WHAT DOES UKRAINE THINK?

edited by
Andrew Wilson

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Andrey Kurkov
Foreword

In 2004, after the initial success of the Orange Revolution, many Ukrainians believed that they had crossed the Rubicon, that there could be no going back to the old corrupt system, and that Ukraine was on the verge of taking its place in civilised Europe.

But Ukrainians do not have the eternal patience of the Russians. By 2006, they were already complaining about the government's activity, or lack of it. I heard young Ukrainian patriots expounding the thesis that the Orange Revolution had not changed anything because it had been peaceful and bloodless. "Where there is no sacrifice, there is no progress, no fundamental change, no change for the better," they said. I imagine that it was precisely these people, firm in their idea of sacrifice for the greater good, who at the beginning of 2014 built the first barricades on Hrushevskoho Street, which leads up to the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ukrainian Parliament. Those barricades immediately became the front line for the struggle between the new Ukraine and the old corrupt regime.

Essentially, the Maidan remained a place of peaceful protest until the end, but it also witnessed the mass shooting of demonstrators. The first shots rang out on Hrushevskoho Street. There, also, the first Molotov cocktails were thrown at police.

Today, in 2015, we can say for sure that there will be no return to the old Ukraine. But as yet, no one can say what kind of future awaits the country.

Is Ukraine dreaming of Europe? You could say so. But for Ukrainians, the "European dream" is not about becoming a member of the European Union, but about the advent of the rule of law and, as far as possible, freedom from corruption. The average Ukrainian also feels that the word "Europe" carries the idea of European social standards and European democratic values.

To be honest, the territory of this "European Dream" has never quite matched up with the geographical territory of Ukraine. The majority of people in Crimea and eastern Ukraine have remained indifferent to Europe. Why? Throughout Ukraine's independent history, both in Crimea and in the Donbas region, local politicians and the business elite have wielded more influence than their counterparts in Kyiv, and those politicians and business leaders have spared no cost or effort in trying to convince the local population that the politicians in Kyiv and western Ukraine were not only corrupt, but also openly fascist.

The people of the Donbas and Crimea were regularly fed horror stories about the central government's plans to ban the Russian language. The fact that 80 percent of the capital's population in fact speak Russian was never mentioned. Successive central governments made no effort to counter this propaganda. We can now acknowledge that this indifference to social policy was an act of criminal negligence. It was precisely the lack of any internal social policy aimed at consolidating the nation and encouraging inter-regional ties and cultural migration that allowed the Donbas and Crimea to accept the most incredible propaganda as the truth.

The best-known pro-Russian politician, and one of President Vladimir Putin's closest friends in Ukraine, is Viktor Medvedchuk. Before the start of the Maidan protests, he rolled out an anti-European campaign, the aim of which was to scare people away from Europe. His virtual civic movement, Ukraine's Choice,

plastered the country with campaign messages that were laughed at in Kyiv and in western areas of the country, but were accepted in all seriousness in Crimea and the east. In those areas, the Moscow Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church jumped on the idea that convergence with Europe would mean that heterosexuals would be forced to become homosexual. The battle for the future of the country moved onto a new plain. For pro-Russian Ukrainians, Europe took on the image of Satan.

Now, many Russian politicians and pro-Russian Ukrainians declare that the battle for the Donbas is a battle of Orthodox values against the European values "of the devil". But religious bigotry is only one aspect of the ideological war that Russia is waging against Europe on Ukrainian territory, determined as it is not to let Ukraine out from under its control. Putin needs Ukraine for his geopolitical project, "The Russian World". He needs Kyiv as the future spiritual capital of this world, for it was in Kyiv that the baptism of Vladimir the Great, Grand Prince of Kyiv, took place, and it was out through the Golden Gates of Kyiv that Christianity spread through Kievan Rus'.

Over a year has passed since the start of the Maidan protests. The Euromaidan has become part of history and is remembered less and less frequently.[1] The military conflict in the Donbas, which for various reasons Ukrainian politicians are afraid to call a war, is now the main theme that people connect with Ukraine. It is difficult to predict when or how this conflict will end, but the consequences will be comparable to those of the Second World War – it will take at least 20 years, no less than one generation, to heal the psychological wounds of those who have suffered during this conflict, to re-establish trust, and to forgive.

Each member of Ukraine's population of around 45 million can consider him or herself a casualty of this conflict, not only those who have been injured, who have lost their homes or their loved ones. From the outset of the conflict in the Donbas, only a handful of Ukrainians could accept the idea of handing the area over to the

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1 In this collection, the term 'Euromaidan' is used alongside the term Maidan protests to mean 'Maidan protests' to mean the protests in Ukraine in 2013-2014.

Russians, of rejecting it like a cancerous limb. Since then, that number has shrunk still further, partly because of the number of deaths and casualties among Ukrainian soldiers, volunteers, and civilians, and partly because of an awareness that Russia's interest in Ukraine is not confined to the Donbas. Indeed, the Russian Federation does not need the Donbas at all, as Russian politicians have said themselves. "We don't need Donbas. We need Kyiv!", declared the editor of the *Russian Observer*, Yegor Holmogorov, who is very close to the Kremlin.

For Russia and its politicians, Kyiv remains a long-term dream. In Ukraine, there remains no pro-Russian political force, but conservative, pro-Ukrainian groups have sprung up which, for the sake of countering Russian military and media aggression, call for the use of Russian-type tactics: censorship of the internet and control of the independent press, and, of course, of television. Against the background of war, for many Ukrainians these calls are justified.

Psychologically, Ukrainian society may be unstable, but ideologically the country is, as never before, steadfast in its striving towards Europe.

Andrew Wilson
Introduction

Too much of the debate and the diplomacy in the current crisis has been conducted without Ukraine. This volume allows leading Ukrainian experts to speak for themselves, giving a flavour of local debates in the terms and frames of reference that Ukrainians use. Especially in light of the swirl of propaganda, mainly Russian, around recent events, ECFR is delighted to give a platform for what Ukrainians call the "direct voice" of participants themselves.

We have gathered together three sets of papers: the first, on the political situation and the war in the east; the second, on Ukraine's changing national identity and regional dynamics, and on the way that war has fast-forwarded this change; and the third, on the difficulties of implementing much-needed reforms under conditions of war.

Ukraine has experienced so much turmoil in the last two years: the rejection of the key deal with the European Union after a Russian trade war in 2013; the subsequent Euromaidan protests and their bloody climax in February 2014; the flight of President Viktor Yanukovych; Russia's annexation of Crimea; the slow-burning war in the Donbas and the two supposed peace agreements negotiated at Minsk in September 2014 and February 2015; the tragedy of flight MH17; and the widening of sanctions

against Russia. Meanwhile, Ukraine held presidential and parliamentary elections in May and October 2014, formed a new government in December, and supposedly began the difficult process of long-delayed reform. With the economy on the brink of collapse, a $17.5 billion International Monetary Fund deal was agreed in February 2015. Complaints that Ukrainian oligarchs had only grown stronger amid the chaos were followed in March by the dramatic removal of the most powerful oligarch, Ihor Kolomoisky, as governor of Dnipropetrovsk.

The West has struggled to catch up and to analyse what is happening. It has too often found itself stuck in debilitating struggles to establish "facts on the ground" amid the whirl of propaganda. But several broad trends are clear enough. First, Ukraine feels that it has been left without adequate military or diplomatic support to fight war of overwhelming odds in the east. Kyiv has felt that France and Germany, the key EU negotiators in the so-called Normandy format, are so preoccupied with finding peace at any price that they have led Ukraine into a series of one-sided agreements that have only strengthened Russia's hand. Political commentators Oleksiy Haran and Petro Burkovsky discuss Ukraine's precarious position after the February 2015 Minsk agreement. They also question the EU's persistent obsession with asking "What does Putin want?" – which itself keeps changing – rather than addressing and opposing the consistent Russian modus operandi best summed up in Lenin's phrase, "Probe with a bayonet: if you meet steel, stop. If you meet mush, then push." Because the West has not recognised this strategy, it has struggled all the more to counteract it.

However, even as it seems to be fighting a losing war, Ukraine, currently minus Crimea and half of the Donbas, has a stronger sense of national identity than it had before the crisis. At home, Ukrainians debate whether the new patriotism was spurred more by the Maidan protests or by Russia's aggression. For example, Mustafa Nayyem, the journalist (and, since October 2014, member of the Ukrainian parliament) whose Facebook post helped trigger the first protests in November 2013, argued in early 2015 that:

the most important, if not the only result of the Maidan has been the political class's fear of society, which sets Ukraine apart from most other post-Soviet states. [...] All the other changes of the last year – the unprecedented rise of patriotic feelings, awareness of national self-identification, and even the sweeping tide of the volunteer movement – result more from the war than the Maidan. We still don't know the real results of last year's protests.[1]

There was only a week between the climax of the Maidan protests and the Russian coup in Crimea, which obviously makes it difficult to disentangle the two. The prominent historian Yaroslav Hrytsak takes a longer-term approach, discussing how Ukraine's now rapidly changing sense of national identity reflects older historical debates about the role of language and political culture and, after the failure of armed resistance to Soviet rule in the 1940s, about how to adjust to the reality of Soviet Ukraine. Like the Polish diaspora, but several years behind, Ukrainian intellectuals paved the way for a territorial concept of nationality, in which anyone can be a Ukrainian patriot, regardless of ethnicity, language, or religion. This idea is now at last becoming a reality on the ground. Contrary to Russian propaganda about Ukrainian fascism, Ukrainian society is more tolerant of diversity than it used to be; it is Russia that is expressing a narrow, post-imperial, and Orthodox fundamentalism.

Oksana Forostyna, the editor of the well-known intellectual magazine *Krytyka*, writes about her personal experience of the Maidan protests, and how the slogan "I am a Drop in the Ocean" expressed a new willingness to sublimate individual and sectional interests to promote the greater good of belated post-Soviet transformation. She also writes about how protesters reappropriated and reinvented national symbols to give them a new and more all-embracing meaning, and used pop culture to broaden the opposition to Yanukovych's regime, which was portrayed as "Mordor", defended by "Orcs".

1 Mustafa Nayyem, Facebook post, 21 February 2015, available at https://www.facebook.com/ Mustafanayyem/posts/10203987979405873.

The leading specialist on the Ukrainian right and far right, Anton Shekhovtsov, looks at the truth behind the Russian propaganda (which has too often been echoed in the West) about the role of Ukrainian far-right forces in recent events. The right-wing groups on the Maidan were small and divided, and were often manipulated by the regime's "political technology" to provide a scarecrow opponent against which to mobilise.

The philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko analyses Russian propaganda and its obsession with geopolitics, which he terms "zoopolitics" – politics as a survival-of-the-fittest battle between big beasts. He exposes Russia's cynical manipulation of proxy forces, "sur-terrorism" (the terrorism of the surreal), and separatist or more exactly "suicide states" like the mini-"Republics" in east Ukraine. Ukraine, in contrast, has attempted a "revolution of values", to make a decisive break with the corrupt and manipulative world of post-Soviet politics. In fact, Ukraine is at the forefront of the "Europe of values", which old Europe, the "Europe of rules", now too often takes for granted.

Many similar points are made in the study of key Ukrainian regions. The historian Andriy Portnov writes of how his home city, Dnipropetrovsk, previously a Soviet city through-and-through, the former home of the "Brezhnev clan" has become the centre of the new Ukrainian patriotism, and the key to preventing separatism from spreading from the rebel "People's Republics" to the rest of "Novorossiya", as Russian nationalists now label the whole of eastern and southern Ukraine. In building this patriotism, the leading oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky was able to strengthen his political and economic position as governor of Dnipropetrovsk. His removal as governor in March 2015 has so far done little to reduce his overall power or affect this formula.

The sociologists Tatiana Zhurzhenko and Tanya Zaharchenko, on the other hand, describe how another key border region to the Donbas, the old Soviet Ukrainian capital of Kharkiv, has only partly overcome its past as an ambiguous borderland. It has given birth to both the Russian separatist fight club Oplot and the Ukrainian

nationalist group Patriot Ukraïny. Despite continued terrorist attacks, including one in February in which four people were killed at a rally to mark the anniversary of the Maidan protests, the city remains precariously in Kyiv's orbit. But in contrast to the new, muscular patriotism of Dnipropetrovsk, this has been achieved by leaving the Yanukovych elite in power, playing a double game with Kyiv and Moscow. We still need to be wary, therefore, of assuming that the new Ukraine will speak with one voice.

The reform expert Olena Tregub, who joined the new government in the spring of 2015, discusses the paradoxes of the reform process in Ukraine. Ordinary Ukrainians are impatient to see the authorities move quicker, but opinion polls show that the public and the authorities have different priorities for reform. The government is concentrating on fiscal savings, national defence, and anti-corruption policy. However, surveys show that public opinion wanted the Maidan "revolution" to deliver on social goods and to punish the elites. In answer to the question "What are the reforms to you?", the most popular responses were abolishing MPs' immunity (58 percent) and raising pensions and salaries (51 percent). In another poll, the most popular reform was healthcare (43.6 percent).[2]

Finally, another journalist-turned-MP, Serhiy Leshchenko (from the same investigative website as Mustafa Nayyem, *Ukraïnska Pravda*), looks at the difficulties in taking on Ukraine's entrenched oligarchy. Moves to tackle corruption, reform the economy, and clean up Ukrainian politics will be frustrated until the underlying question of oligarchic power is tackled.

Together, the essays only begin to analyse the complexity of the problems – and opportunities – facing Ukraine. Events are of course still changing rapidly on the ground. Ukraine's fate will also depend on Russia's strategy. But they provide a good place to start.

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2   People and Reforms", Poll held 4–19 December 2014, *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*, available at http://opros2014.zn.ua/reforms.

POLITICS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Olexsiy Haran and Petro Burkovsky
Ukraine after the Minsk agreements

1

The second Minsk agreement, signed in February 2015, has not brought peace to Ukraine. The agreement was formally mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and led to a new armistice between Ukrainian forces and the troops of the Russian-backed separatists in the Donbas. Even so, Russian President Vladimir Putin has made nothing but vague commitments to halt Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Putin has denied Russian military involvement in the conflict, which he has spoken of as a "full-scale civil war" in Ukraine.[1] He has also denied Ukraine's right as a sovereign state to defend its territory and citizens, as well as its right to choose its own foreign policy priorities. Therefore, there is little chance that the new armistice deal will create the basis for an enduring peace agreement.

