INTRODUCTION

Anti-nuclear Activism in
Comparative Perspective

The story of nuclear power is the story of a dream gone awry. What began as an ambitious and promising effort to alleviate dependence on limited supplies of fossil fuels has come to be seen as one of the greatest technological follies in modern history. Around the globe, prevalent fears and distrust have repeatedly derailed ambitious programs for the expansion of nuclear power. In country after country, plans to bring new nuclear reactors on line have been stymied, and in some cases public opposition has even forced the closure of stations already in operation. Clearly, the early proponents of nuclear power overlooked a potent factor when proposing the construction of immense power stations relying on this new technology. Over the past two decades, citizen opposition to nuclear power has emerged as a critical element in shaping nuclear power decisions around the globe.

While numerous countries, including the United States, Britain, Germany, France, and Japan, adopted ambitious programs to dramatically expand their reliance on nuclear power in the early 1970s, all of these governments found themselves confronted with substantial, and often vociferous, popular opposition to their chosen path a decade later. Although a few of these countries, particularly France and Japan, were able to insulate nuclear decision making from public opposition and thus permit the continuation of their expansion programs, most of these democracies were overwhelmed by an explosion of popular fear and mistrust. In the United States and across much of Western Europe, citizen mobilization proved highly successful in forcing government and industry to abandon plans for the expansion of nuclear power.
Introduction

While the advanced industrialized democracies found their nuclear power programs under fire in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the communist world appeared strangely calm. While the Soviet Union had also adopted an ambitious program to dramatically expand nuclear power production in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the early 1970s, a decade later no signs of popular opposition to nuclear power could be discerned in the region. The communist systems of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe appeared entirely immune to the anti-nuclear disease, which had spread so quickly throughout the West. In fact these governments appeared able to proceed with their ambitious nuclear plans with absolute impunity.

The absence of anti-nuclear opposition and its consequent impact on decision making in the USSR (as well as Eastern Europe) is readily understandable when one considers the nature of the Soviet political system prior to 1983. As a system based on the Communist Party’s monopolization of the public realm, the Soviet model functioned to prevent the coalescence of independent and unsanctioned public activities. Opportunities for opponents of nuclear power to speak out publicly, to appeal to mass audiences, and to organize resistance to the state’s official commitment to the expansion of nuclear power in the USSR were almost nonexistent prior to 1983. Furthermore, the Party’s control over the dissemination of information provided the state with a powerful tool to prevent the spread of anti-nuclear opposition in Soviet society. The state’s ability to block the flow of information from outside the USSR’s borders while simultaneously propagandizing its own view on the desirability of nuclear power, ensured that the public would remain positively disposed toward the state’s energy agenda. Thus the anti-nuclear contagion was effectively halted at the borders of the USSR.

All of this changed, however, with the watershed year of 1986. With the introduction of Mikhail Gorbachev’s reform program and the graphic demonstration of the dangers of nuclear power provided by the horrific accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station on April 26, 1986, opportunity and impetus for anti-nuclear mobilization suddenly converged in the Soviet Union. More than a decade after opposition to nuclear power had begun to sweep through the United States and Western Europe, the Soviet public slowly began to awaken to the dangers of this powerful technology. As the public became ever more aware of the devastating consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and as opportunities for mass mobilization expanded, popular opposition to nuclear power gathered momentum and soon became a potent force in shaping the Soviet government’s nuclear power program.

From 1987 to 1991, popular movements opposing the continued operation or construction of nuclear reactors proliferated rapidly across the four republics which were home to the Soviet Union’s nuclear power program: Armenia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Russia. This explosion of anti-nuclear activism eventually encompassed virtually every nuclear power station in operation or under construction in the USSR. After unquestioning acceptance of the government’s ambitious plans to double nuclear output during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period (1986–90), the Soviet population suddenly rose up to demand that the government cancel plans for all future reactors, halt construction projects, and close entire stations.

From 1988 to 1990, anti-nuclear activists were unexpectedly successful in pressuring officials to accede to movement demands. In Lithuania, plans to expand the republic’s sole nuclear power facility were canceled, while in Armenia the only operating nuclear power station was closed completely. In Russia and Ukraine, plans for one new project after another fell in the face of overwhelming popular opposition, and construction projects already under way were suspended or occasionally halted completely. In all, the construction of over forty nuclear reactors was either canceled or suspended during this period. Eventually, the parliaments of both Russia and Ukraine passed five-year moratoriums on the construction of new nuclear facilities in their territories and thus brought the Soviet Union’s nuclear power program to a virtual standstill.

Despite the apparent success of these movements, however, they eventually failed to meet their larger objectives. Rather than forming the basis for a powerful anti-nuclear movement, which would fight for the closure of the more than forty nuclear reactors still operating on Soviet soil, public activism on this issue proved unexpectedly short-lived. The movements burst forth in the early period of perestroika, then faded away, leaving little evidence of their previous existence. While some of the movements were successful in preventing the expansion of nuclear power in their regions, little progress was made in ridding the territory of the Soviet Union of the perils of nuclear reactors. Despite the horrific experience of the Chernobyl accident and its graphic demonstration of the potential
dangers of Soviet constructed nuclear power stations, interest in the nuclear power issue withered away, and by 1991, few signs of the previous strength and dynamism of Soviet anti-nuclear power movements remained. In 1991, the Lithuanian parliament renewed discussions on expanding the Ignalina nuclear power station, while in the Armenian republic, officials began to explore the possibility of reopening the closed Medzamor station. By late 1993, the governments of both Russia and Ukraine had annulled their moratorium on the construction of new facilities and had begun to take steps to resume numerous previously suspended or canceled nuclear projects. And by 1995, the Armenians were actively preparing to reopen their sole nuclear power station (scheduled to go back on line in May of 1995), while new reactors had already been brought into operation in Ukraine. Little public outcry was heard in response to these reversals.

