

# THE GATES OF EUROPE

A HISTORY *of* UKRAINE

SERHII PLOKHY

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR  
THE GATES OF EUROPE

“Serhii Plokhy has produced a perfect new history of Ukraine for these troubled times—authoritative and innovative, but always clear and accessible, and a delight to read.”

—*Andrew Wilson, professor of Ukrainian studies at University College London*

“Serhii Plokhy offers a short yet comprehensive history of Ukraine that contextualizes Mr. Putin’s current policies as aggression against the wishes of the Ukrainian people, as well as the order established at the end of the Cold War. A pleasure to read, *The Gates of Europe* will take those familiar with the Moscow narrative on a mind expanding tour of Ukraine’s past.”

—*John Herbst, former US ambassador to Ukraine*

# THE GATES OF EUROPE



# THE GATES OF EUROPE

A HISTORY *of* UKRAINE

SERHII PLOKHY

BASIC BOOKS

A Member of the Perseus Books Group  
New York

Copyright © 2015 by Serhii Plokyh

Published by Basic Books,

A Member of the Perseus Books Group

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, contact Basic Books, 250 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10107.

Books published by Basic Books are available at special discounts for bulk purchases in the United States by corporations, institutions, and other organizations. For more information, please contact the Special Markets Department at the Perseus Books Group, 2300 Chestnut Street, Suite 200, Philadelphia, PA 19103, or call (800) 810-4145, ext. 5000, or e-mail [special.markets@perseusbooks.com](mailto:special.markets@perseusbooks.com).

Designed by Trish Wilkinson

Set in 11-point Adobe Garamond Pro

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Plokyh, Serhii, 1957–

The gates of Europe : a history of Ukraine / Serhii Plokyh.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-465-07394-8 (ebook) 1. Ukraine—History. I. Title.

DK508.51.P55 2015

947.7—dc23 2015015256

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To the people of Ukraine*

# CONTENTS

*Maps*

*Introduction*

## I. ON THE PONTIC FRONTIER

CHAPTER [1 The Edge of the World](#)

CHAPTER [2 The Advent of the Slavs](#)

CHAPTER [3 Vikings on the Dnieper](#)

CHAPTER [4 Byzantium North](#)

CHAPTER [5 The Keys to Kyiv](#)

CHAPTER [6 Pax Mongolica](#)

## II. EAST MEETS WEST

CHAPTER [7 The Making of Ukraine](#)

CHAPTER [8 The Cossacks](#)

CHAPTER [9 Eastern Reformations](#)

CHAPTER [10 The Great Revolt](#)

CHAPTER [11 The Partitions](#)

CHAPTER [12 The Verdict of Poltava](#)

## III. BETWEEN THE EMPIRES

CHAPTER [13 The New Frontiers](#)

CHAPTER [14 The Books of the Genesis](#)

CHAPTER [15 The Porous Border](#)

CHAPTER [16 On the Move](#)

CHAPTER [17 The Unfinished Revolution](#)

## IV. THE WARS OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER [18 The Birth of a Nation](#)

CHAPTER [19 A Shattered Dream](#)



[CHAPTER 20 Communism and Nationalism](#)

[CHAPTER 21 Stalin's Fortress](#)

[CHAPTER 22 Hitler's \*Lebensraum\*](#)

[CHAPTER 23 The Victors](#)

[V. THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE](#)

[CHAPTER 24 The Second Soviet Republic](#)

[CHAPTER 25 Good Bye, Lenin!](#)

[CHAPTER 26 The Independence Square](#)

[CHAPTER 27 The Price of Freedom](#)

[Epilogue: The Meanings of History](#)

[\*Acknowledgments\*](#)

[\*Historical Timeline\*](#)

[\*Who's Who in Ukrainian History\*](#)

[\*Glossary\*](#)

[\*Further Reading\*](#)

[\*Index\*](#)