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1   See "Putin says Ukraine in 'full-scale civil war'", *Al Jazeera*, 23 May 2014, available at http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/05/putin-says-ukraine-full-scale-civil-war-2014523105526315334.html. At this point, even with Russian support, the separatists controlled only one-third of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which comprise 3 percent of Ukrainian territory – which hardly fits the description of "civil war".

Russia's tactics against Ukraine

After more than 22 years of peaceful coexistence with all of its neighbours, Ukraine has found itself in a state of "hybrid war" with the country that until now has been its biggest single trading partner and its key source of energy imports (of both natural gas and nuclear fuel). And the two nations have close cultural and historical ties. The past two decades have not been without incident: there were political crises in 1992–1994 about the Black Sea Fleet and Crimea, and in 2003 about the island of Tuzla; there were gas disputes in 1998–2000, 2006, and 2008–2009; and there have been numerous "trade wars". But despite the ever-present risk of escalation, politicians, the wider public, and expert communities in both countries agreed that, because of mutual dependencies and shared memory, armed hostilities between the two would end in a "lose-lose" situation.

However, since the Orange Revolution in 2004, the Kremlin has perceived Ukraine's moves towards democratic development and European integration as an existential threat to Putin's regime, needing to be neutralised by every possible political, economic, and security means.

The major exporting sectors of the Ukrainian economy, inherited from Soviet times, depend on access to cheap loans, Russian energy, and the Russian market. That being so, the Kremlin decided that the best way of taking over Ukraine in the medium term would be to exploit these weaknesses. Mechanisms for enhancing asymmetric dependence were implanted in the gas contracts of 2009 and in the $3 billion loan offered in 2013. In the security sector, Moscow ignored Kyiv's calls to demarcate state borders and to sign additional agreements on the details and conditions for stationing the Black Sea Fleet and allied formations in Sevastopol and Crimea (Russia's right to remain there was extended in 2010, but the conditions of stay were under-defined). In 2014, Russia used these loopholes to disguise the beginning of its aggression against Ukraine.

As the conflict has unfolded, the Kremlin has consistently used diplomacy as a cover to threaten Ukraine with full-scale war and to secure territorial and political dividends for the Russian-inspired separatists. Diplomacy has also provided a means to constrain Ukraine's responses. First, Moscow used May 2014's quadrilateral talks in Geneva between Ukraine, Russia, the United States, and the European Union to prevent Ukraine from taking action against the Russian terrorist groups that had seized the towns of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk in Donetsk province. In June, a few days after the presidential election in Ukraine, emissaries from the Kremlin approached president-elect Petro Poroshenko to demand that the Ukrainian armed forces declare a unilateral ceasefire. Ten days of consultations during the ceasefire ended with no result, but 27 Ukrainian servicemen were killed during the supposed pause in hostilities.

On 26 August, Putin met with Poroshenko in Minsk and threatened to eliminate the Ukrainian troops encircled in Ilovaisk and to occupy the port city of Mariupol if Ukraine refused to accept his conditions for a new peace agreement. On 28 August, NATO released satellite images showing Russia's forces crossing Ukraine state borders to engage in military operations against Ukrainian troops. Initially, the German government demanded that Russia explain the clear fact that its troops and equipment were present in Ukraine. But then, on 6 September and 19 September, the contact group, mediated by the OSCE, agreed ceasefire terms in Minsk, which meant that Ukraine was forced to withdraw its armed forces from the central districts of Luhansk and the southeast of Donetsk. Between September 2014 and January 2015, the separatists advanced and seized more than 500km2 of land beyond the agreed line of armistice.

The same scheme was used by Russia during the talks on 12 February 2015 in Minsk. Putin insisted that the Ukrainian army must leave the city of Debaltseve and the surrounding territory if Ukraine wanted to agree a functional ceasefire regime. On the ground, the separatists did not allow OSCE observers access to their positions around Debaltseve and continued shelling and attacking

the city after the ceasefire deadline had passed, until Ukrainian troops finally withdrew. Russia had wasted no time in violating the documents that it had just signed.

Ukraine's situation is made even more precarious by Russia's willingness to use so-called humanitarian aid to supply the separatists with ammunition and fuel for their armoured vehicles. The OSCE has monitored several convoys of military vehicles moving across the border to Donetsk. It confirmed Ukrainian military intelligence information that the armistice regime from October 2014 to January 2015 was used for military build-up by the separatist forces, with the direct involvement of the Russian armed forces.

Options to tackle Russia's aggression

Ukraine has few options as to how to react to Russia's combined diplomatic and military tools. The first option for Kyiv would be to enter into direct negotiations with the separatists. But there is no guarantee that this would stop their aggression or launch a process of "reintegration" and legitimisation, which would entail giving a formal "special status" to the areas controlled by the Russian-supported separatists and thereby further Putin's aim of using them to block decisions by the central government.

Kyiv's second option would be to continue fighting the separatists in the hope that the Kremlin decides that the costs are too high and that it should end the conflict. Or, Kyiv could recognise these territories as "temporarily occupied", sanitise the internal border, and concentrate on long-awaited domestic reforms, economic stabilisation with Western support, and building modern military capabilities.

The second Minsk accords give Kyiv no help in choosing a course. And they do not include detailed or concrete Russian commitments to restore the border regime and repatriate Russian "volunteers" and arms. Ukraine can neither persuade nor force the Russian authorities to take these steps – only European and/or transatlantic efforts can make this happen.

In 2014, the "diplomatic solution" approach, which included extensive talks and limited targeted sanctions, made little difference on the ground. In fact, because Russia consistently abused the process to make territorial gains, it made things worse. So far, Russia has suffered more from the fall in global oil prices than from existing Western sanctions. But more could be done to make diplomatic actions more effective.

For instance, the shooting down of flight MH17 in summer 2014 and the evidence that highly sophisticated Russian weaponry has been transferred to "volunteers" and irregular paramilitaries in the Donbas ought to open up the question of whether to re-establish the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (transformed into the Wassenaar Arrangement in 1996). This would mean prohibiting the transfer of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies to Russia and to countries or business entities that recognise the annexation of Crimea or cooperate with the Russian defence industry.

It is also vital to counter the possible use of trade wars and the manipulation of gas and electricity supply to Ukraine as tools of economic pressure. European countries could implement measures similar to those in the US Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014. That is, they could prohibit any transfers of credit or payments between financial institutions and Gazprom or other Russian state companies and banks, and/or prohibit any investment in equity or debt of longer than 30 days' maturity in Russian energy and defence companies.

In the longer term, the EU should assist Ukraine, as well as Central European member states, in minimising imports of Russian oil, gas, and nuclear fuel. To do so, it should build more trans-border interconnectors to supply fossil fuels from alternative sources, as well as support projects on energy saving and renewable energy or extraction of non-conventional oil and gas.

As George Soros has argued, a Western commitment to support the post-conflict reconstruction of the Ukrainian economy with the help of financing from the International Monetary Fund and the EU

would strengthen the country's internal stability and bolster public confidence in democratic and market institutions. This would help Ukraine to counter Russian efforts to use social tensions to recruit and arm separatists outside the Donbas.

Countering Russian aims

Western leaders should not repeat or echo Russian "political" demands in the course of diplomatic talks. By promoting the "federalisation" and neutrality of Ukraine, Russia wants to limit Ukrainian sovereignty, either by weakening the central authority or by prohibiting any kind of alliance with the Western (European) powers. The "non-bloc" status adopted by President Viktor Yanukovych to placate the Kremlin did not work. Moscow started its economic and information warfare against Yanukovych as soon as it became clear that the EU–Ukraine association agreement might be signed (even though, until then, the Kremlin had never formally objected to Ukraine's full membership of the EU).

Russia is denying Ukraine's right to strengthen itself by developing and enhancing economic and military ties with the EU and NATO. Its aim in doing so is to retain the right and power to punish its neighbour or to subordinate its sovereignty to supranational Russian-dominated bodies.

Moscow insists on "federalisation" because it wants preferential treatment for those players in Ukraine that represent Russian interests, even though the Russia-leaning Opposition Bloc won only 9.4 percent of the vote in the October 2014 elections, and the "People's Republics" in the Donbas currently control less than 7 percent of Ukraine's population. If such a lopsided "federalisation" were accepted, it would provoke great internal instability and it would involve unfair redistribution of national wealth and power. It would also incite minorities elsewhere to take up arms in order to obtain "special rights" and support from Russia. At the same time, radicals would likely take preventive action so as to save national unity. As a result, the country would be more divided and unstable

than it was before the war. Therefore, European politicians and the public should not be seduced by Russian talk about defending the rights of "Russian-speaking regions". It should be remembered that there were no violent interethnic conflicts in independent Ukraine before 2014, and before Putin's "defence of the Russian speakers" led to immense suffering and loss of life among these very people by means of Russian weapons.

It is also important that Europe keeps up diplomatic pressure on Russia about the future of Crimea and the fate of the Crimean Tatars. Russia's refusal to review the issue of the annexation of Crimea proves that Moscow has no interest in developing long-term peaceful relations with Ukraine. This means that any future Russian leader could claim any other piece of Ukrainian land, such as Kharkiv or Odesa, which could be regarded as being of strategic, economic, or "sacred" importance to the Russian state.

The fate of Crimea cannot be decided without the involvement of the Crimean Tatars, the only native people of Crimea. After Russia's annexation, the leaders of the Crimean Tatars cannot even visit Crimea (as was the case under the Soviet Union after 1944). The exiled leaders include Mustafa Cemilev (Qirimoglu), who spent 15 years in Soviet prisons and was subsequently head of the Crimean Tatar *Mejlis* for 25 years.

The biggest risk of any peace agreement on the Kremlin's terms is that the occupied areas of the Donbas could be made into a giant Russian military base on Ukrainian territory. Events in annexed Crimea show that the Kremlin does not plan to develop the recreational or agricultural or port infrastructure of the peninsula. Since April 2014, it has strengthened only the Russian army, air force, and fleet formations aimed at mainland Ukraine. In mid-February 2015, these forces started military training, simply to show that they are capable of starting operations at short notice from the Kremlin.

Another option for Kyiv is military deterrence, and the government wants to keep this option open if diplomatic solutions should in the end fail. Since December 2014, the Ukrainian authorities have been

working on a "plan B", which would include the declaration of martial law and the mobilisation of resources to halt the further advance of Russia and the separatists in the Donbas. This kind of policy would need the US and EU member states to provide military and technical aid to Ukraine to reinforce the Ukrainian armed forces and prevent the flow of refugees.

At the Wales summit in September 2014, NATO permitted its individual members to supply arms to Ukraine. This was one of the factors that forced Russia into the peace talks at Minsk. Therefore, there is no causal link between arms supplies and the escalation of aggression, as those who argue against supplying Kyiv have suggested. On the contrary, Russia waited for three months after the NATO summit to see whether the former Warsaw Pact members were willing to sell to Kyiv Soviet-type arms and equipment. Escalation only happened when it appeared that the West was not serious about supplying arms, and when Russia could see that Ukraine faced shortages in the field and would be forced to negotiate with the separatists, who could rely on unrestricted military supplies and support from Russia.

Only if and when the West decides to rearm Ukraine, at the same time as increasing sanctions, will Russia have to re-evaluate the cost of the conflict and the separatists be deterred and prevented from breaking the armistice in order to take new territory and move further inside Ukraine.

Oksana Forostyna

Poaching, simmering, and boiling: The declining relevance of identity discourse in Ukraine

2

One night in mid-December 2013, my parents, in Lviv, Western Ukraine, woke up as dozens of cars honked their horns. It was the sound of alarm: the drivers were heading to Kyiv's Maidan, the main square of the Ukrainian capital, which was under attack by riot police. The journey took at least five hours, as the police did everything to prevent people from coming to Kyiv from other cities. But people went to help the Kyiv protesters and to save their capital, to save something they considered belonged to them.

Things had not always been like that.

Just 12 years earlier, in 2001, during a previous round of protests, Kyiv police rounded up students from Lviv as they arrived at metro and railway stations. The authorities believed a real Kyivite would not cause trouble for the regime of Leonid Kuchma, then president of Ukraine. This was at least a half-truth: a considerable proportion of members of the protests on the Maidan in 1990 were students from Western Ukraine.

But in 2004, Kyiv joined the first really large-scale demonstrations in modern Ukrainian history: almost a month of protest on the Maidan, also known as the Orange Revolution. Protesters spoke

both Ukrainian and Russian – beginning a trend whereby language has ceased to be a marker of political preferences, for the first time in centuries.

After the territories around Kyiv were joined to Russia in the seventeenth century, the use of the Ukrainian language was severely restricted. The period of so-called Ukrainianisation in the early Soviet period was fruitful but short, and after it came the total, systematic, and extremely brutal extermination of Ukrainian writers and intellectuals. Ukrainian became either the marginalised language of "low" culture and peasants, or else was demonised as the language of the enemy. After Ukraine gained its independence, real power rested with members of the ex-Soviet industrial establishment, all of whom were Russian-speakers; even in Lviv, the language of commerce was generally Russian, as former apparatchiks chose business as their next career step. During the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s, language was part of political identity. If you spoke Ukrainian, you were most probably against the Kuchma regime.

The Orange Revolution spoke both Russian and Ukrainian, but it took another nine years to launch the birth of a new nation, the Ukrainian political nation, in which the use of Russian no longer betrays a pro-Moscow inclination. The most important thing in making the shift was establishing mutual trust between Western Ukraine and Kyiv, a process that began before 2004, but continued after the revolution. Labour migration from Lviv to Kyiv began in the 1990s. Political actors were the first, then came journalists, artists, scholars, and business owners. During Viktor Yushchenko's rule (2005–2010), the Ukrainian language, holidays, and culture became part of establishment culture, for better or for worse. Speaking Ukrainian and going to Western Ukraine for Christmas was no longer something odd and iconoclastic. However, the more important shift was in Kyiv, which became more tolerant and more able to absorb people from different regions and even different countries.