Eco-nationalism: The Convergence of Environmentalism and Nationalism

Paradoxically, while anti-nuclear power movements failed to create the foundation for a unified and lasting anti-nuclear or environmental movement in the USSR during the perestroika period, they proved powerful springboards for the creation of national movements in the non-Russian republics and regions of the Soviet Union. In both Lithuania and Armenia, anti-nuclear movements carried strong nationalist overtones from their inception and were rapidly transformed and incorporated into movements for republic sovereignty. In Ukraine, where national identity was buried beneath decades and even centuries of Russification, anti-nuclear movements provided a context through which national consciousness could be forged and mobilizational networks and skills created. And in Tatarstan, an "Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic" within the Russian Federation, the anti-nuclear movement represented the first step toward the revival of the long-dormant Tatar nation.

In contrast, in Russian regions of the Russian Federation, activists were unable to identify a national group to juxtapose against the imperial center, and movements were limited to the single issue of nuclear power. While Russian movements attempted to take advantage of demands for greater territorial self-determination, they were unable to find a strong group identity to mobilize and thus suffered substantial mobilizational limitations relative to their counterparts in the non-Russian republics. Understanding this changing linkage between anti-nuclear activism and nationalism in different regions and republics of the former USSR and its successor states is one of the main objectives of this study.

This is the story of the rise and fall of the anti-nuclear power movement in the USSR and its successor states. The evolution of this movement, however, is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of eco-nationalism. Thus we must ask: What was it about the political, social, and economic conditions of the late Soviet period that favored the convergence of environmental and national objectives? Why was the anti-nuclear cause adopted as the centerpiece of the nationalist movements of Armenia, Lithuania, and, to a lesser extent, Ukraine but not effectively linked to nationalism in Russia? What role does national identity play in determining whether environmentalism will take on a nationalist hue? And finally, what is the significance of the eco-nationalist phenomenon for understanding environmental activism in other parts of the world? Did an unusual convergence of conditions and identities create a unique phenomenon in the Soviet case or might environmentalism and nationalism go hand in hand in other parts of the world?

Theoretical Tools: Considering Resources and Identities

In comparing mobilizational patterns in the former USSR and the advanced industrialized world of the West, differences in the characteristics and developmental trajectories of anti-nuclear movements are readily apparent. In this study, I argue that structural factors provide a good starting point for explaining the unexpected mobilizational patterns observed in the USSR and its successor states. The Communist Party's longstanding monopolization of mobilizational resources left an important structural legacy, which has dramatically shaped the ability of autonomous actors to mobilize independent movements. In the following chapter, I suggest that the most significant aspects of this legacy include: (1) the scarcity of
mobilizational resources in society and (2) uneven and constantly changing access to key resources by competing independent actors.

This dual legacy dramatically affected the characteristics of the social movements that emerged in the former USSR and its successor states after 1985. First, the scarcity of mobilizational resources for actors outside the Communist Party substantially undermined the possibility for the creation of tightly organized social movements during the perestroika period (1986–91). During this period, limited access to critical resources led movement organizations to rely largely on indigenous leadership and volunteer staff (rather than the professionalized movements common in the developed West), weak linkages both within and between movement branches, unstable group membership, and disruptive tactics. The continuing dearth of key mobilizational resources during the transitional period following the collapse of the USSR in 1991 has made these organizational limitations a persistent feature of post-Soviet societies. Indigenous movements continue to be haunted by shortages of critical tangible resources, such as funds, meeting space, and communications technology, as well as intangibles, including organizational skills and networks for bloc recruitment. Interestingly enough, with the flood of foreign capital into the region after 1991, the most vibrant and effectively organized movements of the transition period are frequently those directly linked to and sponsored by wealthy foreign and international organizations.

The second aspect of the communist legacy that I focus on in this study is the ever-changing distribution of mobilizational resources among competing groups in society. This also significantly shaped mobilization patterns throughout both the perestroika and transitional periods. During the perestroika years, the Communist Party’s ad hoc dissemination of critical resources to groups outside the Party opened opportunities for some movements to thrive while simultaneously blocking possibilities for other movements to emerge. Thus, during the early perestroika years, movements deemed nonthreatening to the Party’s status and goals were privileged in their access to important resources, while independent actors with more radical agendas were denied opportunities and resources. This created the conditions under which movement surrogacy might emerge. During the initial period of perestroika, it was not uncommon for radical actors to hide behind surrogate causes that targeted similar audiences. In the upcoming chapters, I will argue that in some parts of the former USSR, the anti-nuclear movement was little more than a surrogate or hidden nationalist demands.

As the mobilizational environment changed, however, access to key resources shifted to more radical actors and the need for movement surrogacy disappeared. Surrogacy was simply a rationally selected tactic that fit the existing structural conditions and that was discarded when no longer useful. Thus, the convergence of environmentalism and nationalism during the perestroika period may be at least partially accounted for by the unusual structural conditions under which these movements emerged.

