clear, organized, and living ethnicity within Subcarpathian Rus' that developed during the interwar period which assisted in strides to gain autonomy prior to World War II. This was, in large part, made possible by the new, "liberal" Czechoslovak government, which invested an abundant amount of funds into the infrastructure and progressive agencies within Subcarpathian Rus' and creating a feeling of a cultural renaissance among its inhabitants. The central government allowed the region of Subcarpathian Rus' to maintain an official language, a national anthem, and a coat of arms.

The Czechoslovak government also worked to improve the education system within the region due to their perspective on the "backwards" Slavs by dramatically increasing the amount of school systems. These school systems were for both children and adults and many students were taught using the Rusyn language. Reading rooms, now called *Prosvita* organizations, continued to expand, which enabled grassroots cultural maintenance. These organizations housed access to books and newspapers and lectures could also be heard. Both schools and *bursas* are dually important as they were enduring institutions, and proliferated and legitimized the use of the Rusyn language. The Rusyn intelligista, "...for the first time enjoyed relative freedom to work out their identity and construct their own national narrative....writers and activists produced a voluminous literature, including journals, polemics, critical studies, and *belles lettres* (Rusinko, 2003, 296)." The creation of group entities like football teams and theater groups bolstered national pride (Magocsi, 2005). The use of sacral art also increased and became

especially sophisticated during this time period. All of these developments provided an opportunity for Rusyns to engage in and celebrate their distinct culture.

The democratic nature of the Czechoslovak regime actually led to other aspects of culture, such as religion, to be challenged. This new sense of freedom sparked a “return to Orthodoxy” movement across Subcarpathia Rus’, even at the local village level. The Greek Catholic Church responded with a missionary campaign across the region, and the number of converts decreased (Magocsi, 2005, 212). These conversions reflect a larger question of identity and national orientation – those who returned to Orthodoxy preferred a Russian national orientation, in response to the Greek Catholic Church, which maintained pro-Hungary aspects in its structures but later adopted a purely Rusyn national orientation. This also shows that while more democracy and recognition allowed those in the homeland to create flourishing cultural structures, that freedom could also lead to divides and disunity.

Those in the diaspora grappled with their cultural identity once emigrating to the United States. It is evident that many Rusyns found it difficult to maintain their culture as, “...before WWI, the only independent Slavic state of any significance [to the average American] was Russia. Thus, since the Carpathian East Slavs used the terms Rus, Rusyn, Rusnak, Ruska, ... [it was simpler to] say you were ‘Russian’ when asked nationality and leave it at that (Best, 2013, 11).” A clearest sense of identity was found in quickly assimilating to American culture or finding small, niche communities within religious institutions (Best, 2013, 10). Becoming a member of a Greek Catholic or Orthodox church was one of the only ways in which Rusyn-Americans maintained their cultural identity during this time. Because many immigrants believed that they would eventually return back to the homeland one day, there was no

significant push to create distinctly Rusyn cultural institutions within the United States during this time.

However, Magocsi expresses the Rusyn political connection as always having a, "...special connotation. It has generally not meant participation in the American political system, but rather refers to a concern with the fate of the homeland, to endless debates about the problem of ethnic or national self-identity...(1993, 83)." Rusyns did stay connected to their homeland, but it was mostly in a political way. It is also important to note that the United States government was not funding Rusyn-Americans to create vehicles of cultural preservation as Rusyns in the homeland were. Where Rusyns in the diaspora lacked in cultural maintenance compared to that of their homeland, they made up for it in political activism, and vice versa.

Economy

In emigrating to the United States, most Rusyns who did so believed that their stay in the United States would be short-term – their goal was to make money to later return home and provide a more comfortable lifestyle for their family there. Most Rusyns settled in industrial cities in the Northeast such as New York City, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, but low pay and long hours in factory jobs meant that many young Rusyn immigrants faced the reality of staying longer than they originally intended. While the average Rusyn did not become extremely wealthy after emigrating to the United States, they certainly felt they had a greater level of economic mobility compared to the homeland as there was a larger range of work opportunities in the community around them. Furthermore, Rusyn-Americans invested much of their earned money into building cultural and political institutions such as new churches and fraternal society buildings. They also were able to send money back to their family in the homeland (or even

physically go back and forth between Carpatho-Rus' and the United States and bring it with them), and many families grew to rely on these finances as a substantial source of their income.