Outsiders' misconceptions

Meanwhile, "Ukraine fatigue" grew outside Ukraine, although it was really "discourse fatigue", that is, a sense of frustration with the lack of cognitive ability and vocabulary to explain Ukraine. None of the known frameworks fitted: Ukraine was too modern to be described as a backward society, too secular to draw a religious boundary, too complicated and contradictory in its national and cultural identities to be explained without boring an audience to tears with numerous details and digressions, too Soviet and corrupt to go West, and too Western and too ambitious to simply stay post-Soviet. A new mapping of this part of the world was needed.

The same absence of a framework made it easy to mythologise Ukraine when it made the headlines in late November 2013. The main misconception was that the turmoil in Ukraine was a clash of identities. Two mind traps and the meta-narrative behind these traps caused this delusion.

The first trap was generalisation: looking for and relying on similarities to previous conflicts. This approach is shallow, but comforting: identity conflicts can be transferred to the domain of irrationality, which means we do not need to treat these tribes somewhere beyond the EU borders as comprehensible or driven by rational narratives. Describing a complex phenomenon takes time and energy, while focusing on similarities to other events is easy. Hence all the headlines about Ukrainian Nazis – a phenomenon similar to something the audience already knows.

This also made it easy to miss the "anti-Maidan", the infernal mix of Soviet myths and xenophobia that drove the Ukrainian riot police, encouraged by the authorities, to terrorise the protesters. This was not an ethnic nationalist discourse, but something new and homegrown, which had been cultivated since the late 1990s but which found its way into mainstream ideology at the beginning of the Putin era. The discourse is not simply Soviet nostalgia or resentment, or a contradictory mix of Orthodoxy in its Russian version and martial atheism. The identity can only describe itself

negatively, as "anti-". First and foremost, its self-image is "anti-fascist", with a broad interpretation of who the fascists actually are. "Fascists" (the traditional Soviet name for German Nazis during the Second World War) were the enemies of the Soviet Union, so all enemies of the Soviet Union are fascists. Therefore, "anti-fascist" means, in fact, anti-Western, anti-American, and anti-European. It is also anti-Ukrainian and anti-Semitic, as long as Ukrainians and Jews are considered to be allies of the West.

The second trap is the assumption that things in Ukraine have remained the same since the last time the rest of the world paid attention. Indeed, Ukraine under the rule of Yanukovych and his clan stagnated, according to formal indicators. But, for locals, things were changing. Violence and police terror did not start on the night of 30 November 2013. A survey in 2012 showed that 60.7 percent of Ukrainians believed that no one was immune from violence at police stations, and only 1.5 percent believed that nobody was at risk of mistreatment.[1] The estimated number of victims of violence at the hands of police officers between 2004 and 2012 was more than one million. The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union registered 159 complaints of torture and other forms of ill-treatment in 2012.[2] But before 30 November this kind of terror was dispersed throughout the country; it had to become concentrated to be noticed by the outside world.

British historian and public intellectual Tony Judt described the meta-narrative behind these traps in his political testament, *Ill Fares the Land*:

> The politics of the '60s thus devolved into an aggregation of individual claims upon society and the state. "Identity" began to colonize public discourse: private identity, sexual identity, cultural identity. From here it was but a short step to the fragmentation of radical politics, its metamorphosis

1   Zhanna Zalkina, "Protection From Torture And Other Ill-Treatment" in Arkadiy Bushchenko and Yevhen Zakharov (eds), *Human Rights in Ukraine* (Kyiv: Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, 2012), available at http://helsinki.org.ua/index.php?id=1362722817 (hereafter, "Human Rights in Ukraine").

2   "Human Rights in Ukraine".

into multiculturalism. Curiously, the new Left remained exquisitely sensitive to the collective attributes of humans in distant lands, where they could be gathered up into anonymous social categories like "peasant", "post-colonial", "subaltern" and the like. But back home, the individual reigned supreme.[3]

That approach has determined the perception of Ukraine abroad: both because the mapping of Ukraine's numerous identities has been simplistic, and because their importance has been overestimated.

A new Ukrainian identity

From the late 1990s on, identity politics in Ukraine was a cheap way to make voters take sides in a virtual clash without actually debating, say, economic matters. Anyone can talk about identities, and identity is always about "me". A catchphrase of the discourse of Soviet resentment, "*Dedy voevali*" ("Grandfathers fought"), refers to Soviet soldiers in the Second World War. It is supposed to mean that the Second World War is still important, but its real meaning is, "*My* grandfather fought, *my* grandfather was a hero, and most likely a better person than yours". Or: "It's important that *my* mother tongue has a special status. It's important to make *my* life as comfortable as possible, and comfortable means that *my* beliefs cannot be judged or even updated."

On the eve of the Euromaidan, Ukrainian opinion-leaders seemed exhausted by this modus operandi, and by internal contradictions and the lack of mutual trust. As the protests began, activists, mostly from a media background, were preoccupied with organisational issues. The Left was disappointed to see the Right there, and vice versa; the Kyiv bourgeoisie was not yet involved on a large scale.

The night of the first mass police beatings (29–30 November 2013) changed things profoundly: an active minority's protest turned into

3 Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Allen Lane, 2010) (hereafter, Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*), p.88

a true mass movement. For many, 30 November and 1 December, the days when protesters occupied the city centre, represented the beginning of a personal transformation. People who had never been politically active made a huge jump from their private, normal worlds into something new, strange, and intense.

A group of Kyiv designers developed a series of visuals and a slogan for these demonstrations: "I'm a drop in the ocean." The slogan immediately caught on: it explained the nature of the compromise and the reason that traditional identities had lost their significance. After the mass beatings, Ukrainians faced an enemy so ugly that previous frameworks were pulled down. "I'm a drop in the ocean" also meant "I can compromise on my personal story and my personal preferences for the common good." The myth of a "Ukraine divided by nationalists" had been defeated.

This approach is also the opposite of "the subjectivism of private – and privately-measured – interest and desire" – the shared sense of purpose for which Tony Judt mourned.[4] You can call a protest an angry mob, and a shared sense of purpose can be labelled nationalism. But the key driver of the protests was solidarity, not mob fever, and after 1 December it was values and virtues, not identities. Had it been otherwise, the Maidan simply could not have functioned, let alone won.

The Facebook post that signalled the start of the Euromaidan in 2013 was written by Afghanistan-born journalist Mustafa Nayyem. The first person killed in the Euromaidan, in January 2014, was an Armenian, Serhiy Nigoyan, the son of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. The song "*Voiny sveta*" ("The Warriors of Light"), the battle hymn of the Maidan and the later war, is in Russian and was written by a Belarusian rock band. The author of the Maidan slogan, "I'm a drop in the ocean", is a Russian expat who lives in Kyiv. Ukrainian society has accepted and even values its diversity at this most critical of moments.

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4 Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, p.89.

Many observers focused on the nationalistic rhetoric on the Maidan, which was present, of course. But few noticed the language of compromise and of pop culture. The day after Lenin's monument was toppled in Kyiv, a collage of Yoda[5] on Lenin's pedestal appeared on the web. The wider public and even the media adopted the metaphors invented by younger protesters. For example, J.R.R. Tolkien's "Mordor" became the common name for the Yanukovych regime, and soon for Putin's Russia too. Berkut police and titushki (paid thugs brought to Kyiv) were "Orcs".

The general vision was the ultimate struggle between Good and Evil – which is why fantasy and well-known fictional characters were cited so often. In one Facebook post, on 31 January, after the bloody clashes on Hrushevsky Street, with the regime organising beatings and kidnappings, Ukrainian journalist Yevhen Kuzmenko compared this shocking new reality to *Harry Potter*:

> Slytherin with its cult of dark force; torturers in forests and dugouts, propaganda, wizards-activists are disappearing, and Muggles sympathise; a set of curses (and particularly "Cruciatus" for Bulatov),[6] the term "mudblood" as an analogue for [the] nickname "Maidown",[7] dementors aka Berkut – and Voldemort as a collective image for Putin, Kluyev, and Medvedchuk.

This black-and-white approach now seemed the best description of reality, and displaced previous identities. The protesters had no military gear, so they used cycling, snowboarding, and other extreme sports gear, as well as costumes for historical and fantasy re-enactment. In other words, they contributed their previous identities to the common mission. After days of fighting, the gear they used to wear for skiing in their previous carefree lives was worn away, and so was their past.

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5   A character in the *Star Wars* movie franchise.

6   An allusion to the kidnapping of Automaidan activist Dmitry Bulatov. He was tortured by his kidnappers and crucified.

7   A pejorative term for Maidan activists.

But sadly, it was exactly this black-and-white picture that outside observers could not grasp, even in times of war. As Ukrainian writer Yuriy Andrukhovych put it when receiving the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought in 2014:

> To doubt is quite a virtue of a genuine European. And my acquaintances – as they are genuine Europeans – also doubt. They ask me how is it even possible that Good was only on one side, and Evil on the other. Isn't the truth somewhere in the middle, or at least in between?

> I understand: they wish to give a chance of not being an ultimate Evil not only to [the] Kremlin, but also its puppet "separatists". Postmodern consciousness presumes reconciliation and excludes a black-and-white approach. "Court-martials", death penalty,[8] and tortures are not enough for my acquaintances. They are looking for villains on the both sides of the conflict.

It was not only the communists who lost their symbols in Ukraine in 2014. In fact, both communists and nationalists were bankrupted. Nationalist party leaders in parliament lost the initiative to the new anonymous radicals when the serious clashes began in mid-January (though party members and voters were involved). Nationalist icons have been adopted and reinvented by people who are far from being Ukrainian nationalists. People who never in their lives spoke Ukrainian suddenly called themselves *banderivtsi*, as only nationalists did before. The Maidan has filled words with new meanings that nationalists cannot control – that nobody can control.

This new liquid identity is difficult to grasp from the outside – it is not an easy job to understand it from the inside. Few people in Ukraine could imagine just a few years ago that the core of newborn Ukrainian nationalism would be Dnipropetrovsk, the city of Russian-speakers, proud of its glorious Soviet past. But the war with Russia pushes Ukrainians to reappraise their conventions on a daily basis.

8   Both on the territory controlled by Russia-backed terrorists.

Old symbols, previously considered outdated or even trivial, have now been radically redefined. The old salutation "Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to the heroes!" was rejected at the beginning of the Maidan as a relic of nationalist tradition. Now it has been normalised on a mass scale, because a new narrative was born behind it, and Ukrainian Russian-speakers, politically indifferent before, knew who the new "heroes" were, many of them personally. "Heroes" from history books may have meant little to them, but they respected the people standing next to them. They became their own story. That was history in the making, and we were drops in the ocean.

Yaroslav Hrytsak
Rethinking Ukraine

<div style="text-align: right">**3**</div>

The project to "rethink Ukraine" has been ongoing since the 1960s–1980s, when it was debated by intellectuals of the Ukrainian diaspora in North America, mostly historians who were born during World War I and left Ukraine after World War II, some escaping Hitler and most escaping Stalin.[1] They spent their formative years in Western Ukraine under Polish rule during the interwar years, but they did not succumb to the temptations of communism and fascism. Their intellectual guru was Viacheslav Lypynsky (1882–1931), one of the first critics of totalitarianism, in both its leftwing and rightwing varieties.

Lypynsky was born to wealthy Polish landowners in Right-bank Ukraine. He decided to shift from Polish to Ukrainian identity in order to supply the Ukrainian national movement with the elite that it had been badly lacking. At the time, Ukrainian nationalism articulated Ukrainian identity in ethnic terms – that is, the identity of the Ukrainian-speaking peasants who made up 90 percent of the local population. But peasants were a highly unreliable social base for any modern political movement, nationalism included, as was demonstrated by the defeat of the Ukrainian national

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1 See Ivan L. Rudnytsky, with the assistance of John-Paul Himka, *Rethinking Ukrainian History* (Edmonton: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1981).

revolution in 1917–1920, which Lypynsky blamed on the movement having too narrow a concept of Ukrainian identity.

Lypynsky stated that the basic difference between Ukraine and Russia was not language but a different type of relationship between state and society.[2] The centralist character of the Russian empire had created the autocratic regime, which should therefore be opposed by solidarity among the democratic elements of the various national groups of the empire, including the Russians.

He and the intellectuals who followed him initially made little headway among the Ukrainian diaspora, which was then mainly under the sway of Ukrainian integral nationalism. This ideology also took shape in the shadow of the defeat of the Ukrainian revolution and out of criticism of the nineteenth-century national movement, though its vision of the nation was radically different. For Dmytro Dontsov (1883–1973), the main problem with Ukrainian nationalism was not that it displayed too much ethnic hatred, but that it showed too little.

Many young Ukrainians took the side of Dontsov. His views served as the ideological base for the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN, 1929) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA, 1943). The latter was the largest example of anti-communist resistance before Budapest in 1956 – but was held responsible for the extermination of Poles and Jews, as well as for collaboration with the Nazis. After the war, surviving UPA officers and soldiers migrated to the West, and took control over most diaspora institutions.

They were called Banderites, after Stepan Bandera (1909–1959), the leader of the more radical faction of the OUN. His biography turned him into a symbol of heroic and uncompromising struggle against all national foes: he was imprisoned by the Poles in 1936–1939 and by the Nazis in 1941–1944, and finally assassinated in 1959 in Munich by a KGB agent. Until the very

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2   Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), p.18 (hereafter, Rudnytsky, Essays).

end, he believed the solution of the Ukrainian issue could only come from a Ukrainian national revolution – a large-scale uprising of "peasant masses" – just as in 1917-1920.[3]

Ukrainian nationalists saw Ukrainian liberals as their foes, and blamed them for betraying national interests. But the nationalists were also split internally. Even though local Ukrainians were moderately supportive of the idea of a Ukrainian national state, they could not accept Dontsov's ideology, which they considered too close to fascism.[4] By the end of the war, most Ukrainian nationalists had revised their ideological tenets and moved to more inclusive slogans such as "Freedom to Ukraine, freedom to all enslaved nations".