Since 1991, the distribution of mobilizational resources in society has continued to shape the development of social activism in the newly independent countries. While the distribution of mobilizational resources in society no longer encourages the intertwining of environmental and nationalist goals, it nonetheless continues to affect movement characteristics in other ways. As noted above, one of the most significant aspects of the post-Soviet period has been the unusually privileged position of foreign-sponsored organizations in the Soviet successor states. Since 1991, Western aid has become a critical factor in determining which independent organizations will survive and be able to carry out their agendas. This new factor has led to a substantial change in mobilizational patterns since 1991.

While a structural analysis offers significant insight into mobilization in late and post-Soviet society, it does not provide a complete picture of the mobilizational process. In this study, I also consider the impact of identity in shaping how people mobilize. I argue that the preservation and possible reinforcement of national identities during the communist period (and absence of strong alternative group identities) is a critical factor in explaining the linkage between nationalism and anti-nuclear activism during the perestroika years. The anti-nuclear movements of the former USSR were more than simple protests against a potentially dangerous technology; they were the cries of colonized nations against the antidemocratic incursions of an imperial center. It is this linkage between anti-nuclear activism and national identity that most significantly differentiates the anti-nuclear movements of the former Soviet Union with their counterparts in the West. Because the strength and the characteristics of national identities differ across Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Armenia, however, the ways in which anti-nuclear and nationalist causes became intertwined
varied by region. In the case studies that follow we will probe this variation and consider the role of national identity in shaping the potential for eco-nationalism to emerge.

With the achievement of national independence for the fifteen republics of the former Soviet Union in 1991, the role of national identity in mobilizing anti-nuclear protest diminished substantially. While minority nationalities could still rail against the domination of foreign overlords, the titular nationalities now found themselves masters of their own fate. No longer could they equate environmental contamination with colonial oppression. No longer did the local nuclear power station represent Moscow's careless treatment of the periphery; instead, the station came to be seen as a critical factor in the economic survival of the newly independent states. It represented self-sufficiency rather than imperial domination, and as such aroused little popular opposition. With independence, the symbolic function of the anti-nuclear movement evaporated, and popular interest in the issue plummeted. Since 1991, apathy has replaced environmental and anti-nuclear activism. With the linkage between environmentalism and nationalism effectively severed, the movement has fallen on hard times across all of the former USSR.

Overview

This theoretical synthesis of structural and identity models and its application to the late- and post-Soviet case is presented in detail in chapter 1. The empirical core of this study, however, is contained in the following five chapters. In these chapters, the anti-nuclear movements of Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, and the national enclaves of Tatarstan and Crimea are thoroughly investigated. Comparison of the movements in these different regions and now-independent states reveals both important similarities and differences in characteristics and development. Most important among these distinctions is the varying relationship between anti-nuclear activism and national identity. In the final chapter, I return to the theoretical framework presented in chapter 1 and consider how it may be refined to account for this changing linkage between anti-nuclear activism and nationalism.

Finally, I close with some thoughts on how anti-nuclear activism in the newly independent states may evolve in the future and what the consequent implications for the development of nuclear power in the Soviet successor states are. Given widespread Western concerns about the safety of the dozens of nuclear power stations now operating in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Armenia, the role of society in acting as a watchdog over the nuclear power sector in the Soviet successor states may be seen as particularly important. Plummeting popular interest in the nuclear power issue and evidence that the surge of anti-nuclear sentiment during the perestroika period was more politically than environmentally motivated, however, bode poorly for the likely role of post-Soviet society in watching over their nuclear power industry. The implications of these conclusions for ensuring the safe operation of nuclear power in the Soviet successor states are disturbing.
The convergence of environmentalism and nationalism in many regions of the former USSR created the potential for the emergence of powerful mass movements during the perestroika period. Because environmental activists could appeal not only to popularly held environmental values but also to people's sense of national identity and community, the environmental movements of the perestroika period attracted far broader constituencies than would otherwise have been the case. Rather than approaching the population in terms of abstract environmental ideals, activists were able to present the nuclear power issue as a very real and material threat to the survival of a specific territory and group of people. In cases in which national identity was highly consensual, it proved quite simple to portray nuclear power as an imperialist threat to national survival.

The emergence of the eco-nationalist phenomenon in the former USSR was an outgrowth of both the unusual structural conditions of the perestroika period and the strength of the national identities that had survived the Soviet period in some of the republics and regions of the USSR. Were these conditions unique however? Was eco-nationalism simply a product of the unstable and unusual features of the late-communist period in the Soviet Union, or might we expect to see it elsewhere around the globe? In the case of the Soviet anti-nuclear movement, the power of the movement emerged from the fact that the nuclear threat could be easily translated into a symbol of the domination of one ethnic or political group over another. The poorly constructed and operated nuclear power stations were obvious symbols of Moscow's disregard for the welfare of its member nations. They represented the unequal relationship between Russians and other ethnic groups, and between the central Soviet authorities and republic and regional leaders. In this case, national inequalities and environmental complaints became synonymous.

This situation is not unique. In numerous inter-state environmental battles as well as domestic struggles between regions or ethnically defined territories, the potential certainly exists for environmental struggles to take on nationalist overtones. Whether or not these two causes will converge, however, depends on many factors. As in the Soviet case, structural conditions which might force nationalists to mask their intentions behind a surrogate cause might favor the convergence of environmentalism and nationalism. Likewise, communities which hold a strong, consensual sense of national identity and distinctiveness would be more likely to introduce nationalism into the environmental crusade. In addition, a history of hostility or inequality between national or regional groups involved in the environmental contest would also add to the potential for eco-nationalism. The most unpredictable factor, however, lies in the role of individuals. As we have observed across Eastern Europe and the former USSR in recent years, the emergence of effective political entrepreneurs willing to play the nationalist card is often a critical feature in determining the extent of nationalist mobilization in a society.