In the homeland, Rusyns again lacked group elites that could provide necessary finances to assist in garnering resources for their autonomy movement. They also continued to lack in trading with outside entities. While the political autonomy for which they petitioned did not require a completely independent economic system from the state to which they were attached, semi-independence would require strong, self-sufficient economic institutions.

However, the Czechoslovak government did invest a massive amount of funds into Subcarpathian Rus' during the interwar period which improved their overall economy. While 83% of Rusyns were still employed in agricultural or forest-related jobs in 1930, Prague was determined to transform the capital city of Uzhhorod into a prosperous cultural and economic center. In urban areas such as these, the government created architectural structures that were not only completely new to the region but still function to this day. In rural areas, Czechoslovak governmental agencies brought new cultivation methods, improved crop strains, and educational assistance on farming to the communities there. Furthermore, a land reform contributed to the dissolution of large land estates previously owned by Hungarian nobility, which allowed for those in the area to purchase more land (Magocsi, 2005, 204). These vehicles of economic improvement were not a collaborative effort between the Rusyn government and the central entity in Prague – they were imposed on a state level. However, this presents that the government was willing to provide resources to Subcarpathian Rus' even though they would no longer allow them to become an autonomous entity.

The interwar period was arguably the most opportune time for Carpatho-Rusyns to reach their goal of autonomy, and for short amounts of time during these years, they reached that goal

– however, it was always under threat from a more powerful entity and was eventually taken away again. It is clear that Rusyns had some level of qualified success during this time, as Rusyns did eventually receive their desired autonomy in the late 1930s, but it wasn't willingly offered – it was because Czechoslovakia was weakened by Nazi Germany and felt pressured to make changes in an effort to preserve some sense of freedom. It is possible that this autonomous state may have endured if World War II had not happened, or even if the onset was later, giving Rusyns more time to create stability and organization. Regardless, Rusyns made great progress during the interwar period. It is clear that their engagement with the political opportunity structure factor propelled the movement into legitimacy and allowed them to then strengthen their sense of cultural maintenance and economic functioning during this time, as values of these factors also increased. Yet, the Rusyns lacked the stability to endure as an autonomous entity throughout World War II. Many groups across the continent suffered this same fate throughout the war.

Second Failure to Achieve Autonomy: 1991

Political opportunity structure

Degree of popular access to political system: moderate

Stability within elites: high

Presence of allies: yes

Level of political repression: low

Cultural maintenance: weak

Vehicles of cultural preservation: no

Language spoken across homeland: no

Diaspora/diffused population: yes

Economic functioning: weak

Industrialized local economy: moderate

Individual economic mobility: moderate

Trade with external entities: no

Success in achieving autonomy?: no

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s prompted a continental resurgence of nationalism, and Carpatho-Rusyns were not exempt. Increases in globalization and education also assisted Rusyns in being realistic about their aspirations. The breakup of the Soviet Union created the opportunity for new states to form, but Rusyns knew that this was unlikely for them. Once again, the ethnicity looked to gain a politically autonomous region for their people. A World Congress of Rusyns was held in 1991 and When Ukraine's parliament held its national referendum to declare independence, they also asked whether Transcarpathia (Ukrainian:

Zakkarpatia), a region that was home to a majority of Rusyns at the time, should be given status of a self-governing administrative territory (autonomy) within Ukraine (similar to Ukraine's Crimea region). 78% of those who voted, voted in favor of this self-government. Even though this question was on the same ballot as the question of Ukrainian independence, and that was passed, the Ukrainian parliament later refused to accept the results of the Transcarpathia vote.

Sixteen years after the 1991 referendum regarding Transcarpathian autonomy had passed and went ignored by Ukrainian government officials, an organization named the Diet of Subcarpathian Rus' proclaimed its intention to declare the region as an autonomous one regardless of Ukraine's approval. This organization additionally called on those within the European Union and the Russian Federation to guarantee a favorable resolution, which was strongly criticized by pro-Rusyn activists as well as the World Congress of Rusyns as the petition to the Russian Federation was "hardly an appropriate model for Carpatho-Rusyns or any people in Europe (Magocsi 2008)." While the petitions were somewhat extreme, they garnered international attention which made it impossible for the otherwise passive Ukrainian government to ignore. In 2007, the Transcarpathian Regional government passed a resolution that recognized Rusyns as a nationality *on the territory of the Transcarpathian oblast* (Magocsi 2019). The national Ukrainian government did not follow Transcarpathia in doing so. The Ukrainian legislative system does not have the authority to decide on the existence of a nation – the country's interior law declares that every person belonging to a national minority has the right of free identification (Law on National Minorities in Ukraine). In 2012, Dymytrii Sydor, the head of the Diet of Subcarpathian Rus', was found guilty of the destruction of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Political Opportunity Structure