The led to some rapprochement with Ukrainian liberals, with the diaspora journal *Suchasnist* (1961) serving as a discussion forum for the further articulation of Ukrainian identity. Liberals and nationalists shared a common belief that a future independent Ukraine would emerge as a result of the evolution of Soviet Ukraine, not in mass scale national revolution, as Bandera had believed. This brought them close to the Paris-based Polish liberal journal, *Kultura* (1947). By the 1980s, the *Kultura* doctrine had become dominant among the leaders of Solidarity.[5]

The Ukrainian diaspora liberals and *Suchasnist* could not repeat this success, since Soviet Ukraine was much more isolated from the West than was communist Poland. Still, Ukrainian dissident thought in the 1960-1980s evolved in a similar direction to that of the Ukrainian diaspora liberals: it embraced a civic model of the Ukrainian nation to include all other people living in Ukraine, including Russians.[6] This model was accepted by Rukh (1989), the largest Ukrainian opposition movement in the Gorbachev era.

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3 Stepan Bandera, "Ukrainska natsionalna revolutsia, a ne tilky protyrezhymnyj rezystans", *Ukraintsii Samostiinik*, 1950, available at www.ukrstor.com/ukrstor/unr.html.

4 See Yevhen Stakhiv, *Kriz tiurmy, pidpillia y kordony* (Kyiv: Rada, 1999), pp.130-134.

5 See Bogumila Berdychowska, "Giedroyc ta ukraintsi", in Bogumila Berdychowska (ed.), *Jerzy Giedroyc ta ukrainska emigraciyaa. Lystuvannia 1950–1982 rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid', 2006).

6 Rudnytsky, *Essays*, p. 489.

To be sure, all this "rethinking of Ukraine" was built more on guesses than on solid empirical ground. However, the post-war decades witnessed three major changes: with the annexation of Western Ukraine, the Soviets gathered nearly all ethnic Ukrainian territory within discrete political borders; Jews and Poles, two historically large ethnic groups in Ukraine, were reduced to tiny minorities, while the number of Russians increased dramatically; and the majority of Ukrainians moved to cities, and thus Ukraine ceased to be a peasant nation. But what these changes meant for the evolution of Ukrainian identity was unclear, in particular whether Western Ukraine would counterbalance the Russian assimilation of Ukrainians who moved to the cities.[7]

1991-2004

The moment of truth came in 1991. In the December 1991 referendum, 90 percent of people voted for the secession of Ukraine from the Soviet Union. This proved the diaspora liberals right on two counts. Firstly, independent Ukraine emerged not as the result of a violent national revolution, but from the evolution of the USSR. Secondly, the percentage of those who voted for independence exceeded the number of ethnic Ukrainians (73 percent) and Ukrainian speakers (43 percent). This seemed to show the victory of the civic concept of Ukrainian identity. Furthermore, in order to solidify this victory, the Ukrainian government adopted a zero-option citizenship law, which granted automatic Ukrainian citizenship to all residents on Ukrainian territory – contrary to the demand of some nationalist groups to give citizenship only to those with adequate knowledge of Ukrainian.

But this apparent victory turned out to be problematic. The overwhelming support for Ukrainian independence was the result of an alliance of three very unlikely allies: Ukrainian-speaking Western Ukraine, former Communist leaders in Kyiv who supported independence in order to preserve their power, and worker movements in the Russian-speaking Donbas. This alliance broke

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7   Roman Szporluk (b. 1933) tried to introduce issues of modernisation and urbanisation into the "rethinking of Ukraine".

apart as soon as independent Ukraine plummeted into deep economic and political crises. The 1994 presidential elections revealed deep political cleavages that coincided with linguistic divisions, prompting Samuel Huntington to include Ukraine in his Clash of Civilizations as a classic case of a "cleft country".[8]

Political developments and available data suggested that Ukrainian nationalism was much more ethnic in its character, and had little appeal to Russian speakers in Ukraine.[9] However, the situation was not clear-cut. The new president of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, won in 1994 due to the overwhelming support of the Russian-speaking east, but after his victory he made a U(krainian)-turn; among other things, he learned to speak Ukrainian and tried to play down regional differences. During the next presidential elections (1999) he was supported by Western Ukraine, Kyiv, and the Donbas. This coalition looked like a reincarnation of the 1991 alliance, except that this time the Donbas was no longer represented by the workers' movement – which had practically ceased to exist – but by regional oligarchs who had made their immense fortunes from murky schemes under Kuchma's protection.

The Kuchma years (1994–2004) brought relative stability, but at high cost: corruption skyrocketed, elections were manipulated, and the opposition was suppressed. It seemed like the civic concept of Ukrainian identity could only be preserved by an authoritarian regime. It was even argued that the "civic" concept was responsible for the failure of post-communist transformation in Ukraine – in contrast to more successful Ukrainian neighbours with states based on ethnicity, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, or Slovakia.

The failure of Ukraine's post-communist transformation called for a further rethinking of Ukrainian identity. The most influential

8 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

9 See Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

reconceptualisation came from literary critic Mykola Riabchuk.[10] He saw the main reason for Ukraine's failure in its belated and incomplete nation-building. Since the Ukrainian nation was arrested in its development by the Russian Empire and then by the Soviet Union, Ukraine never became a thoroughly homogenised political and cultural space. Therefore, there is not one but two Ukraines. The first Ukraine is less Russified and Sovietised, and so possesses a set of fixed identities – Ukrainian language and national historical memory. The other Ukraine is represented by Russian-speakers and has a hybrid Soviet-Russian-Ukrainian identity. Modern Ukraine may look like the "first Ukraine" on the surface, but it is the "second Ukraine" that actually rules the country.

The problems began when Riabchuk started to map those two Ukraines: for him, they were epitomised by the twin poles of Galicia and the Donbas. But the two are exceptional cases that cannot be generalised, and there are other regions that defy this dichotomy. Instead of the theory of "two Ukraines", I would suggest the metaphor of "twenty-two Ukraines" as a more accurate way of describing the Ukrainian cultural and political map.[11] Neither can Ukraine's failures be reduced simply to problems of nation-building. In the Donbas and in many other Ukrainian regions, national identity takes second place to social (workers, pensioners) and regional (Donetskite) identities.

The task of rethinking Ukrainian identity has mainly been carried out by so-called national democrats and liberals. Their opponents, integral nationalists, have not carried out as much rethinking; instead, they still cling to the ideas of Dontsov and Bandera. Their Ukraine is largely Ukrainian-speaking Ukraine, and Russian speakers should be either assimilated or expelled.

Russian politicians and public intellectuals have done no "rethinking of Ukraine" either. Unlike their Polish counterparts,

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10 Mykola Riabchuk, Vid Malorossii do Ukrainy: paradoksy zapizniloho natsiyetvorennia (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2000).

11 Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Strasti za natisionalizmom Istorychni esei* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2004).

they did not want to concede any historical territories, like Crimea or the Donbas, to Ukraine. They continued to believe that Ukrainian identity is not a viable concept, and that sooner or later Ukraine should return to Russia.[12]

In between these two extreme poles were a variety of smaller groups and projects, such as the small but vociferous group of "Galician autonomists" who believe that the Ukrainian "West" should keep its distance from the Ukrainian "rest", either by obtaining political autonomy or, if the worst came to the worst and reunification with Russia were threatened, by separating from Ukraine. They saw Galicia (and some add neighbouring Bukovyna) as the only "true" Ukraine that had to be saved.[13]

The long discussions in 1991–2014 produced no consensus on Ukrainian identity. The 1996 Ukrainian constitution had two parallel – ethnic ("Ukrainian people") and civic ("people of Ukraine") – concepts. This ambiguity reflected the prevailing ambivalent public mood: even though a significant number of Ukrainians had some nostalgia for the Soviet Union, opinion polls showed that around two-thirds would vote for the independence of Ukraine – down from 90 percent in 1991, but still a majority in every region.

2004-2014

The Orange Revolution began as civic protests, and protesters included a wide spectrum of groups, from Ukrainian nationalists to Russian-speaking communists. Still, the protests led to a sharp division of Ukraine into two parts along linguistic lines, apparently confirming the "two Ukraines" theory, except that the "West" was now larger and, in fact, covered a lot of territory in the "East", stretching as far as the Russian-Ukrainian border. Furthermore, the 2004 Maidan protests took place in bilingual Kyiv.

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12   For the opinions of Yeltsin and his milieu, see Aleksandr Tsipko, "Stalin, holodomor i druzhba narodov", *Nezavisimaya*, 16 December 2008, available at www.ng.ru/ng_politics/2008-12-16/13_stalin.html.

13   See Eleonora Narvselius, *Ukrainian Intelligentsia in Post-Soviet L'viv: Narratives, Identity and Power* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012).

The new president, Viktor Yushchenko, failed to deliver political and economic reforms and embarked on the promotion of the Ukrainian language and a national version of history. His efforts were focused on "telling the truth" about the Ukrainian famine of 1932–1933 as an anti-Ukrainian genocide perpetuated by the Soviets. And at the very end of his term, he posthumously granted Bandera the title of "Hero of Ukraine".

Yushchenko succeeded on the issue of the Ukrainian famine, or Holodomor. A national consensus emerged that it was orchestrated by Joseph Stalin against Ukraine. Even though most Russian-speakers in the east would never accept Bandera as a hero, they shared the negative opinion about Stalin. But Yushchenko's other policies only paved the way for Viktor Yanukovych's victory in the next presidential elections, in 2010.

This ambivalence prevailed even under Yanukovych. On the one hand, his entourage deprived Bandera of hero status, and endowed Russian with the status of the second ("regional") official language in the Russian-speaking regions. On the other hand, Yanukovych learned to speak Ukrainian and consistently used it in his public speeches. He also continued to define the Holodomor as genocide and, most importantly, committed himself to bringing Ukraine into Europe.

The failure of the Orange Revolution intensified the debate on national identity. In the eyes of many, the Donbas with its Russian/ criminal character was responsible for that failure. These views were articulated, among others, by two prominent Ukrainian writers, Yuriy Andrukhovych and Vasyl Shklar. They suggested that for the sake of a better Ukrainian future, Ukraine had to get rid of this region.[14] Another solution – "Ukraine of the Centre" – was proposed by the Kyiv-based Russian-speaking intellectual Mykhaylo Dubynyansky. In order to overcome inner divides and simultaneously

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14 Oksana Klimonchuk, "Andrukhovych: Iakshcho peremozhut pomaranchevi, to Krymu j Donbasu treba daty mozhlyvist vidokremytysia," *UNIAN*, 22 July 2010, available at www.unian.ua/ politics/382762-andruhovich-yakscho-peremojut-pomaranchevi-to-krimu-y-donbasu-treba-dati-mojlivist-vidokremitisya.html; V. Shklar, "Yushchenko –tse Petlura, Tymoshenko – Skoropadskyi, a Ianukovychu nema analohii", *UNIAN*, 09 February 2011, available at www.unian.ua/ politics/458529-vshklyar-yuschenko-tse-petlyura-timoshenko-skoropadskiy-a-yanukovichu-nemae-analogiy.html.

save Ukraine from the authoritarian Yanukovych, he called for a new opposition that would be free of "'Galician and Donbas tribalists' and could replace hackneyed verbal labels like 'nation', 'Ukrainianness', [and] 'Slavic brotherhood' with the inclusive term 'citizens'".[15]

But "values discourse" also grew in popularity, calling for a paradigmatic shift from identities to values. In this interpretation, the failure of the Orange Revolution was not due to the weakness of Ukrainian identity – as a matter of fact, that identity had proved to be relatively strong – but was due to the failure of the Orange leaders to deliver reforms. To put Ukraine on a new track, there needed to be a new elite with a new set of values and broad social support – above all, from the younger generation and from the middle class.[16]

All three of these new discourses have been implemented during the Euromaidan and its aftermath. The Euromaidan started as a mass public protest and was branded the "Revolution of Values" or "Revolution of Dignity". The 2014 presidential elections were the first elections in the history of Ukraine in which the winner, Petro Poroshenko, won by a landslide. In many senses, he and his Bloc could be considered as the epitome of the new "Ukraine of the Centre". But the leaders and parties that symbolised nationalism, including Svoboda, were, at least initially, discredited. Finally, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the "Russian Spring" (Russian-Ukrainian conflict) led to the de facto separation of the Donbas.

This is not to say that the West/East divide (the "two Ukraines") has ceased to exist. It is still visible in the relatively strong showing of the Opposition Bloc in the second, parliamentary, elections held in October 2014. But the divide has receded, and politics built on this divide are doomed to failure. In the words of Andrei Illarionov, a former Putin adviser, the entirety of the Kremlin strategy towards Ukraine in 2014 was built on the instrumentalisation of the West/

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15 Mykhailo Dubynianskyi, "Zoloto seredyny", *Ukrains'ka Pravda* , 28 June 2010, available at www. pravda.com.ua/articles/2010/06/28/5173726/.

16 See Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Zhyttia, smert ta inshi nepryjemnosti* (Kyiv: Grani, 2008).

East divide. Putin was sure that once his army entered Crimea, it would be warmly welcomed by all the Russian-speaking regions in the "other Ukraine".[17]

That never happened. More than that, there emerged a new dividing line: the strongest support for military action against the Donbas was in the neighbouring Russian-speaking region of Dnipropetrovsk.[18] Future developments will depend to a large extent on the position of two other Russian-speaking cities, Odessa and Kharkiv. But, for the moment, the failure of the 2014 "Russian Spring" in Ukraine, as well as recent sociological surveys, suggest that they are closer to Dnipropetrovsk than to Donetsk.[19]

The future of Ukraine largely depends on the readiness of new elites to deliver long-expected reforms. But this is not directly related to identity politics. As the history of Ukrainian independence reveals, despite all its inner divisions, Ukraine has proved to be a relatively stable community that can withstand the deepest inner crises and even military aggression from outside.

17 Andrei Illarionov made this statement in an interview with Ukrainian journalist Dmitriy Gordon in January 2015; so far, the interview is not currently available online.

18 "Mnenia i vzglady zhytelei Iugo-Vostoka Ukrainy, April 2014", *Zerkalo Nedeli*, 18 April 2014, available at http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/mneniya-i-vzglyady-zhiteley-yugo-vostoka-ukrainy-aprel-2014-143598_.html.

