

# Ukrainian Memory Culture Post-1991: The Case of Stepan Bandera\*

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines Ukrainian memory culture, via an analysis of the case of Stepan Bandera (1909–59), the leader of the Ukrainian integral nationalists. Since the case of Bandera is particularly conflictogenic, its analysis makes it possible to measure the depths of the regional and ideological divides in Ukraine. Contrary to what has been often presented as a clash of two Ukraines—the Ukrainophile West vs the Russophile East—the Ukrainian situation seems to be much more complex. This complexity may serve as a saving grace, since it creates a space for maneuvering and new scenarios, including that of a “Third Ukraine” that strives for reconciliation.*

## **In Place of an Introduction: Reflections on the Specificity of the Ukrainian Situation**

Let me confess at the outset that the topic of historical memory is not a favorite of mine. I am not, however, alone in my aversion to this topic. In fact, I have yet to meet a single professional historian who approves wholeheartedly of the fashion for studying historical memory. The reason for this attitude is a simple one: historical memory is not history—historical memory is the *distortion* of history. As Ernest Renan wrote (I offer Eric Hobsbawm’s loose

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