The convergence of environmentalism and nationalism may have both positive and negative implications for the success of the environmental crusade in a given region. On the positive side, by appealing to a sense of national identity and community, the environmental movement may greatly expand its constituency and thus its influence. Unfortunately, however, the negative implications of this phenomenon are likely to far outweigh the positive. First, by adding a very tangible environmental threat to already existing national tensions, exacerbation of nationalist antagonisms is likely. In the Soviet case, the convergence of environmentalism and nationalism did not lead simply to the victory of the environmental movement; it also lead to the nationalist fragmentation of the USSR. While many may agree that in the case of the USSR, the breakup of the empire was not a tragedy, this would not necessarily be the case with other ethnic or regional conflicts around the world.

In addition, the eco-nationalist phenomenon impies a certain superficiality in popularly held environmental values. As we saw in the Soviet case, when the appeal to a sense of national community was eliminated,
interest in environmental issues plummeted. Thus eco-nationalism can be deceptive, leading one to believe that a high degree of environmental consciousness exists, where in fact there is little or none. In the Soviet case, the aftermath of the heady days of eco-nationalist (and eco-regionalist) fervor has left disappointment and disillusionment in its wake.

In reviewing the cases presented in this study, however, it should be noted that the extent to which anti-nuclear activism and nationalism converged in Lithuania, Armenia, Ukraine, Russia, Tatarstan, and Crimea varied considerably across republic and region. Thus, let us turn now to this variation. In the following section, I will briefly evaluate the extent to which the theoretical framework presented in chapter 1 accounted for the observed characteristics of the anti-nuclear movements studied, then consider what lessons may be drawn from the variation in the linkage between anti-nuclear activism and nationalism that was observed in these cases.

Structure and Identity Revisited

In the preceding chapters, strong similarities in social movement characteristics and developmental patterns were observed across republics and regions of the former Soviet Union. These similarities tend to support the hypothesis that structural factors have played a very significant role in shaping patterns of social activism in these late- and postcommunist societies. Because all of these regions experienced similar resource availability and distribution during the perestroika period and only slightly diverging resource and opportunity structures following the breakup of the USSR in 1991, the observed similarities lend credence to the resource mobilizational approach suggested in chapter 1.

In reviewing the preceding cases, it is immediately obvious that all of the indigenous movements displayed substantial organizational shortcomings during the perestroika period and after. This supports the suggestion, made earlier, that widespread impoverishment of these late- and postcommunist societies, accompanied by the low access to key tangible and intangible resources of new independent actors relative to established Communist Party elites, would likely result in classical social movement organizations based on voluntary leadership, with very weak organizational linkages both within and between chapters. As was observed in these studies, difficulties in obtaining access to the media and independent printing facilities, lack of adequate meeting space, and inadequate communications equipment severely limited the ability of new social movements to organize efficiently and effectively. Even more than the missing tangible resources, however, these movements clearly suffered from the activists' lack of independent mobilizational experience. Rather than having large preexisting networks to mobilize quickly to their cause, these new movements were lucky if they had a tiny network of concerned intellectuals to provide the initial core of the movement. In most cases, these amateur movement entrepreneurs also lacked organizational skills. During the perestroika period, the anti-nuclear movements were dominated by concerned citizens whose experience in organizing mass movements was practically nonexistent.

The organizational shortcomings observed during the perestroika period largely carried over to the post-1991 transition period. While the Communist Party's iron grip on mobilizational resources was largely eliminated by 1991, independent actors still found it difficult to obtain the facilities and equipment necessary for effective mobilization. As the GDP continued to contract across most of the former USSR, resource availability remained highly limited for many indigenous groups. The most interesting aspect for the post-1991 period, however, was the changing leadership of the anti-nuclear and environmental movements of Moscow and Kiev. As the newly independent states began to remove restrictions on foreign economic activities within their territory, chapters of preexisting international environmental organizations began to pop up to fill the vacuum left by the decline of the indigenous movements. The most notable example has been the expansion of the international group Greenpeace in Russia and Ukraine. While small chapters of Greenpeace existed in Moscow and Kiev prior to 1991, these organizations have become the most dynamic and active environmental social forces on the horizon today. With almost-total foreign sponsorship, these groups have access to far greater mobilizational resources than their indigenous competitors. Substantial inflow of funds, photocopying and fax machines, computers, and organizational expertise have created organizations quite unlike any before seen in Russia and Ukraine. To date, however, these organizations are largely restricted to the capital cities, and they have not had a major
impact on environmental organization in less cosmopolitan regions. A recent inflow of foreign capital to support struggling indigenous environmental groups also has the potential to alter mobilizational patterns in the newly independent states. Whether or not these outside funders will significantly shape agendas, tactics, and organizational characteristics of indigenous groups has yet to be seen. What is clear is that since 1991 foreign capital has become the single most important determinant of group survival and success.