19 Aleksei Navalnyi, "Sotsopros FBK po Kharkovskoi i Odesskoi oblastiam", *Obozrevatel*, 23 September 2014, available at http://obozrevatel.com/blogs/52409-sotsopros-fbk-po-harkovskoj-i-odesskoj-oblastyam--evropa-rossiya-novorossiya.htm.

THE VIEW FROM
THE REGIONS

Tatiana Zhurzhenko
Ukraine's Eastern Borderlands: The end of ambiguity?

4

Ukraine's eastern borderlands have been considered problematic ever since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 because of their geographic proximity and strong economic ties to Russia, the significant share of ethnic Russians among the local population, the dominance of the Russian language in the region, and the emergence of influential regional clans that took a hold on Ukrainian politics. And yet, for almost a quarter of a century, the eastern regions of Ukraine seemed to have coped with the trauma of Soviet collapse and accepted their new peripheral status.

In 2014, the Euromaidan, the fall of Viktor Yanukovych's regime, and the swift annexation of Crimea caused a deep political disorientation in the east and fuelled pro-Russian separatism, which led to a military conflict in the Donbas. With the return of power politics to the European continent, the comfortable post-Soviet ambiguity of Ukraine's borderlands is now in question.

What is left of the "East"?

One year after the Euromaidan, it is clear that there is no such single regional entity in Ukraine as a pro-Russian "east" or "southeast".

The "east" has shrunk to the separatist-controlled "People's Republics" in Donetsk and Luhansk. Having struggled for two decades to reinvent themselves, other cities such as Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhya, Odessa, and Dnipropetrovsk now proudly display their national identity through national symbols and colours in public space, street art, and patriotic posters. This demonstrative "Ukrainianisation" reflects a new pro-Ukrainian consensus among local elites, business, and civil society, one that has emerged in response to the serious threat of internal destabilisation and Russian invasion. Even if the Kyiv government is not trusted in eastern Ukraine, the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Russia-controlled territories of the Donbas and the grim economic prospects of Crimea make the pro-Russian option far less attractive, even for determined Russophiles.

Moreover, for the first time in the post-Soviet period, mass grassroots social initiatives are springing up in the east and south – sprouts of a new Ukrainian civil society, which failed to develop after the Orange Revolution but now has a second chance to make its mark. The volunteer movements that emerged from the Euromaidan are now focusing on providing support for the army and the National Guard, care for the wounded in local hospitals, and aid to refugees from the Donbas. They are connected nationwide through social networks, they raise money in the country and abroad, and they influence local politics. This new civil society represents something new for the east – a Ukrainian identity that is territorial and political rather than ethnic or linguistic.

These positive developments are only one side of the story, however: opinion polls and electoral behaviour evidence a more complex reality. The "borderland" ambivalence has not disappeared. In the October 2014 parliamentary elections, Kharkiv emerged as a stronghold of the pro-Russian Opposition Bloc, which also did well in Zaporizhzhya, Mariupol, Kryvyi Rih, and even Dnipropetrovsk. A recent opinion poll demonstrates that, despite the city's proximity to the military conflict, only 6.9 percent of people in Kharkiv see the fighting as a war between Russia and Ukraine, compared to 39.6 percent nationwide. As

with Russians in Russia, 38.1 percent of Kharkovites see the conflict as being between the United States and Russia, as compared to only 12.1 percent nationwide.[1] Russia's approval rating still remains high in the east: 79.9 percent of Kharkovites have a positive attitude towards Russia, and 70.2 percent have a favourable view of the Russian leadership (compared to only 19.7 percent nationwide).[2] Many Ukrainians in the east prefer not to notice Russian aggression, blame Kyiv for the conflict, and claim to be neutral or apolitical.

Ambivalence in identities and loyalties goes alongside political polarisation and radicalisation: another disturbing trend in the east and south is the rise both of pro-Russian extremist groups and of the Ukrainian far right. The pro-Russian group Oplot and the Ukrainian far-right group Patriot Ukraïny both emerged in Kharkiv, long before the outbreak of violence in 2013–2014. From the events of 2013 on, they were empowered by the temporary power vacuum and the new demand for paramilitary structures from both sides of the political divide.

Radicalisation and polarisation are not going to disappear with the "outsourcing" of the military conflict to the Donbas. In Kharkiv, the brutal attacks by titushki, the mass clashes on the streets, and the public humiliation of captured Euromaidan activists in winter/spring 2014 have not been forgotten. People still want revenge for the collective trauma of the tragic fire in Odessa that cost dozens of lives, mainly pro-Russian activists. Throughout the winter, a series of acts of sabotage and terrorist attacks, fortunately not yet serious, have occurred in these two cities. While pro-Russian extremists are mostly hiding underground, radical Ukrainian nationalism, far-right groups, and even neo-Nazis have become more visible. Local officials who have to rely on a fragile pro-Ukrainian consensus take a relatively tolerant attitude, considering Ukrainian radicals the lesser evil or even viewing them as

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1 "People and Reforms", Poll conducted 4-19 December 2014, *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*, available at http://opros2014.zn.ua/reforms.

2 "Ukraina—Rossiya: nervnaya lyobov', neravnaya nenavist'", *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*, 3 October 2014, available at http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/ukraina-rossiya-nervnaya-lyubov-neravnaya-nenavist-_.html.

temporary allies. All of this suggests that the long-term trend in the cities of the east and south will be towards political instability and an increase in violence and criminality.

Even the relative strength of civil society is not simply positive. A weak and fragmented state can be easily captured by old or new clans, and non-transparent deals between local bosses and the Kyiv government substitute for much-needed decentralisation.

The changing view of the Ukrainian-Russian border

Ukraine's land border with Russia is almost 2,000 km long. It extends through urbanised and densely populated territories, and is traditionally one of the busiest borders in the region in terms of cross-border traffic, labour migration, and intensity of economic ties. So, strengthening border and custom controls after independence in 1991 was never a very popular idea in the border regions of Ukraine, since a significant part of the local population made a living from cross-border trade, contraband, and seasonal jobs in Russia. This economic reality corresponded with the inertia of Soviet mental mapping – the new border was often perceived as an artificial division, especially by the older generation. The delimitation and demarcation of the border has taken more than 20 years and was still unfinished before Russia's aggression in 2014. With the outbreak of the armed conflict in the Donbas and Russia's intervention, Ukraine lost control over 300 km of its state border.

In spring 2014, the porous border with Russia was blamed for aggressive crowds with Saint George ribbons[3] invading eastern Ukrainian cities and storming public buildings. Then, in the summer, it permitted Russia to send massive assistance to the separatists in the form of arms, munitions, and military personnel. Meanwhile, Ukrainian border checkpoints have been established along the new dividing line between Ukraine-controlled territory

3   These ribbons are a widely recognised patriotic and military symbol in Russia. Since 2014, they have become associated with a symbol of loyalty to the Kremlin and/or Russian nationalist leanings.

and the territories controlled by the separatist "republics". Even if a new military escalation of the conflict can be prevented, it seems unavoidable that the Ukrainian-Russian border will be militarised for the foreseeable future.

These dramatic developments have been reflected in the rapidly changing popular view of the Ukrainian-Russian border. In 2001, a sociological survey conducted by the Centre for Peace, Conversion, and Foreign Policy of Ukraine showed significant differences between the attitudes of Ukrainian experts and those of ordinary citizens towards the status of Ukraine's border with Russia. The overwhelming majority of experts (87.5 percent) assessed the transparent and un-demarcated border with Russia "negatively, as a proof of Ukraine's exposure to potential risks". More than half of the experts (56.2 percent) wanted a "Ukrainian border equally protected along its entire perimeter", while another 25 percent favoured "the western border being more open than the eastern one". By contrast, the results of a general opinion poll demonstrated that the majority of Ukrainians (59.7 percent) saw a transparent and un-demarcated eastern border "positively, as a proof of a special relationship between Ukraine and Russia". Almost half of the respondents (46.7 percent) wanted to see the eastern border "more open than the western one".[4]

But by June/July 2014, more than half of Ukrainians (58 percent) wanted Ukraine to close the border with Russia (compared to only 32 percent in May of the same year), with 34 percent against this measure. Half of the respondents (49 percent) supported the idea of introducing a visa regime with Russia, with 41 percent against (compared to 54 percent in May). However, the idea was least popular in the south, in the Kharkiv oblast, and in the Donbas.[5]

Despite regional differences, the border with Russia is now largely seen in Ukraine as a source of instability and of military threat, which represents a major change in everyday geopolitics. This

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4   O. Sushko and N. Parkhomenko, "Kordoni Ukrainii", Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine, 2001.

5   "Otnoshenie k situatsii na Vostoke", Rating Group Ukraine, 22 July 2014, available at www. ratinggroup.com.ua/ru/products/politic/data/entry/14098/.

tendency is reflected in various projects to secure and fortify the border with Russia.

In June 2014, Ihor Kolomoisky proposed a wall of reinforced steel along the perimeter of the border with Russia. Critics pointed out that such a wall, even if helpful against illegal crossing and smuggling of weapons, would not be able to stop a military invasion, and denounced it as a PR stunt designed to consolidate Kolomoisky's image as a Ukrainian patriot. Some experts noted that such a project could not be implemented before Ukraine resumed control over the whole length of its border with Russia. But President Petro Poroshenko publicly supported the idea and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk announced its official beginning in September. Yatsenyuk, who personally visited the construction site in the Kharkiv oblast, proposed to call the project the "European rampart" – the de facto eastern border of the EU.[6]

For Moscow, this is yet more proof of the West pursuing the isolation of Russia, with Ukraine just an instrument in this exercise. In Ukraine, however, the popularity of the idea cannot be explained by anti-Russian sentiments alone, but must also be put down to deep-rooted security concerns. And various grassroots initiatives have emerged to improve the infrastructure of the border and support the border guards.

Borderlands as a laboratory of post-Soviet nostalgia

Two observations from the early 2000s, when I was doing research in several border villages of the Kharkiv and Belgorod oblasts, today appear to me in a new light. A decade ago, the break with the Soviet past was still particularly painful, and the Ukrainian present had not fully arrived. The social and economic transformations of the 1990s – land reform, the dismantling of the collective farms and the emergence of private agricultural companies, rising unemployment, and social insecurity – were attributed by the locals to the new Ukrainian state and were inseparable from the fact of the new

6   "Yatseniuk: Project Wall to allow Ukraine to get visa-free regime with EU", Interfax Ukraine, 15 October 2014, available at http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/228802.html.

border. I wrote then: "Spatial and temporal boundaries are closely related: the new border manifests the irreversibility of the post-1991 political and social changes, thus separating not only Ukraine from Russia, but also the new Ukrainian state from an imagined Soviet Union."[7] A considerable number of locals, many of whom watch Russian TV, perceived Russia not as a neighbouring state but as a contemporary version of their former country.

On the new social and economic asymmetries that resulted from different dynamics of transition on both sides of the border, I wrote: "Neither Russian nor Ukrainian citizens perceive the new border as a cultural boundary. Rather, it is different social provisions related to citizenship and the labour market situation that make the border 'real' in their eyes."[8] In the early 2000s, economic and social indicators were better in the Belgorod oblast, across the border in Russia, than they were in Kharkiv, and salaries, pensions, and social benefits were higher in Russia than in Ukraine.

My research helps to understand the role of post-Soviet nostalgia in the pro-Russian separatist revolt. I suspect that both of the above mechanisms were even stronger in the miners' settlements and mono-industrial towns of the Donbas. There, being cut off from the (idealised) past by the new border must have evoked an even stronger feeling of marginality and social injustice. From this perspective, post-Soviet nostalgia is not an intellectual or ideological phenomenon of Ukraine's eastern borderlands but, instead, a structural one. It is not a mindset caused by a lack of patriotic education, but something embedded in the "habitus" of life in the borderlands.

During the last decade, this particular spatio-temporality of the Ukrainian-Russian borderlands correlated with Russia's efforts to reinvent itself as a centre of power, an alternative to the West, and a better version of the Soviet Union. Using the emotional language of Soviet memory, it appeared as an imagined homeland for all those

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7   Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "'We used to be one country': Rural transformations, economic asymmetries and national identities in the Ukrainian-Russian borderlands", in J.L. Bacas & W. Kavanagh (eds). *Border encounters: Asymmetry and proximity at Europe's Frontiers* (NY and Oxford: Berghahn 2013) (hereafter, Zhurzhenko, "We used to be one country"), p.194.

8   Zhurzhenko, "We used to be one country", p.211.

lost in the borderlands as grey zones of the post-Soviet transition. The sudden crystallisation of pro-Russian separatism in spring 2014 was caused by a number of external as well as internal political factors, but it can also be explained by the collapse of the post-Soviet spatio-temporality. With the fall of the Yanukovych regime, the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state and its borders was put into question, and 23 years of post-Soviet history were reset to zero. While Kremlin commentators spoke about "returning" to the moment of 1991 and reconsidering historical choices made at that time, millions of Ukrainian citizens suddenly became feverish about "coming home", mistaking Putin's Russia for their imagined Soviet homeland.

Whatever happens to Ukraine's east, however, the moment of post-Soviet nostalgia as a mobilising force seems to be over. The war in the Donbas has become a new rupture in contemporary Ukrainian history, a point of crystallisation for identities, discourses, and narratives for decades to come. The mainstream Ukrainian narrative on the conflict in the east as a Ukrainian-Russian war and a Ukrainian fight for independence will most likely become the foundation for a new ideological consensus. However, in the east – and not only in the Donbas – it will coexist with alternative narratives which present the current events as a Ukrainian civil war, a conflict of the West with Russia, or even as a heroic fight against a "fascist junta". Even if the Donbas is reintegrated into Ukraine, these narratives will resonate with subaltern memories of a traumatised population, open hostility towards Kyiv, and anti-Ukrainian sentiments. Ukraine will have to deal with the consequences of a civil conflict and should consider various mechanisms for reconciliation, from a truth commission and investigation of war crimes, to economic and cultural decentralisation. Only a strong and democratic Ukrainian state and a self-confident civil society, which do not feel threatened by Russian aggression, will be able, in the long run, to reintegrate the ambivalent east.