The first World Congress of Rusyns was held in early 1991 and was a major promotion of intergroup cooperation as it allowed Rusyn groups to streamline and agree on their goals as an ethnic minority. Its meeting legitimized the existence of Carpatho-Rusyns for many, and states such as Czechoslovakia and the United States recognized Rusyns as an official ethnic group. This was a significant first step toward reaching political autonomy. The Rusyns at the Congress were strongly inclined to creating autonomy for themselves as they argued they were the indigenous majority population of the region and felt they had legal precedence to establish what they wanted due to its status before World War II and the Soviet Union.

Leaders within the Rusyn community were hopeful after the Ukrainian referendum, as a clear majority of people within the state supported at least some level of autonomy. There was little movement after the vote took place. Eventually, Ukrainian President Kravchuk was confronted with requests as to why his promise hadn't come to fruition yet. The blame was placed on Ukraine's national parliament and their authority regarding the matter (Magocsi, 2005). Activists in both Eastern Europe and abroad responded to this with protests and activism, but it made a minimal impact as Ukraine's 1996 constitution adopted a centralized state structure. Transcarpathia was granted an *oblast* in Ukraine and given a governing administration in which the head was appointed by the president, but this was a far cry from the original aspirations of Rusyns.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is a clear instance of political opportunity structure, as the system had a clear opening for change. Dozens of entities became independent states in the early 1990s, so it was not unrealistic for Carpatho-Rusyns to petition for semi-independence at the

same time. However, this short window of time meant that Rusyns had to quickly recover and regroup after decades of Communism. Throughout the Soviet era, those in the homeland had some cultural “leaders” of the intelligista, but there was no clear figurehead that motivated Rusyns to break free of Communism and restore their sense of heritage. While there was now an increased level of popular access to the political system, Rusyns never resorted to violence or petitioned to intergovernmental organizations.

This parallels the situation in the United States as those Rusyns living there were, overall, no longer interested in the political situation of their homeland. While there were scholars invested in the Rusyn situation, the group lacked an elite individual or group with political experience that was sufficient enough to advocate for their situation on the world stage. While there were sympathetic external powers such as Slovakia, Poland, and the United States, they could do little to challenge Ukraine’s statutes. Furthermore, World Congress of Rusyns activists, “...agreed to end organizational ties with Provisional Government of Subcarpathian Rus', [which was] seen by the Ukrainian government as challenging the constitution (Cantin, 2012).”

Cultural Maintenance

At this point in time, the Rusyn’s sense of culture was recovering from its suppression during the Soviet era. For the last several decades, Rusyns had been stripped of their distinct identity and were only allowed to be identified as Ukrainian as well as speak the Ukrainian language. Furthermore, their sense of religion, often the most fundamental aspect of their culture, was repressed. Rusyns had to maintain any aspects of their distinct culture in secret, if at all, and enduring institutions to proliferate it. Because of these conditions and the overall limitation on geographic mobility, Rusyns were essentially cut off from their brethren in the diaspora during

the communist era, who also did very little to maintain culture. The “roots fever” of the United States in the 1970s sparked a revival in Rusyn-American folk groups during this decade, especially in larger cities with pre-existing Rusyn communities such as Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit (Magocsi, 1993, 65). However, the saliency of the folk groups lasted for no more than a decade, and the Rusyn-Americans overall fell out of touch with their ethnic heritage until the 1990s.

The nationalist movements occurring across the continent motivated Rusyns to re-engage with their culture, too. Scholars and political activists in both Eastern Europe and the United States reconnected and formed small civic and cultural organizations within months of the social and political changes and welcomed cross-border cooperation between each group. Each group existed on their belief that Carpatho-Rusyns *were* a distinctive ethnicity and so should be granted rights enjoyed by other national minorities (Magocsi, 2005). When those in the homeland finally had the freedom to express their identities, Central and Eastern Europeans were presented with, “an opportunity for public discussion of ethnic issues and the return to extremists positions in public discourse,” as well as the reawakening of pre-socialist angers. This revival of national identity in the early 1990s was a challenge as some struggled to fully reaccept this newly emerging cultural diversity (Haase, 2005, 222).