The changing tactics observed in these regional case studies also reflected changes in both resource availability and opportunities. In both Lithuania and Armenia, preferential access to key resources for movements deemed nonthreatening by the Communist Party combined with a strong sense of national identity in these republics, led to the phenomenon of movement surrogacy during the perestroika period. Because the anti-nuclear platform could be used to mobilize people to defend their nation against the potentially genocidal policies of the imperial center, the anti-nuclear and nationalist causes tended to meld together in both Lithuania and Armenia. Movement surrogacy, however, was a short-lived phenomenon; as resources shifted from environmental to more radical political platforms the need to utilize a surrogate tactic disappeared. Thus, in Armenia the anti-nuclear movement lasted only a few weeks, while in Lithuania it survived little more than a year; in both cases, activism shifted in the direction of openly nationalist mobilization as soon as the political leadership demonstrated their unwillingness to crack down on overt nationalism. Interestingly enough, surrogacy did not emerge as an important tactic in Ukraine, Russia, or the national enclaves of Tatarstan and Crimea. In these cases, the absence of a strong and consensual ethnic national identity impeded the ability of movement entrepreneurs to utilize the anti-nuclear movement for purely nationalist objectives. The way in which the anti-nuclear and nationalist movements of a region were linked tells us a great deal about the strength and character of national identity in that area—a subject we will return to below.

In addition to the temporary nature of the surrogacy tactic, other methods used by the anti-nuclear movements during the perestroika period and after also changed over time. Initially, the extreme lack of resources for independent actors combined with a dearth of opportunities for influencing political decisions led to the predominance of disruptive tactics. Mass protests, commonly known as “meetings,” were the order of the day during the early perestroika period. Thousands of people took to the streets to demand government actions on a number of fronts, including nuclear power. With the elections of 1989 and 1990, however, new opportunities for influence emerged. Electoral politics became a major forum for the anti-nuclear crusade. In the all-union elections of 1989 and, particularly, the republic and local elections of 1990, anti-nuclear platforms were almost unanimously adopted by competing candidates. The republic and local elections of 1990 were rapidly followed by a slew of decisions by republic, oblast, and city soviets declaring their intention to halt nuclear expansion programs in their regions. Thus the electoral strategy was demonstrated to be highly effective.

Following the 1990 elections, another change in tactics that was observed was a shift from mass protests to internal lobbying and direct participation in nuclear decision making. Due to the more open democratic institutions which began to function locally in 1990, anti-nuclear and environmental activists often found ample opportunity to establish themselves as advisors to both individuals and political bodies. This made specialist and intellectual activists a far more valuable commodity and relegated the less-educated mass participants to the sidelines. For many activists, mass protests were no longer viewed as the most effective method for influencing decisions. This was an important factor in the decline of mass activism in 1990 and beyond. In addition, many of the movements lost their most dynamic members as a result of the 1989 and 1990 elections; as their leaders were elected to these newly democratic institutions, the movements found themselves abandoned and leaderless. This again supported a shift in tactics away from mass activism.

Finally, in the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR the shift from mass activism to more sophisticated lobbying techniques has been quite pronounced. Not only have opportunities for lobbying and influence expanded with the growing consolidation of democratic institutions and practices across much of the former USSR but the influx of foreign-sponsored organizations has led to the introduction of highly sophisticated tactics already tested outside the region. Not only has Greenpeace engaged in extensive lobbying efforts in Moscow and Kiev but they have also
attempted to duplicate the German experience and utilize the courts to halt nuclear expansion. The decision by the Russian government to overturn the parliament's five-year moratorium on nuclear construction and to reinitiate the nuclear power program in late 1993 has been challenged by Greenpeace in the courts system. As yet, however, these legal tactics have yielded few concrete results.

While the resource mobilization perspective clearly yields a great deal of insight into the characteristics and development of the anti-nuclear power movements of the former USSR, the picture is nonetheless incomplete. While strong similarities in movements were observed across regions, the differences in the linkage between anti-nuclear activism and nationalism cannot be overlooked. These divergences in mobilizational patterns bring us back to the question of the role of identity and its contestation in shaping how movements evolve.

In the preceding case studies, we observed a broad spectrum of relationships between anti-nuclear activism and nationalism. At one end of the spectrum, the anti-nuclear movements of Lithuania and Armenia appeared to be little more than temporary fronts for forbidden nationalist demands. At the other extreme, in Russian regions of the Russian Federation and on the Crimean peninsula, the anti-nuclear movements had little or no connection to ethnic nationalism. Between these two extremes, the anti-nuclear movements of Ukraine and Tatarstan displayed a certain affinity for nationalist demands but nonetheless maintained their own distinct identity. This variation in the way nationalism entered the anti-nuclear movements illuminates the differences in the strength and character of national identity in the republics and regions of the former USSR.

As noted in chapter 1, social movements may be viewed as forums within which people can explore, contest, and reaffirm identities. In joining the anti-nuclear movement, one of the first social movements to emerge after decades of oppression, people clearly were concerned with more than just nuclear safety. While Chernobyl and the threat of a nuclear disaster may have provided the initial impetus for mobilization, the movement eventually became a way in which participants came to understand their new identity in a rapidly changing world. As the old order was first challenged then rapidly discredited during the perestroika period and after, people were left disoriented. With their cognitive maps shattered, citizens of the former USSR were forced to take a new look at their world and reassess their own identity within it.

In mobilizing against Moscow's nuclear power decisions, movement participants had the opportunity to explore not only their attitudes toward the environment but also their own roles as members of a political community. The issues they implicitly questioned were: what is the nature of our political community? who are its citizens? what is the appropriate relationship between citizens and the state? While the answers to the first two questions varied, participant members were largely in agreement on the third; in participating in this kind of unprecedented independent activism, people were confirming their belief that citizens should have a much greater role in political decision making. While contesting and exploring precisely how far the shift in power from state to citizenry should go, members agreed that the state's monopoly over decision making should be eliminated. In all of the cases observed, resentment of Moscow's complete dominance over local decision making played a key and explicit role in mobilizing opposition to nuclear power.