Tanya Zaharchenko
East Ukraine Beyond Pro and Anti: Monochrome Prefixes and Their Discontents

<div style="text-align:right">5</div>

War has its own language. The war in Ukraine is no exception: its newly coined — or re-coined and re-adapted — vocabulary is actively circulating in social networks and finding its way into mass media. In line with the visceral nature of armed conflict, many of these terms are variations of hate speech. One example is the word *vatnik* — a negative characterisation of an aggressive and unthinking Russian patriot — and its creative deviation, vyshyvatnik, which describes a Ukrainian patriot of similar qualities.[1] Predictably, certain negative words, such as *ukrop*, have been re-appropriated as positive by their targets.

Despite the steady stream of observer commentary on this ever-developing conflict language, however, its two arguably most destructive components have remained largely unquestioned. These are the exceedingly popular prefixes, pro- and anti-, which are ever-present both in media coverage of the war and among the general public. For example, the Wikipedia page for '2014 pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine', which has accumulated over 4,000 edits as of early December 2014, features approximately 150 instances of the prefix pro- in this.[2]

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1 For more examples see Kseniia Turkova, "Slovar' peremen: Kakimi slovami i memami obogatilsia nash iazyk posle Evromaidana", *Vesti mass-media*, 21-27 November 2014, available at http://reporter.vesti-ukr.com/78528-slovar-peremen.

2 "2014 pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine", *Wikipedia*, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2014_pro-Russian_unrest_in_Ukraine.

These vague placeholders portray a binary distribution of loyalties: we all think we know what being pro-Russian means. But in fact they lure their users into a false sense of morphological security. Their use results in black-and-white discursive formations behind events that are far from monochrome in reality. These prefixes are, in other words, semantic chameleons.

A non-binary conflict

A number of commentators have addressed the non-binary nature of the Ukrainian conflict from its very beginning.[3] I have argued that recent battles have revived the "two Ukraines" framework as, on the surface, a plausible explanation for events. The international media have often wrongly painted the Maidan as two parts of the nation pulling in opposite directions. In reality, the Ukrainian uprising was not an either/or struggle between European and Russian allegiances. For the majority of participants, the demonstrations were linked to a growing sense of dignity – and of its violation. A wide spectrum of society took part in the protests, and both Ukrainian and Russian language was used among the participants.

Granted, as a result of the ongoing war, increasingly fewer residents of Ukraine are prepared or willing to recognise or acknowledge Russia's own struggles with an oppressive regime. The loss of these formerly culturally and linguistically hybrid hearts is one of Russia's most momentous losses in the current conflict, surpassed only by lost human lives. It would be inaccurate, however, to describe this process as the "Ukrainianisation" of the east. The east has always had Ukraine in it; now, it is simply making a choice to foreground that part of itself in response to aggression. No amount of coercion could have achieved the same effect.

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3   See, for instance, Rory Finnin, "A Divided Ukraine: Europe's Most Dangerous Idea", *CRASSH*, 27 March 2014, available at www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/blog/post/a-divided-ukraine-europes-most-dangerous-idea; Volodymyr Kulyk, "On Christmas Carols, Othering, and Intergroup Differences", *Krytyka*, 30 December 2013, available at http://krytyka.com/ua/community/blogs/pro-kolyadky-inshuvannya-ta-mizhhrupovi-vidminnosti; Tanya Zaharchenko, "A Ukrainian Thesaurus in Russian", *The King's Review*, 15 May 2014, available at http://kingsreview.co.uk/magazine/blog/2014/05/15/ukrainian-thesaurus.

My own Russophone friends and family in east Ukraine have been less than supportive about my decision to accept a 12-month postdoctoral fellowship in St Petersburg. The region (and Kharkiv in particular) has seen massive volunteering efforts in support of the Ukrainian army. Nevertheless, its inhabitants remain generalised and reduced to a monolith of "far eastern" lost causes by those commentators who continue to view Ukraine in black-and-white. For example, one writer made the monumental assumption that "the West should come to an agreement with Russia whereby Ukraine will be split in two, with the Russian-speaking areas annexed to Russia (as they should always have been)."[4]

The divisiveness and generalisation of such statements overlooks the actual complexity and range of responses to the war in regions that can loosely be termed "eastern". They neglect not just implicit nuances, but also explicit numbers: recent surveys have, once again, "revealed [east of Kyiv] a far more diverse region than the pro-Russian monolith commonly portrayed in both Russian and Western media".[5] In the "general south-east" cited by this survey, only 8.4 percent of respondents agree that "Ukraine and Russia should unite into one state".

As Serhiy Zhadan has tirelessly emphasised, the "Donbas is varied [*raznyi*], and too many people forget this when they try to gauge it. This cake is composed of many layers."[6] The notion of "mentality", another chameleon placeholder that relies on the assumption of a static human condition, has returned with a vengeance. It frequently surfaces in discussions by present-day "defenders of Ukraine from the Donbas", as one commentator ironically termed them in a recent Facebook exchange. In a divisive essay that exemplifies such efforts, a writer from the western city of Ivano-Frankivsk asserts: "Entirely different people live in [Ukraine's] far east; people whom we westerners

4 Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry, "Why the West should let Russia have eastern Ukraine", *The Week*, 29 August 2014, available at http://theweek.com/articles/444136/west-should-let-russia-have-eastern-ukraine.

5 "Mneniia i vzgliady zhitelei iugo-vostoka Ukrainy: aprel' 2014", *Zerkalo nedeli*, 18 April 2014, available at http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/mneniya-i-vzglyady-zhiteley-yugo-vostoka-ukrainy-aprel-2014-143598_.html.

6 "Zhivaia biblioteka Donbassa. Sergei Zhadan, poet, pisatel'", *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 27 January 2015, available at http://life.pravda.com.ua/person/2015/01/27/188444.

can neither comprehend nor accept, and certainly not consider our own. […] they're absolutely nothing like us."[7] Is this a "pro-Ukrainian" statement? What makes for a "pro-Russian" statement, then?

Having moved to Russia temporarily, I expected to face (and was repeatedly warned to prepare for) a mass of people who unequivocally support the armed conflict in Ukraine. Sure enough, people with this viewpoint did come my way. What I did not expect to find was so many people who are fully aware of ongoing events and firmly opposed to their government's actions. I walked among thousands of them, for instance, at the March for Peace on 21 September 2014. I talk to them every day at home and at work. One cannot help but wonder: where are Vladimir Putin's alleged 86 percent? And, likewise, where are the voices of the population with whom I actually interact?

The spiral of silence

These much-needed voices could be trapped within what the German scholar Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann described several decades ago as a "spiral of silence", in her attempt to explain why some groups stay quiet on a particular issue, while others are more vocal.[8] Noelle-Neumann proposed that people regularly scan their surroundings to discern the current climate of opinion, the cumulative distribution of views on a given issue. Individuals are more likely to voice their position if it coincides with what they perceive (not always accurately) to be the majority opinion. This, in turn, enhances the supposed widespread status of that opinion, sending minority opinion holders into yet another twist of a self-perpetuating spiral.

Three main conditions are necessary for a spiral of silence to occur. Firstly, the issue in question must have a moral component. Secondly, there must be a time factor involved: a perceived climate of opinion plus an estimation of its future development. Thirdly, mass media must take an identifiable position on the issue. The resulting

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7 Taras Prokhas'ko, "Dalekoskhidnyi ukrains'kyi front", *Galyts'kyi Korespondent*, available at http://www.gk-press.if.ua/node/11885.

8 Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion – Our Social Skin* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993) (hereafter, Noelle-Neumann, The Spiral of Silence).

conglomeration, whether accurate or not, affects individuals' readiness to speak out, which in turn affects their impression of the climate of opinion. Over time, the resulting process establishes one view as the predominant public attitude.[9] And mass media have a great impact on the population's view of which opinion is in the majority.

Among the many methods used in the Russian media's portrayal of Ukraine, three appear to be most widespread. The first is the creation of the myth (*mifologema*) that Ukraine equals chaos. In Russian, for instance, several words can be used to denote "uprising", including *volneniia* and *besporiadki*. But President Putin has repeatedly used *pogromy* in his remarks, because this word signifies strong negativity and discomfort.[10] The second method is what journalists call the creation of a frightening alternative, namely the spread of fascism elsewhere (versus "here"). Third, as often happens in war, is the general dehumanisation of opponents. The notorious fabricated case of the boy crucified by Ukrainians is an often-cited example.[11] Together, these methods contribute to what is known as an echo chamber – a condition in which information is reinforced by repetition inside a sealed system.

There are studies of similar syndromes in the United States during the Gulf War.[12] But in today's Russia the echo chamber is doubled, or inverted: it happens externally as well as within the country. Observers outside Russia tend to assume they know the dominant opinion on the inside. On the inside, however, things are far from being so clear.

In October 2014, for instance, the independent channel TV Rain reported that "74 percent of Russian residents believe that Russia and Ukraine are not at war with each other" (though this included 15

9   Dietram A. Scheufele and Patricia Moy, "Twenty-Five Years of the Spiral of Silence: A Conceptual Review and Empirical Outlook", *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2000, p. 11.

10   For example, see "Putin: Pogromy v Ukraine malo sviazany so vzaimootnosheniiami s ES", *Korrespondent*, 2 December 2013, available at http://korrespondent.net/world/russia/3273758-putyn-pohromy-v-ukrayne-malo-sviazany-so-vzaymootnoshenyiamy-s-es.

11   "Lozh': raspiatie v efire Pervogo kanala", *Stopfake*, 15 July 2014, available at http://www.stopfake.org/lozh-raspyatie-v-efire-pervogo-kanala.

12   William P. Eveland, Jr., Douglas M. McLeod, and Nancy Signorielli, "Actual and Perceived U.S. Public Opinion: The Spiral of Silence During the Persian Gulf War", *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 1995.

percent who abstained).[13] But that meant that 26 percent were aware of the war, despite the myths propagated by the mass media. Some 70 percent of Russians also think that every newspaper should present its own version of events, and only 12 percent maintain that mass media should have a unified voice.[14]

So why, amid people capable – as any other people – of thought and analysis, does the spiral of silence continue to turn today? I submit that the crippling situation in contemporary Russia is sustained by the skilful way that the country's authorities handle warfare's semantic chameleons: the prefixes pro- and anti-. Any idea that opposes the authorities and their ideology is nimbly positioned and attacked as anti-Russian. It is no accident that liberal thinkers in Russia are habitually called "traitors" (*liberal-predateli*).

Such formulations generally come first from politicians wrapping the flag around themselves and their positions, equating the nation with their own policies. Critics of the Vietnam War were dubbed anti-American, rather than anti-LBJ or anti-Nixon. Having mastered this potent etymological weapon, and having fused the roots of his regime with the many traumas of the past century, Putin's government continues to wield binary prefixes to its own advantage. They are frequently supplemented by the similarly expedient diagnoses of -phobe and -phile. But this is not a region being torn apart by unchanging and unchangeable geographically oriented currents – eastwards or westwards, pro- or anti-. Rather, it is in the grips of manufactured pseudo-patriotism, best illustrated by a 2001 Boris Grebenshchikov song: this patriotism "means simply this: kill the one who thinks otherwise" (*patriotizm znachit prosto ubei inovertsa*).

The political scientist Alexei Makarkin has observed that in Russia a "patriotic" point of view tends to mean not "stabbing one's country in

13   "Patriotizm po-russki i po-ukrainski: liubov' k rodine = podderzhka vlasti?", *TV Rain*, 22 October 2014, available at http://tvrain.ru/teleshow/here_and_now/patriotizm_po_russki_i_po_ukrainski_ljubov_k_rodine_podderzhka_vlasti-376971/.

14   "Rossiiane – patrioty i puritan", Levada-Tsentr, 28 February 2014, available at http://www.levada.ru/28-02-2014/rossiyane-patrioty-i-puritane.

the back".[15] "It is becoming unpatriotic to criticise socio-economic aspects: one immediately joins the ranks of 'national traitors'. So society has swung towards general approval."[16] This cultivated sense of general approval is the result of an active spiral of silence.

In my experience, the influential position that pro- and anti- have acquired among contemporary Russian mental constructions was best illustrated in the 2014 March for Peace in St Petersburg, through a discussion I had with a Russian friend about our opposing perceptions of what had taken place that day. As I blogged shortly afterwards:

> At the end, we walked away in silence. "You know," said Max, "I feel like I was just told that my mother is a whore." – "Why?" – "Well, this is my home. I can't hate it, or be asked to hate it. Even if your mother does something wrong, you still stick by her. Right?"

> I thought, suddenly, – what if this is the spot that hurts? "You stick by her," I agreed, "But you also tell her how you feel. Wouldn't you? Besides... your mother has agency. She can do something right or wrong. And Russia? Things are being done in her name. She isn't doing them. It is precisely if you love her that you stand up for her. Right?"

> We thought a bit as we walked.

> "Tell me. Was this a March for Peace or an anti-Russian march?" asked Max, lighting a cigarette.

> I thought about it. Then I told him honestly: "If we use these terms, then it was the most pro-Russian march I've seen in ages."[17]

15 Elena Mukhametshina, "S tem, shto mezhdu Ukrainoi i Rossiei idet voina, soglasilic' 70% ukraintsev i 26% rossiyan", *Vedomosti*, 22 October 2014, available at http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/35054791/bratskij-vzglyad-na-vojnu.

16 Olga Churakova, "'Levada-tsentr': Rossiyane vse bol'she lyubyat Vladimira Putina, no ne vidyat v etom kul'ta lichnosti", *Vedomosti*, 15 October 2014, available at http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/34735801/putin-v-roli-pushkina.

17 Tanya Zaharchenko, "March for Peace in St. Petersburg", *Of Memory and Identity*, 22 September 2014, available at http://memoryidentity.wordpress.com/2014/09/22/march-for-peace.

Noelle-Neumann notes that there is always one minority "that remains at the end of the spiral of silence process in defiance of the threats of isolation".[18] Such is the case in Russia today, just as it was during Soviet times. Due to the effects of the inverse echo chamber, the voice of this group is not generally heard abroad. Yet it exists, and it contains multitudes. "The whole nation minus one person is no longer the whole nation. Minus one – that's not an all-national approval. Minus fifty, minus one hundred – that's not an all-national approval", said Natalya Gorbanevskaya about her decision to protest against the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Likewise, millions of Russians minus those who care about and ache for Ukraine is no longer an all-national lack of compassion or of "the spirit to be free (as a Donbass-based poet has claimed)". Like the Donbas, Russia is not a monolith. It is also a cake with many layers.