Indeed, some Rusyns were actually reluctant to return to their old culture ways as doing so meant the economic guarantees of Soviet communism were no more. In her interviews with older residents of both the Prešov and Zakkarpatia regions, older generations remarked that the security of the communist era outweighed the freedoms of the 21st century in their idea of a good life. In addition, they believe that those in the West were lied to about the realities of communism, and that now they suffer under self-serving political parties (2012, 73). While this

is mostly in regard to the economic sphere of life, it does present the reluctance of many people to fully re-embrace distinctive Rusyn culture as they had become comfortable with speaking Ukrainian and adhering to Soviet practices that guaranteed a house and food. This challenged mobilization around gaining autonomy, and while Rusyns are awarded many more freedoms now in terms of celebrating culture, the lack of cohesion served neither the referendum vote nor any potential, subsequent protests against the refusal to implement it.

The Rusyn language had fallen out of use both in the Soviet Union and the United States, so culture was not being preserved in this way in 1991. Lack of communication between the homeland and diaspora during the Soviet era also meant that the diaspora population was not contributing to their plan other than the intelligista. Because cultural institutions were still redeveloping (and continue to do so to this day), low levels of cultural maintenance did not assist the Rusyns in this attempt to gain autonomy as their muddled sense of identity gave many people no incentive to mobilize.

Economic Functioning

“The liquidation of factories and co-ops, the crumbling infrastructure and fears of corruption which discourage foreign investment, and the large investments required to scale-up to be competitive in global markets all contribute to the lack of work which pays a livable wage in the [Transcarpathian] region (Cantin, 2012, 80).” This is the stark reality of economic conditions and prosperity in 21st- century Transcarpathia. By 1990, most places where Rusyns and Rusyn-Americans lived were at least somewhat industrialized. There were villages that did not have a central business district (and still do not today), but the end of the Soviet era ushered in a new sense of globalization for those in Eastern Europe (Cantin, 2012).

Rusyns in Ukraine experienced a tumultuous and devastating decade in regards to finances after the state gained its independence. Its traditional agrarian culture did not set the state up for success when it became independent, and the disorganized nature of its transition to democracy exacerbated the problem. Rusyns in Transcarpathia, as well as all Ukrainians in the state, directly suffered as a result of this. The country experienced hyperinflation and an exceptionally huge production decline for a country not ravaged by a major war. “Official GDP collapsed by almost half from 1990 to 1994, and slow decline continued throughout the decade. Economic growth would not resume again until 2000. The budget deficit was, at 14.4 percent of GDP, exceptionally large. Barter and the use of surrogate moneys and foreign currencies prevailed. Ukraine had introduced a sovereign currency, the hryvnia, but it was little used. A shadow economy swelled and compensated for an unknown share of the economic collapse (Sutela, 2012).”

Throughout all of this, Rusyns in Transcarpathia could do little to improve their own economic situation because they were still reliant on state policies. Economic mobility was lacking as many were simply trying to financially stay afloat. Rusyns could do little to try to create economic relations with other states. These factors did not help in their attempts to gain autonomy in 1991, and while economic conditions have somewhat improved in Transcarpathia, their crumbling infrastructure and government corruption would not help a current attempt at autonomy as their situation has not drastically improved.

It is clear that the 1991 autonomy movement was another failure for the Rusyns, and it was similar to the 1848 movement in that it was largely the work of elites that made an active attempt to gain this status. It also parallels the first autonomy movement in that levels of cultural maintenance were not strong because of lack of coordination and communication among

community members. Weaknesses within economic functioning did not help either. Overall, high levels of political opportunity structure were the foundational factors that helped Rusyns make any type of movement during this time period, but lack of cultural maintenance or economic functioning did not assist them in propelling the movement to any sort of qualified success.

Conclusion: Where the Rusyns stand today and implications

Carpatho-Rusyns are recognized as a nationality in Poland, Slovakia, and Romania, among others, where their organizations and publications receive state support (Best, 2013, 14). The Carpatho-Rusyns that live in Ukrainian territories today, however, almost completely lack the minority rights and protections that exist in other European states as there is presently a monolingual attitude among Ukrainian policymakers that Carpatho-Rusyns are simply a Ukrainian “sub-ethnos” group. In fact, “while the law on national minorities in Ukraine guarantees citizens’ right to freely choose their national identity, Rusyn was not an option as a nationality...” during the 2001 census (Cserniesko and Ferenc, 2014, 399). Because of this, official numbers of Rusyns in Ukraine do not exist, although estimates believe approximately 8,000 Rusyns live in the *Zakarpattia* (Transcarpathia) region (Magocsi 2010). While Rusyns constitute the largest minority in the region, the state of Ukraine does not recognize their nation *or* their language as separate. This causes the Carpatho-Rusyns there to identify Ukrainian as their national identity, while also professing “Rusyn” contexts only in which they feel it is safe or noncontroversial to do so (Cantin, 2014, 850).