While movement participants largely agreed on the need to shift power from the state to society, it was often much more difficult for them to reach a consensus on the nature of political community and its membership. What political community did they identify with? The USSR? Their republic? Perhaps their territory or oblast? And who were the members of their political community? Was membership limited to a particular ethnic group or open to all residing in the region? In essence, they were asking, who is "us"? These questions of political community and membership were central to anti-nuclear activists in all of the cases observed.

In Armenia and Lithuania, movement participants moved toward a consensus on these questions much more quickly than in the other republics and regions studied. In both cases, activists quickly agreed that the appropriate political community was the republic rather than the union. Furthermore, membership in the community was largely assumed to flow from ethnic factors. In Armenia, the short-lived anti-nuclear movement was rapidly transformed and incorporated into the strongly nationalist Nagorno-Karabakh Committee. This very popular committee celebrated Armenia's distinctive history and culture and demanded the reunification of the Armenian people. The demands for republic sovereignty which emerged almost immediately and an overwhelming emphasis on ethnicity
in campaigning for a return of the Nagorno-Karabakh region demonstrated the high level of social consensus on the appropriate nature and membership of the political community in Armenia.

Similarly, in Lithuania, it was not long before it became obvious that members of the anti-nuclear movement considered themselves citizens of Lithuania, not the USSR. From its very inception, the movement portrayed the nuclear power issue as an example of Moscow’s imperial treatment of Lithuania. People were called upon to defend the Lithuanian land and people against the destructive policies of the center. Even before the anti-nuclear movement was swallowed by the nationalist Sajudis organization, the movement’s platform, as espoused in open forums and the media, reflected an overwhelming emphasis on issues of Lithuanian nationhood and sovereignty.

The anti-nuclear movement of Lithuania also offered people the opportunity to explore the question of who should be considered citizens of Lithuania. As the movement grew, and particularly after it was absorbed by Sajudis, the anti-Russian orientation became ever more prominent. Because the Ignalina AES was built and staffed primarily by Russians, the nuclear power issue provided a powerful focus for anti-Russian hostility. The area around the station was repeatedly referred to as an example of “demographic pollution,” and anti-nuclear articles often highlighted the Russian role in promoting these “genocidal” nuclear power policies in Lithuania. While ethnicity clearly played a determining role in defining Lithuania’s national community for some, however, there is also evidence that other movement participants were reluctant to exclude Russians and other ethnic groups from the citizenry. Thus, while the anti-nuclear movement seemed to be moving in the direction of an exclusive ethnic identity for Lithuania’s political community, this question remained contested.

In addition to providing a forum for core members to explore identity, the anti-nuclear movement played an important role in opening this debate to the wider society. While intellectual elites who founded both the anti-nuclear and national movements of Lithuania clearly began with a strong sense of their distinctive Lithuanian identity, the bulk of the population needed to be prodded into reconsidering who they were. After almost fifty years of Soviet domination, much of society appeared dormant. The anti-nuclear crusade offered a perfect tool to mobilize society and to cultivate a revived sense of national identity in the population. By beginning with a safe, apparently apolitical, topic, activists were able to appeal to large sectors of society who might not have been ready to risk involvement in a more radical movement. In addition, by using the nuclear power issue as a way to graphically demonstrate the potential dangers of Soviet domination, activists were able to involve people who might not have initially favored an independence platform. The anti-nuclear front allowed nationalist activists to move gradually in reawakening society and pulling them over to their cause.

The rapid transformation of the anti-nuclear movements of Armenia and Lithuania into national sovereignty movements indicated a strong degree of consensus among their leaders on issues of national identity. Intellectual elites in both republics already possessed a clear sense of who they were; as soon as opportunities permitted, they were quick to discard the anti-nuclear cause and move on to their true demands. There was little need for a protracted debate as to whether they were citizens of the USSR or their republic—their answer was obvious. The unusual consensus on national identity observed in these two republics contrasts sharply with the other cases examined here.

As we turn to Ukraine and the national enclaves of Tatarstan and Crimea, the contrast is immediately apparent. Whereas intellectual elites of Armenia and Lithuania possessed a clear sense of national identity early on and acted as movement entrepreneurs in mobilizing society to the nationalist platform, this was not the case in Ukraine or the national enclaves. In these cases, both intellectual elites and the mass of society found themselves confused about their primary political identification. As independence movements began to shake the Baltics, intellectuals and nonintellectuals alike began to question whether perhaps their republics or regions should also be independent political entities. The debate, however, was relatively slow to surface and remained highly controversial all the way up until 1991 (in the case of Ukraine) and to the present for both Tatarstan and Crimea.

