

## „Piedmont“, „Banderstadt“, and the „Cradle of nationalism“. Ethnopolitical study of a city

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**Abstract.** The West Ukrainian city of Lviv is often described as a „cradle“, or „hotbed“, of Ukrainian nationalism, within a broader media-spread narrative that counter-opposes Ukraine’s allegedly „nationalistic West“ and so-called „pro-Russian East“. The article questions this quasi-binary opposition at the both formal-logical and substantive level, and examines the factors that informed and still tend to support the „nationalistic“ image of the region. It finds out no data-based evidence of a higher level of xenophobia or intolerance in Western Ukraine if compared with other Ukrainian regions or some neighboring states, and concludes that the primary reason for the „nationalistic“ othering of the city of Lviv and the Western Ukraine was their defiance of the Soviet rule, Soviet norms and values in the post-WWII period. That defiance had many forms but the most manifestly observable was a brazen free use of Ukrainian in the urban environment, deemed „nationalistic“ and stigmatized elsewhere in Ukraine. The article draws on the earlier observations of close connection between Ukrainian identity (nationalism) and pro-Western orientation (set of values), determined by a peculiar development of the Ukrainian national project since its very inception in the first half of the 19th century. The higher patriotic mobilization in Lviv (and in Western Ukraine in general) is seen as the main reason for a higher level of social optimism and apparently exaggerated assessments of personal well-being in Lviv vis-à-vis Ukraine’s average. Nowadays, West Ukrainians and the denizens of Lviv face a difficult dual task: to tackle their burdensome „nationalistic“ image and to play the self-assigned role of Ukrainian „Piedmont“ that leads both the national revival and social modernization. The emphasis on the latter, the essay implies, might be a good key to the successful managing of the former.

**Key words:** Lviv, Western Ukraine, nationalism, xenophobia, propagandistic othering and stereotyping.

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