This is a stark contrast to Rusyns in other states such as Slovakia, where Rusyn symbols are clearly visible in public and people evidently have a stronger, more positive sense of connection to the heritage. Cantin states that, “The issue in Zakarpattia is less about encouraging young people to value their [Rusyn] language and culture than it is about making it politically safe for them to use the word ‘Rusyn’ to describe themselves and their ethnicity and having economic resources beyond personal donations available for education and cultural programs (2014, 860).” Indeed, lack of official recognition is a contradiction because several Rusyn organizations are still registered lawfully, Rusyn language and culture are taught in Sunday

schools, and there are monuments and plaques across the territory dedicated to significant representatives of the Rusyn nation (Csernicsko and Ferenc, 2014, 404). Furthermore, Rusyns in Transcarpathia are dealt different economic conditions than their counterparts in other states. Despite the economic difficulties in the Prešov Region, conditions are better there than in Zakarpattia. Cantin reports that, "Infrastructure is an even greater problem in Zakarpattia than it is in the Prešov Region. Traveling across western Ukraine, it's easy to see that in Zakarpattia, cities are in greater disrepair, much dirtier, and more overgrown with weeds in public spaces than are other cities such as Kolomiya, Chernivtsi, or L'viv (2012, 77)." The contrasts between the two places presents the manifestation of ethnic identity expression or suppression.

Rusyns are also recognized by other Western states that have large diaspora populations including the United States and Canada, which bolsters their cause. Activism has continued, especially stemming from the diaspora, which plays a key role not just in promoting Rusyn culture and identity, but in trying to convince Ukraine to recognize its Rusyn minority. This has garnered some federal attention on behalf of the United States as in 2005, then-U.S. Senator John McCain penned a letter to Ukrainian President Iushchenko advocating for Rusyns. McCain wrote, "that there is substantial scholarly support for the distinctiveness of the Rusyn people and language" and that "various bodies dealing with human and minority rights have taken note of their aspirations to self-identity (UNPO, 2005)."

The Ukrainian government fears this very recognition could violate the unity of the young Ukrainian state and nation. Many political leaders see these ambitions as separatism, which tarnish the integrity of Ukraine, while others simply see Rusyns as a pseudo-minority (Csernicsko and Ferenc, 2014, 410). This is perhaps the most fundamental reason as to why Rusyns have to continue their struggle for basic recognition, let alone autonomy, in the current

time. Many believe that the Rusyn question has been demonized by its Ukrainian opponents because of the insecurity many of them feel about their own nationality, language, and culture, despite living in an independent state. Adding to this is the fact that nation-building is an ongoing process in Ukraine, and Ukrainophones still feel threatened by the domination of the Russian language and the large numbers of Russian speakers – and even more so since tensions between Ukraine and Russia have escalated since early 2014. The Rusyn question is usually condemned as a political movement instigated by hostile neighboring countries or foreign scholars and has been neglected since this time (Kuzio, 2005).

The concerns of these current Ukrainian politicians are then masked by the seemingly liberal legislation that states the free choice and confession of one's nationality is the private right of a citizen. In reality, Rusyns' lack of an option to declare their identity on the Ukrainian census violates the liberal view that individuals have the right to free identification and the right to use their own language. This could simply be overturned by the state government by overwriting the statute based on the opinion of the National Academy of Sciences (Csernicso and Ferenc, 2014, 406), but this would be too threatening to the current Ukrainian government dynamic.

Receiving this acknowledgement from Ukraine, however, was – and still is – the biggest obstacle although almost 75 percent of Carpatho-Rusyns in Europe lived in their Transcarpathian region. Rusyns are not the only stateless nation who currently face this reality. Activist groups and cultural organizations have flourished across many areas of Europe and the United States, even within this century. In her study of Rusyns in the Presov and Zakkarpattia regions, Kristina Cantin reported, "...ample evidence that young people were continuing to participate in Rusyn

cultural organizations and perpetuate Rusyn practices (2012, 40).” There are currently no clear aspirations to attempt to reclaim autonomy as there was for the last two hundred years.