In Ukraine, anti-nuclear activists were reluctant to tie their demands too closely to Ukrainian nationalism. While the opponents of nuclear power referred frequently to Moscow’s colonial treatment of Ukraine, activists were also quick to point out that they were not advocating Ukrainian independence. Even in early 1991, the leadership of Zelenyi svit explicitly dissociated itself from more radical calls for Ukrainian secession.
Interestingly enough, however, there is evidence that this issue was hotly contested. The constant organizational crises and leadership scandals that plagued the movement in 1990 and 1991 were often explicitly linked to disagreement about the extent to which Zelenii svit should identify with both RuKh and radical calls for national independence. Thus the anti-nuclear movement did provide a forum through which people might explore issues of national identity. And, as in Lithuania, it provided an effective tool for reawakening a long-dormant society and initiating discussion on Ukraine’s proper relationship to Moscow. Unlike the Lithuanian case, however, a consensus was not soon reached. Even as independence was achieved in December 1991, substantial evidence indicates that much of society felt ambivalent or confused about Ukraine’s new political status.

In searching for a sense of identity, anti-nuclear activists in Ukraine also had to confront the ethnic dilemma; in a republic with such close historical and cultural ties to Russia and more than a quarter of the population considered ethnically Russian, how should the national community be defined? On this question, anti-nuclear activists tended to shy away from an ethnic definition of the Ukrainian nation. The anti-nuclear protest movements in fact tended to incorporate both the Ukrainian and Russian populations of the areas surrounding the nuclear power stations. Unlike in the Lithuanian case, nuclear power stations were not portrayed as demographic abstractions. Anti-Russian rhetoric did not form a significant component of the anti-nuclear debate in Ukraine. Even in the movements opposing stations in West Ukraine (e.g., Rivne AES), where ethnic homogeneity and rationalism were thought to be stronger, little sign of ethnic exclusivity was observed among anti-nuclear activists.

The evolution of the anti-nuclear movement of Tatarstan followed a very similar pattern. As in Ukraine, the movement provided a forum to contest the nature of the Tatar identity. Where was Tatarstan to fit in the new order? Was it to be a component of the USSR? Of Russia? Or an independent political entity? Should membership in the Tatar nation that appeared to be emerging in the late 1980s and beyond, be limited to ethnic Tatars or also extended to the immense Russian population of Tatarstan? While the confusing developmental path of the anti-nuclear movement indicates that these issues were not easily or immediately resolvable for the Tatar population, the resistance of the population to attempts to mobi-

lize ethnic exclusivity were encouraging. As we look at Tatarstan today, it is clear that these questions are still being contested; Tatarstan’s status within Russia has yet to be accepted by all members of the republic’s population.

Similarly, in the Crimea questions of national community and identity have yet to be resolved. As in the Tatar case, the anti-nuclear movement provided a useful medium for exploring Crimea’s place in the USSR and what it meant to be “Crimean.” Due to Crimea’s unusual history, however, activists found themselves at a loss to answer these questions. While all soon agreed that Crimea should have greater economic autonomy, the question of Crimea’s proper place in the Commonwealth of Independent States has yet to be answered. While the anti-nuclear movement has long since disappeared from the peninsula, the issues of identity that it raised are still very hotly contested. By early 1995, Crimean Tatar were demanding a Tatar state, while Russians in Sevastopol had declared themselves part of Russia, and parliamentarians in Simferopol were openly defying Ukrainian control. While ethnic nationalism has thus far failed to ignite the peninsula, the fluidity of the situation makes prediction foolhardy.

Finally, the lack of association between anti-nuclear activism and nationalism in Russian regions of the Russian Federation provides insight into the distinctive nature of the Russian national identity. During the perestroika period, anti-nuclear activists in Russia were unable to come to grips with a distinctive national identity that could be used in their battle against Moscow. While other republics were able to use the anti-nuclear cause to demonstrate Moscow’s imperial disregard for its colonies, Russians found it much more difficult to juggle themselves against Moscow. After all, it had been the Russian revolution that had brought communism to the region. Russia was the core of the USSR, and to many, the two entities were synonymous. Interestingly enough, while the anti-nuclear movements of Russia triggered widespread debate about the proper relationship between state and society and consideration of the degree of territorial autonomy that should be incorporated into the new order, they did not give rise to widespread discussion on what it meant to be Russian. While Yeltsin eventually incorporated anti-nuclear demands into his Russian sovereignty platform, it is important to note that the anti-nuclear activists at the local level never made this connection.
five-year moratoria on the construction of new nuclear facilities in 1990, by late 1992 the new decision makers in these now independent states were working to distance themselves from these earlier decrees. The Russian and Ukrainian parliaments rapidly overturned the moratoria during 1992-93, and construction on a number of important unfinished nuclear projects was quick to resume. In 1993, the Russian government announced plans for the expansion of several nuclear power stations; in 1994, the Ukrainians followed suit with a decree to expand the Khmelnitsky, Zaporozhzhе, and Rovno facilities. Even bolder was the Armenian government's decision to reopen the Medzamor station, closed in 1988 following the immense earthquake in the region. The resolve of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Armenian governments to move ahead with their nuclear power expansion programs contrasts sharply with the dithering of the Soviet government during its final years. What might explain this change in attitude?

A number of interconnected factors may have contributed to the reversals in nuclear power policies after 1991. One of the most important of these was the elimination of a largely illegitimate form of government and its replacement with more popularly supported political institutions. Not only did these new states identify with a more deeply rooted sense of national community than that of the old USSR, but they were also built upon democratic principles. Because democracies provide opportunities for the routine incorporation of public opinion in decision making, the governments are much more likely to be accepted as legitimate, and governmental decisions are less vulnerable to popular challenge. The new confidence of the governments, of the Soviet successor states was immediately apparent as protesters in 1992 and after found themselves largely ignored by their governments. As these new democracies consolidated their authority, demonstrations and "meetings" became ever less effective tools for shaping political decisions.