Having been to both sides of the border near which I was born, and having heard mutual hate speech in both directions (*vatnik* and *vyshyvatnik*, like pro- and anti-, are two sides of one futile coin), I submit once again that one of the reasons binary prefixes of war are so impotent and yet so harmful in describing the current situation is that, arguably, being pro-Ukrainian these days can also mean being pro-Russian. It can imply wanting to see Russia as a non-aggressor country that continues to exist in those of its people who reject the manipulative official rhetoric and the anxious "kill the one who thinks otherwise" parody of patriotism. This framework – "for your freedom and ours" – does not fit into the opposing discursive formations we have been using. But it was expressed perfectly by Alexander Galich in 1968: "Fellow citizens, our homeland is in danger – our tanks have entered foreign soil!"

Watching holiday greetings from Ukraine's soldiers this winter, it was noticeable how many of them spoke Russian as they reconfirmed their commitment to serve and protect Ukraine, straight from a warzone.[19] Strong voices, both academic and

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18   Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence*, p. 170.

19   5 kanal, "Sviatkovi pryvitannia vid biitsiv ATO", YouTube, 2 January 2015, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0097KGGTepg.

creative, have risen over the past years against the simplified division of Ukraine into Ukrainian and Russian parts. It is time to revise our tendency to interpret the situation as black-and-white by dividing its supposed sides into pro- and anti- as well. Until then, it will remain difficult to articulate why, at this very moment in Russia, my *Vil'na Ukraina* (Free Ukraine) necklace is the most pro-Russian symbol that I can think of.

Andriy Portnov
"The Heart of Ukraine"? Dnipropetrovsk and the Ukrainian Revolution

6

In 2014, my home city of Dnipropetrovsk surprised everyone when, unlike neighbouring Donetsk – the centre of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" – it declared its devotion and loyalty to Ukraine with unexpected strength. How did this happen and why?

Empire to Soviet

The first urban settlement on the territory of present-day Dnipropetrovsk was the Polish fortress of Kudak, destroyed by Russian troops in 1711. The city of Ekaterinoslav ("glory to Catherine") was conceived by the empress's favourite, Prince Potemkin, as a symbol of the Russian Empire's approach to Constantinople. In 1787, Catherine II herself laid the foundation stone of what was intended to become the world's biggest Orthodox church. The deaths of Catherine II and Potemkin put an end to the plans to build a city with a university, musical academy, and big houses in the style of Roman and Greek buildings. Ekaterinoslav then became probably the biggest Potemkin village in the empire.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the city was awakened from provincial lethargy by rapid industrialisation. "The new Athens" turned into "the southern Manchester", one of the centres of the iron-mining industry. The Bolshevik Grigory Petrovsky, a worker in the city's biggest metallurgical plant, *Brianskij zavod*, became head of the Soviet Ukrainian government, and in 1926 the city where he had worked in his youth became Dnipropetrovsk (Dnieper River+ Petrovsky).

Both imperial and Soviet cities were centres of Jewish life. At the turn of the twentieth century, Jews constituted around 40 percent of the city's population. A special ("blessed") importance of the city for the Hasidic tradition is that the Seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), grew up there.

Dnipropetrovsk enjoyed its "golden age" during the period of stagnation, when the Kremlin was run by "one of the city's men" – Leonid Brezhnev. The Soviet leader was a native of the industrial town of Dniprodzerzhynsk (Kamenskoe before 1936), a short distance upriver from Dnipropetrovsk. The southern city was the unofficial capital of the Brezhnev stagnation.

In 1959, because it was home to the Yuzhmash rocket factory, Dnipropetrovsk was listed as a semi-closed city. This meant that mentioning the city's military complex enterprises was prohibited and foreigners were banned from visiting the city. The largest among Ukraine's 11 "closed" cities, Dnipropetrovsk had a population of 917,074 in 1970. Many locals viewed the closed status as a special privilege, a guarantee of somewhat better food supplies, and evidence of direct links to Moscow. In the Soviet period the locals did not see Kyiv as their capital and were fond of the joke about three periods of Russian history: pre-Petrine, Petrine, and Dnipro-petrine (dopetrovski – petrovski – dnipropetrovski, with the first two names relating to the first Russian emperor, Peter the Great).

In search of post-Soviet meanings

The city's open status (since 1989) and the breakup of the Soviet Union represented a great challenge for Dnipropetrovsk. The Parus hotel became a symbol of the city's evolution: the construction site of a semi-finished skyscraper by the river Dnieper was abandoned in the late 1980s and painted, by the early 2000s, in the colours of Privatbank – Ukraine's largest bank, "born" in Dnipropetrovsk and owned by the Privat group of Ihor Kolomoisky and others.

The Dnipropetrovsk "talent pool" preserved its leading position in independent Ukraine during the first years (1994–1999) of the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, previously a director of Yuzhmash. But the city lost ground after the Orange Revolution in 2004, and especially after the "Donetsk president" Viktor Yanukovych came to power in 2010. Dnipropetrovsk belatedly found itself in a post-Soviet situation of confusion and loss of meaning. In 2012, the population fell below one million, down from 1,191,971 residents according to the 1989 census.

The image of a city that was "neither number one nor number two" seemed more about the past than the future. Nevertheless, the mythology of the Brezhnev era suited Dnipropetrovsk's status in the new Ukraine; it was ideologically indeterminate and amorphous while at the same time playing on a lost "special status". In 2012, the city council named a street on the city's outskirts after Brezhnev, and a bronze bas-relief joined the portraits of other distinguished natives in the city centre.

Significantly, the local authorities turned to the Brezhnev myth not immediately after Ukrainian independence, but during the second decade of its post-Soviet existence. The city's symbols, approved in 2001, perfectly reflected the same ambivalence and indeterminacy – national, but with a taste of Soviet historical narrative. The coat-of-arms shows a Cossack village on the present-day site of the city, but, to use the official description, "the top left carries blue and yellow colours,

the same as on the flag of Ukraine, and the top right – red and sky-blue – the colours of the flag of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic". But this is the same city in which a Lenin monument was torn down on 22 February 2014, after many hours of strenuous efforts. Lenin Square was renamed Square of the Maidan Heroes in May. And a huge trident (the emblem of Ukraine) was painted on the semi-finished building of the Parus hotel.

A new "forepost of Ukraine"?

Given the escalating conflict in Ukraine, many expected Kuchma's political birthplace to take the customary pragmatic wait-and-see approach, and throughout the Euromaidan unrest in Kyiv it did so. In late January 2014, the local authorities appointed by Yanukovych brutally dispersed a pro-Ukrainian protest at the building of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration.

But Russia's policy in Crimea, Ukraine's unwillingness to respond militarily, and the subsequent annexation of the peninsula put an end to the public passivity of "the worker city". Ukrainian flags began to fly in large numbers on the balconies of apartment blocks, on business offices, and on automobiles. The message quickly found firm support among the new regional authorities headed by the billionaire and chief of the Privat group, Ihor Kolomoisky, who was appointed head of the oblast (region) state administration in March 2014. Kolomoisky's economic influence spreads into several sectors of the Ukrainian economy: banking, oil, chemicals, mass media, and airlines.[1]

After the Russian intervention in the Donbas, which escalated to full-fledged warfare, the emphatic "Ukrainianness" of Dnipropetrovsk stood in sharp contrast to attitudes in Donetsk and Luhansk. Soon, jokes started to circulate about "Ukraine joining the Dnipropetrovsk Region" and analytical articles began to appear arguing that "the east of Ukraine" had shrunk to the Donbas.[2]

1 Wojciech Kononczuk, "Oligarchs After the Maidan: the Old System in a 'new' Ukraine", OSW, 16 February 2015, available at http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-02-16/oligarchs-after-maidan-old-system-a-new-ukraine.

2 See Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "From borderlands to bloodlands", *Eurozine*, 19 September 2014, available at http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-09-19-zhurzhenko-en.html.

The sudden "conversion to patriotism" in Dnipropetrovsk resulted from a combination of different, often situational, factors. The first was the resolute stance of the active pro-Ukrainian minority. The second was the relative weakness of pro-Russian activists. The third factor was the stance adopted by the Privat group, and its managers' skills in handling conflict. Unlike the elite in Donetsk, who from the start claimed "neutrality" and put on a show of negotiation with the rebels, Privat adopted an unequivocally pro-Ukrainian position and did everything it could to establish control over law enforcement.

Kolomoisky acknowledged in one interview: "Certainly, Dnipropetrovsk was not so explosive a place as Donetsk or Luhansk".[3] In post-Soviet Ukraine, these two cities, unlike Dnipropetrovsk, were the preserve of businesses linked to Yanukovych and the Party of Regions. The flight of the "Donetsk president" from Kyiv and the rapid collapse of the status quo caused Donetsk and Luhansk to become concerned.

For many in the Donbas, the Eurorevolution threatened the breakup of an order that had appeared unbreakable. But for Dnipropetrovsk it meant, among other things, the fall of the "Donetsk clan", which was anticipated with some malicious glee. These different attitudes were largely nurtured by geographical and informational factors: the Donbas's closeness to the border and the difference in media consumption (Ukrainian television in Dnipropetrovsk, Russian television in Donetsk and Luhansk).

The political and economical phenomenon of "Dniprokolomoisk"

The newly invented "Ukrainianness" of Dnipropetrovsk is not a creation of Privat, but it was Privat that helped turn it into a new kind of local patriotism. Kolomoisky's team have centred their political legitimacy on the maintenance of pride, peace, and tranquillity. The prize was the transformation of one of the country's most influential oligarchs into one of its most powerful politicians, walking a fine line between what is permissible and what is not (and sometimes crossing

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3 Sonya Koshkina, "Igor Kolomojskii: Ne dai Bog okazatsia na meste Turchinova!", LB.ua, 16 May 2014, available at http://lb.ua/news/2014/05/16/266620_igor_kolomoyskiy_ne_day_bog.html.

the line). The Privat group announced a reward of $10,000 for captured separatists. When the referendum was held on the special status for the Donbas in May 2014, Privat pushed another referendum in the border districts of Donetsk on whether they should join Dnipropetrovsk (although this purely image-building event had no practical consequences). Kolomoisky's associates did not hide the fact that sometimes they had to act unlawfully. According to Hennadiy Korban, Kolomoisky's deputy, if everything had been done in accordance with the law, "we would have had Chechen mercenaries here long ago".[4]

Dnipropetrovsk has also become a centre of medical treatment for wounded Ukrainian soldiers and a cemetery for dozens of unidentified fighters. The active participation of the Dnipropetrovsk authorities in the war has lent them additional legitimacy and given them standing to criticise the central government in Kyiv. However, both legitimacy and support are far from absolute, as was shown in the parliamentary elections in October 2014.

Figure 1: Results of the 2014 parliamentary elections in Ukraine

Political party	Results in the Dniproppetrovsk region	Ukrainian national results
Opposition bloc	24.27%	9.43%
Petro Poroshenko Bloc	19.4%	21.9%
People's Front	12.2%	22.1%
Self-Help	8.6%	11%
Oleh Lyashko's Radical Party	7.6%	7.4%
Communisty Party of Ukraine	5.3%	3.9%
Voter turnout	47.9%	52.4%

Source: Central Election Commission results, available at
http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp001e#

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4   Gennadi Korban, "Vziav avtomat i kazhu: 'Anu, suky, stavajte do stinky. Doky vy nabyvajete kysheni, tam liudy hynut`", Gazeta.ua, 17 June 2014, available at http://gazeta.ua/articles/events-journal/_vzyav-avtomat-i-kazhu-anu-suki-stavajte-do-stinki-doki-vi-nabivayete-kisheni-tam-lyudi-ginut/564393.

The Opposition Bloc, which absorbed the leftovers from the Party of Regions and some of Yanukovych's associates, came first in the party vote. It performed especially well in the big industrial city of Kryvyi Rih, where the Donetsk oligarch Rinat Akhmetov owns most of the industrial assets. The major reason for its success was the growing dissatisfaction with the Kyiv government (which is not necessarily linked in popular perception to Kolomoisky and his team). The majority constituencies also saw the victory of many "oldies", but Kolomoisky's deputy, Borys Filatov, and Right Sector's leader, Dmytro Yarosh, also won seats. Meanwhile, Kolomoisky vastly expanded his influence in national politics.

The "Privat" group between business and politics

The convergence between business and politics, or rather the deep mutual penetration of these two spheres, has been a major feature of the entire post-Soviet period in Ukraine. The transitional authorities during the crisis appointed local businessmen to key governmental posts to stabilise the situation in the east. Thus, Serhiy Taruta became governor of Donetsk, and Kolomoisky was made governor of Dnipropetrovsk. Taruta was unable to prevent the armed conflict in his region and was soon dismissed from his post. Kolomoisky, on the other hand, during less than 12 months of governorship became a political figure with influence and power considerably more extensive than a mere governor.

The Privat group has also reaped economic rewards since Kolomoisky became a politician: it benefited to the tune of 20 billion hryvnia (approximately €1 billion), including a contract for fuel supplies to the army signed by the state-owned oil refining company Ukrtatnafta (close to Kolomoisky), a stabilisation credit for Kolomoisky's other key asset, Ukraine International Airlines (MAU), and a state refinancing deal for Privatbank.[5]

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5   See, for example: Tymofiy Kramariv, "U 20 mlrd. hrv obiyshovsia Ukraini patriotyzm Ihoria Kolomoyskoho", Texty.Org.Ua, 25 November 2014, available at http://texty.org.ua/pg/article/editorial/read/57018/U_20_mlrd_grn_obijshovsa_Ukrajini_patriotyzm.

Other revelations show discrepancies between Kolomoisky's patriotic rhetoric and his efforts to promote his business interests. In particular, Maidan activists protested against new air carriage rules approved by the State Aviation Administration (headed by MAU's former top manager) – a veiled attempt to monopolise the market in MAU's favour and to limit access to the Ukrainian market for low-cost air carriers. Kolomoisky's enterprises also initiated a series of standoffs with the business empires of Rinat Akhmetov and Dmytro Firtash, both notable for the use of volunteer battalions in armed raiding tactics against their companies in several regions of Ukraine.