Lack of attention or knowledge regarding the Rusyn question assumably leads to a lack of literature on the issue, especially in the English language. Throughout my research, I have been quite limited in my ability to reference a vast range of opinions, praises, and criticisms on Rusyn movements and history because there are only a few credible scholars who have done extensive research on the group. If the Rusyns want to work toward autonomy at some point in the future, and engage with their diaspora, I believe that more serious interaction with scholars is required. It will be difficult for anyone in the political sphere (who can make a difference in terms of autonomy) to connect with the Rusyn problem if they do not even know who the Rusyns are. Rusyns need exposure to the academic and political world on a much greater scale.

Furthermore, Rusyns need to reexamine their level of engagement with the three factors (and their subfactors) throughout this thesis. In analyzing the three autonomy movements, high values of subfactors of the political opportunity structure seem to be the most significant factor in determining stateless nations level of success in reaching autonomy. Each movement began with petitions by political elites within the Rusyn movement, and the more that they were able to engage with state or multiple state governments, the greater the level of success. None of the movements began from strong levels of cultural maintenance or economic functioning. It is clear that sound political coordination is necessary to make an initial, strong impact, and ideally, strong cultural maintenance and economic functioning can be developed from there. High levels of these two factors can certainly be helpful in the initial push for autonomy, but they are not the catalyst for legitimate success.

Each autonomy movement also began at the height of an “opening” within the political system: the Spring of Nations in 1848, the end of World War I, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. State governments attempted to restructure themselves, and this gave Rusyns (especially elites) the chance to mobilize at a time when changes to the existing system were more “acceptable.” This does not necessarily mean that successful autonomy movements can *only* happen when there is an opening in the political system – but it does imply that the movement may have a greater chance of being considered by others as plausible. Once a movement is seen as legitimate by external entities, it becomes more possible for these entities to grant funds or resources for the group to develop their levels of cultural maintenance and economic functioning. This is made clear during the interwar period in Subcarpathian Rus’, where the Czechoslovak government provided their region with infrastructural and cultural improvements. This presents the case that political opportunity structure is driven both by the overall conditions of the region in which the group is located *and* conditions within the stateless nation.

Furthermore, the case of the Rusyns presents how important certain groups of a stateless nation can be in attempting to gain political autonomy. Any time the Rusyns had elite group members who had connections to state or international governments, they were closer to gaining autonomy. Diaspora members and their level of engagement also proved to be a very important aspect of a stateless nation. The Rusyn-American diaspora of the early 20th century were indispensable in the second attempt to gain autonomy as they were the group to coordinate with national and international leaders. They were politically active and economically stronger compared to those in the homeland, so they were able to send funds to their counterparts in Eastern Europe. Conversely, the diaspora had decreased in cultural and political engagement with the homeland by 1991, when the group experienced another failure to gain autonomy. This

presents the potential power of a diaspora of a stateless nation and that they can have a considerable impact on the success of their homelands movement if they are engaging with those “who matter” – group elites as well as government allies – in an conducive way. Furthermore, the freedoms and changes that a diaspora group experiences can parallel that of those in the homeland, as they can be the ones that provide them with funds and other resources to live a more comfortable lifestyle or to make political changes.

If Rusyns push to make any more attempts to gain political autonomy, especially in the Transcarpathian *oblast*, it is imperative that leaders employ strategies to increase political and social mobilization as well as economic functioning. While those in Prešov (and somewhat in Transcarpathia) have institutions that have led to a cultural revival, those in the United States do not have this same level of connection. Cultural institutions still exist, but they do little to connect with those in Ukraine, Slovakia, or Poland. Because of this, there are no concrete goals for Rusyns, which is necessary for another attempt at gaining autonomy. Furthermore, a lack of connection to identity presumably will lead to little reason to mobilize. Rusyns need a larger quantity of voices regarding their plight to propel them onto the world stage if autonomy is still of interest to them. Ukraine is currently entangled in conflict with Russia as well as internal struggles. Will Rusyns use this smaller opening in the political system to make a fourth push for Transcarpathia’s autonomy? If this is a possibility, it is imperative that Rusyns increase their connection to elites and the populace, economically empower members of their group, and encourage and educate the general Rusyn and Rusyn-American populace on their rich and distinct culture worthy of being recognized. Rusyns must learn from the shortcomings of their previous attempts to gain autonomy in order to have a chance to reach success in the future.



Figure 1: Geographical Location of Transcarpathia, European Centre for Minority Issues (1999)

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