In addition to the decreasing effectiveness of the mass-protest tactic, reversals on nuclear power policy can also be traced to changing public opinion on this issue. This is particularly true of political figures but also extended to the public at large. For politicians who had once used the nuclear power issue as a bludgeon against their old Soviet overlords, nuclear power took on new meaning once the Soviet yoke had been thrown off. While opposition to nuclear power had a highly symbolic role in the

Nuclear Power and the Public: Looking to the Future

During their heyday, the anti-nuclear movements of Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Armenia proved remarkably successful in curtailing nuclear power construction in the region. From 1988 to 1991, the Soviet government, finding itself under the unexpected and unaccustomed onslaught of an angry public, agreed to the suspension, cancellation, or closure of over fifty nuclear reactors across the entire USSR. Confronted by mass opposition as well as the insubordination of city, oblast, and republic soviets who supported the anti-nuclear activists, the USSR government simply turned tail and ran. Never before having to take public opinion into account in their economic planning, Soviet decision makers found themselves unprepared to deal with mass opposition and were frightened by its apparent power. Interestingly enough, the government's long history of excluding the public from the decision-making process seems to have accentuated rather than limited the impact of the explosion of popular opposition to nuclear power that occurred in the late perestroika period.

After 1991, however, the influence of the anti-nuclear power movement in the Soviet successor states waned significantly. While both Russia and Ukraine, the Soviet Union's nuclear power flagships, had adopted

These cases illuminate important differences in the nature and strength of national identity in Armenia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, and the national enclaves of Tatarstan and Crimea. While in some cases little contention of national identity was required before a consensus was achieved among intellectual elites, in others the issues were heatedly debated and may still be far from resolution. These differences may be traced to numerous factors, including: the length of time incorporated in the USSR, method of incorporation, republic size, degree of ethnic homogeneity, preexisting histories of independent statehood, and cultural distinctiveness. In addition, however, it must be noted that the activities of movement entreprenuers and key political figures in shaping the discourse on national identity in each region, play a significant and completely unpredictable role in determining whether a consensus might be reached on the nature of the national community.
late perestroika period, after 1991 decision makers in the Soviet successor states were forced to consider the real consequences of halting their nuclear power programs. With shrinking GNP and energy shortages abounding (particularly in Armenia and Ukraine), the wisdom of closing viable stations or discontinuing construction on nearly completed projects became highly questionable. From a pragmatic point of view, the completion of any reactors near operational became both economically advantageous and desirable.

The larger public also seemed more aware of the practical consequences of opposing nuclear facilities. With evidence of economic crisis confronting them at every turn and shortages in electricity often directly affecting people's home and work lives, the symbolism of the anti-nuclear crusade was largely stripped away. The stark reality of cold, dark winters and halted industrial facilities loomed ominously. No longer did opposition to nuclear power mean opposition to Moscow's imperial domination; instead it meant undermining attempts of the newly independent state to survive economically, and it implied direct personal hardships. As a result, during 1992 and 1993, widespread popular opposition to nuclear power virtually disappeared across all of the former USSR. The Russian and Ukrainian decisions to cancel their nuclear moratoria brought statements of indignation from environmental organizations in Moscow and Kiev but failed to ignite the mass protests observed several years before.

In announcing modest expansion programs in Russia and Ukraine in 1993–94, government decision makers were apparently limited not by public opinion but rather by financial considerations. Due to the poor state of their economies, neither government could afford to launch an ambitious expansion program. While construction of nearly completed reactors may be financially feasible, initiation of new projects is not. While plans for new stations and reactors are under discussion in Russia and Ukraine (and even Armenia), it is widely acknowledged that current financial conditions do not permit adoption of such programs. A review of the Russian and Ukrainian press for 1994–1995 shows enormous problems in even keeping currently operating nuclear power stations running. Due to lack of payments by both governments and industrial users of electricity, almost all of the stations are reporting huge shortfalls in earnings. In a recent news conference reviewing the state of nuclear power in

Ukraine, chairman of the State Nuclear Committee, Mykhaylo Umanets warned that,

the branch is on the verge of bankruptcy and technical incapacity. The spring summer season [1995] of repair work is endangered. There are neither spare parts nor nuclear fuel to conduct repairs. Programs for improving the safety of power units are virtually no longer financed. 2

These cash crises have also resulted in inability to purchase new nuclear fuel to keep the stations running and in failure to pay nuclear station workers. Whereas the nuclear power protests of the late perestroika period were by opponents of nuclear power among the public, the protests of the 1990s are by the nuclear power workers. 3 At station after station, workers have demonstrated and held strikes in protest of the stations' failure to pay wages—often for months at a time.

Still, while mass opposition to nuclear power has dwindled since 1991, there is no reason to give up hope that an effective environmental movement may emerge to pressure these new governments to consider nuclear safety. While the symbolic function of these movements has been largely eliminated, the nuclear power problem still remains. Thus an increasing number of clubs and organizations that emerge now are likely to more accurately represent the environmental and safety concerns of their members than the earlier politicized movements of the perestroika period. Anti-nuclear and environmental activism is entering a new era, with new leaders, forms of organization, and tactics and within a new political context. With a more professional profile and sophisticated legal and lobbying tactics, environmental organizations have the potential to play an increasingly important role in shaping nuclear power and environmental policy in the Soviet successor states. The question still remains, however, as to the extent to which these new organizations will succeed in shaping popular opinion and mobilizing citizen concern and activism on a broad scale.