The Greek Settlements, 770 BC–100 BC



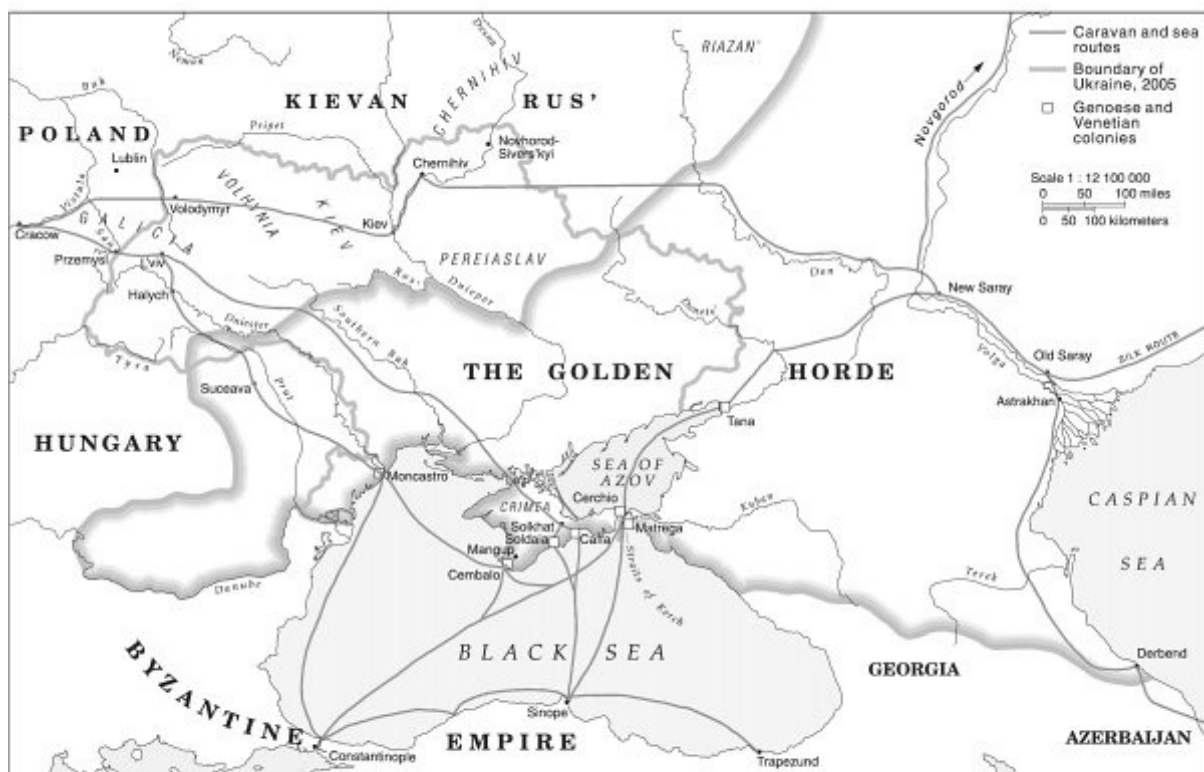
## Kyivan Rus', 980–1054

SOURCE: Zenon E. Kohut, Bohdan Y. Nebesio, and Myroslav Yurkevich, *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine* (Lanham, Maryland; Toronto; Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005).



**Rus' Principalities ca. 1100**

SOURCE: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Former Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).



**The Golden Horde ca. 1300**

Copyright © by Paul Robert Magocsi

SOURCE: Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 117, map 10.



### Lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries

SOURCE: *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, ed. Volodymyr Kubijovyč and Danylo Husar Struk, vol. IV (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).



### Cossack Ukraine ca. 1650

SOURCE: Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, ed. Frank E. Sysyn et al., vol. IX, bk. 1 (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2005).



**The Hetmanate and surrounding territories in the 1750s**

SOURCE: Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. xiv.





### The Partitions of Poland

SOURCE: Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), no. 25, p. 319.



### The Soviet Ukraine

SOURCE: Volodymyr Kubijovyč and Danylo Husar Struk, eds. *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 441.



The Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

## INTRODUCTION

UKRAINIANS PROBABLY HAVE just as much right to brag about their role in changing the world as Scots and other nationalities about which books have been written asserting their claim to have shaped the course of human history. In December 1991, as Ukrainian citizens went to the polls en masse to vote for their independence, they also consigned the mighty Soviet Union to the dustbin of history. The events in Ukraine then had major international repercussions and did indeed change the course of history: the Soviet Union was dissolved one week after the Ukrainian referendum, and President George H. W. Bush declared the final victory of the West in the prolonged and exhausting Cold War.

The world next saw Ukraine on television screens in November 2004, when festive orange-clad crowds filled the squares and streets of Kyiv demanding fair elections and got their way. The Orange Revolution gave a common name to a number of “color revolutions” that shook authoritarian regimes from Serbia to Lebanon and from Georgia to Kyrgyzstan. The color revolutions did not change the post-Soviet world, but they left a lasting legacy and the hope that it would change one day. Ukrainians reappeared on the world’s television screens in November and December 2013, when they poured onto the streets of Kyiv once again, this time in support of closer ties with the European Union. At a time when enthusiasm for the European Union was at a low ebb among its member countries, the readiness of the Ukrainians to march and stay on the streets in subzero temperatures for days, weeks, and months surprised and inspired the citizens of western and central Europe.

Events in Ukraine took an unexpected and tragic turn in early 2014, when a confrontation between the protesters and government forces violently disrupted the festive, almost street-party atmosphere of the earlier protests. In full view of television cameras, riot police and government snipers opened fire, wounding and killing dozens of pro-European demonstrators in February 2014. The images shocked the world. So did the Russian annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 and, later that spring, Moscow’s campaign of hybrid warfare in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. In July, the downing by pro-Russian separatists of a Malaysian airliner with almost three hundred people on board turned the Russo-Ukrainian conflict into a truly international one. The developments in Ukraine had a major impact on European and world affairs, causing politicians to speak