The greatest scandal was the conflict around Ukraine's biggest oil company, Ukrnafta, in which 52 percent of the stock is owned by the Ukrainian state company Naftogaz, about 42 percent by the Privat group, and the rest by minority stockholders through companies registered in Cyprus. The Privat group has in fact been managing Ukrnafta for 12 years, relying on the provision in Ukrainian law that 60 percent + 1 share constitute a quorum at a meeting of stockholders. Ukrnafta has yet to pay the state 1.7 billion hryvnia in dividends (around €85 million). In January 2015, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law whereby 50 percent + 1 share constitute a quorum. But, after a heated debate, deputies voted for a wording of the law which refers to joint-stock societies with "stock owned by the state". In Ukrnafta, the state owns 52 percent of the shares indirectly, via Naftogaz, so Ukrnafta was not affected by this piece of legislation.

The law was finally adopted on 19 March 2015, prompting a six-day stand-off with Kolomoisky's armed guards in front of the Ukrnafta office in Kyiv. The head of the SBU (the Ukrainian state secret service) spoke about an "organised crime group under the support of the high-ranked Dnipropetrovsk officials", and President Poroshenko promised to dissolve "private armies", in spite of Kolomoisky's veiled threats about the lack of decentralisation reforms.[6] Ukrainian media claimed that the role of the West, especially the United States, was decisive in

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6   The chronology of the events can be found in Sevil Musaeva-Borovyk and Maria Zhartovska, "Shist' dniv Kolomoiskoho. Jak prezydent pozbavyv oligarkha vlady", *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, 26 March 2015, available at http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2015/03/26/7062702/.

supporting Poroshenko's decision to calm Kolomoisky down and force his resignation on 25 March.[7] In an interview with the *Washington Post,* Kolomoisky claimed he has "no future plans in politics" and remains "more a businessman than a politician".[8] But it is not yet clear whether Kolomoisky's resignation meant the beginning of the de-oligarchisation of Ukraine, or was just an episode in the country's power struggle and the efforts to secure a state monopoly on violence.

Conclusions

The transformation of Dnipropetrovsk into "the heart of Ukraine" cannot be reduced only to the activities of the governor-oligarch Kolomoisky and the Privat group, although it is connected to them in many ways. Kolomoisky and his team were able to fill the local power vacuum after the Maidan unrest. The extraordinary influence of the Privat group in Dnipropetrovsk is not only the result of successful crisis management, but also the product of the weakness and imbalance of the central government in Kyiv. It is still unclear how this (im)balance will function after the resignation of Kolomoisky and his closest collaborators. The new regional authorities from the Privat group were able to skilfully make use of the peculiarities of Dnipropetrovsk's self-identification and to offer the city a new formula of local patriotism, closely connected with political loyalty to Ukraine. It was in Dnipropetrovsk that Ukrainian political nationalism has manifested itself most clearly – the kind of nationalism that does not involve the abandonment of Russian language or identity.

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7   Yulia Mostovaya, "Lokhmotia gneva", *Dzerkalo Nedeli*, 27 March 2015, available at http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/lohmotya-gneva-_.html.

8   Karoun Demirjian, "A Ukrainian governor's billions couldn't save him from being fired", *Washington Post*, 26 March 2015, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/03/26/a-ukrainian-governors-billions-couldnt-save-him-from-being-fired/.

UKRAINE – RHETORIC AND REALITY

Volodymyr Yermolenko
Russia, zoopolitics, and information bombs

7

Russia's national coat of arms depicts an eagle with two heads. Russian propaganda, too, is a two-headed beast. A two-faced Janus, it looks in opposing directions, and its contradictory directions show that there is no solid ideological basis for a new Russian project.

Within Russia and for the Russian-speaking audiences in the former Soviet Union, Russia's key television channels send a profoundly traditionalist message. Russia, as the most important heir to the USSR, is an old civilisation, they say. It smashed Nazism; it has been a stronghold of Eastern Christian culture; it has always had a "special way", a Russian *Sonderweg*.

For international audiences, however, Russia presents itself differently. It is part of a "brave new world", a new multipolar world order that has a profoundly futurist agenda. This new world will displace the global order centred on the declining and old-fashioned West.

This is the profound contradiction of the two-headed eagle of Russian propaganda: to the domestic audience, the Kremlin says that Russia's strength lies in the past, while to the international audience it says that Russia's strength is in the future, in the unknown, in a new style of politics, business, and communication.

This new style has nothing to do with the politically correct, with humanism, or with mutual respect. It is more aggressive and more animal-like. It is more *zoopolitical*.

Zoopolitics

In the period since the end of the Second World War, the West has been trying to construct itself according to a "win-win" logic. This logic presumes that, in every relationship, all sides should win. The only injustice is in the division of the shares of the pie: some wins are big, while others are modest.

Russia, on the other hand, operates according to a "lose-lose" logic. This framework decrees that, in every relationship, you should not lose more than your opponent. The world is a battlefield, and you are guaranteed to be wounded and to lose blood. So, your primary goal must be to kill, so as not to be killed; to eat, in order not to be eaten.

Russia's famous return to "geopolitics", therefore, is in fact a return to *zoopolitics*.[1] This is an understanding of politics as, essentially, a battle between big animals, or animal states, for their survival and for their "living areas". Putin's repeated comparison of Russia with a "bear in his taiga" is a metaphor that reveals the hidden logic behind his actions: the imagery of a "struggle for survival" prevails here over rational win-win calculations.[2] The Kremlin has returned not so much to the Cold War epoch as to the Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century: people are animals, states are animals too, and states can only survive if they kill or injure other states.

Zoopolitics dominates Russian propaganda in the West. The language at RT, for example, is explicitly brutal, "politically incorrect". It is aimed directly at the hearts and minds of those who suffer from "civilisation fatigue", those who consider the West's

1   On Russia's return to "geopolitics", see "Studenty i aspiranty Londonskoi shkoly ekonomiki v MGU" (Students and graduates of the London School of Economics at Moscow State University), *Evrazia.TV*, 20 April 2012, available at http://www.evrazia.tv/content/studenty-i-aspiranty-londonskoy-shkoly-ekonomiki-v-mgu.

2   See, for example, Rhetoric TV, "V. Putin "Medved' ni u kogo razresheniya sprashivat' ne budet. Nadeyus' eto vsem ponyatno", YouTube, 24 October 2014, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEFBgiT-Dmo.

political correctness, diplomatic softness, and values of respect and tolerance as expressions of its decadence and weakness. For example, RT is not afraid of giving the floor to anti-Western intellectuals such as Pepe Escobar who suggest dividing Ukraine between Poland and Russia.[3] And there are many instances of messages of this kind.

Importantly, Russia sees its zoopolitical struggle as being global. For the Kremlin, the battle is not just for Crimea, for Ukraine, or even for "Novorossiya". It is a challenge to the world as a whole, and specifically to the West. Like Hitler's Nazism, which disguised German petty nationalism within a global narrative of the fight between races, Russia presents its struggle as a fight for the whole planet.

The key difference from the Nazis' horrible fantasy is that the Kremlin replaces the concept of "race" with the concept of "civilisation". In order to show that the fight is neither local nor regional, Russia says that it itself is not a state, not a nation, but a "civilisation". "Russian is not an ethnic [...] but a civilisational characteristic", Russian culture minister Vladimir Medinskii once said.[4] If Russia sees itself not as a country or a nation, but as a specific civilisation, it can present itself as an alternative to Western civilisation.

A big alternative

It is often argued that the key method of Russian propaganda is to confuse, to relativise, and to persuade the reader that objective truth does not exist. Peter Pomerantsev says, for example, that the aim of Kremlin propaganda is to "sow confusion via conspiracy theories and proliferate falsehood".[5]

3 Pepe Escobar, "How Russia and Germany may save Europe from war", *RT*, 28 November 2014, available at http://rt.com/op-edge/209695-war-russia-nato-missile-defense/.

4 See vasiasamosvalov, "Vladimir Medinski – Pravdivye mify o Rossii" (Vladimir Medinski – True myths about Russia), YouTube, 1 January 2013, available at http://youtu.be/btr6KwRTRR0?t=2m30s.

5 Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money", *the Interpreter*, November 2014, available at http://www.interpretermag.com/the-menace-of-unreality-how-the-kremlin-weaponizes-information-culture-and-money/.

But another narrative is present in Russia's information policy. This tactic says that Russia and other "emerging countries" present a "big alternative" to the world, which is now temporarily dominated by the West.

The "big alternative" narrative is present on propaganda channels like RT, aimed at a Western audience. This narrative tells a story not about Russia, but about the world itself, about the planet as a whole. "Telling the untold" (the slogan of *Sputnik*, a new media brand launched by the Kremlin in 2014) means telling the world the untold "truth" about itself, which until now it has not known.

The first message is that the world is no longer unipolar: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, RT says, are already successfully challenging the dominance of the West. Their competitive advantage consists in their pragmatism and the fact that they pay zero attention to "values". While the West is stuck in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, or Ukraine, these emerging powers travel around the world and strike deals.

The alternative model that Russian propaganda is trying to propose to a global audience is not the alternative "social model" promoted by the USSR and communist China in the twentieth century, when they said to the West: "We suggest for you a new society". The new alternative is the "network". "We are better at networking", they say; while the West is focused on traditional problems, the rest are doing business, building new networks in Asia, Africa, and South America. They do not suggest a new society; they suggest new connections between societies. They are not better leaders, but better dealers.

The second message that RT conveys is that the world is dynamic, and that this dynamism is centrifugal rather than centripetal. The new emerging powers are moving away from the West rather than towards it, RT likes to repeat. It plays with stories of these new euro- and America-sceptics: Turkey, which is shifting away from the European Union; Brazil, which largely ignores the West's advice (unlike Argentina); the economic powerhouses of China or India,

and so on. The message is directed at the West, and it says: "Everybody is running away from you. You too should run away from yourself. Or, at least, you should run from your values."

Russia and "suicide states"

The past several years have changed the nature of terrorism. "Traditional" terrorism has transformed into something new – something that Ukrainian writer Tetyana Ogarkova calls "sur-terrorism" (in Ukrainian, *siur* indicates "surrealist").

Traditional terrorism was an asystemic attempt to break the system without suggesting any viable alternative. Sur-terrorism suggests something more than protesting. It tries to organise its anti-systemic attack within a systemic form, in the form of a *state*.

The two forms of contemporary sur-terrorism are Russia and Islamic State, both of which pretend they represent different civilisations to the Western one. Their opposition to Western civilisation is no longer chaotic and network-like: it is an order aimed at bringing disorder, it is an anti-chaotic chaos machine.

Instead of dispersing bombs, Russia scatters "bomb states". Instead of sending suicide bombers, it launches "suicide states". The self-proclaimed states of the Donetsk People's Republic, the Luhansk People's Republic, Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia are the bomb states that Russia throws out, and their only *raison d'être* is to explode.

As with a terrorist, the Kremlin's Russia does not know who its enemy really is. It feels that the enemy is everywhere; the enemy has a million faces and, therefore, it is faceless. Russia identifies its enemy vaguely as "the West" or "the system" or "the unipolar world". It has equal disrespect for liberalism and socialism, Islam and Islamophobes, Jews and anti-Semitism – because it has lost the ability to distinguish between them.

Its information strategy is quasi-terrorist too. The primary aim of channels like RT is to explode, to bring disorder, to harm as many as possible. Kremlin propaganda praises traditional values and flirts with the Front National or other right-wing parties, but it also tries to bring Islamic immigrants to its side by saying that Europe suffers from Islamophobia. It backs leftist groups and seems to have sympathy with their anti-capitalist visions, but it blames "Gay Europe" for its tolerance of homosexuality.

It might seem that the Kremlin is trying to find friends on both the right and the left. But the reality is that it fears its enemies are both on the right and on the left, in the centre too, and, what is more, behind its back.

"Ukraine crisis"?

Russian aggression against Ukraine is often presented in the Western media as the "Ukraine crisis" or the "Ukraine conflict". This wording leaves Russian aggression out of the picture, creating the impression that the issue is all about Ukraine's "internal conflict", "civil war", or domestic mess.

There is now plenty of evidence that Russian troops are on Ukrainian soil.[6] There is evidence that Russian arms have been supplied to pro-Russian militia. A recent journalistic investigation on the downing of flight MH17 found traces both of the Russian BUK and of the Russian military team who operated it.[7] The chronology of events in Crimea and the Donbas shows that professional and highly competent Russian special forces quickly seized key strategic buildings and arms arsenals. Given these facts, it is short-sighted and cynical to call Russia's war against Ukraine and its pro-EU choice a "Ukraine crisis".

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6   Dozens of videos of interviews with captured Russian soldiers are available online; see, for example, Gram Zeppi, "A captured Russian soldier tells more about their mission in Ukraine (English subs)", YouTube, 27 August 2014, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ujY6hh79zA; benalvino1860, "Interrogation of Second Russian Soldier Captured in Ukraine on August 25. English", YouTube, 27 August 2014, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrzC7bE-kCc; *the Moscow Times*, "Russian Soldiers Captured in Ukraine Questioned (English Subs)", YouTube, 26 August 2014, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bllZ3y3m4-Q.

7   "Flight MH17: Searching for the Truth", *Correct!v*, 9 January 2015, available at https://mh17.correctiv.org/english/.

Imagine calling Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia a "Czechoslovakia crisis". Or Hitler and Stalin's invasion of Poland a "Poland crisis". Or the Holocaust a "Jewish crisis". This is exactly what happens with the wording "Ukraine crisis". Its logic mentions only the victim. It implies that invasion and aggression are the victim's fault.

Believing in values

The English political journalist Douglas Hyde wrote a book published in 1950 called *I Believed*. An "autobiography of a former British Communist", the book gave an account of the quasi-religious belief in the communist idea held by some leftist activists in the mid-twentieth century.

The belief, even faith, that many Western intellectuals placed in totalitarian ideologies represented one of the biggest challenges for both pre- and post-war European society. To modernise and humanise itself, Europe needed a fresh scepticism, similar to British sceptic philosophies of the eighteenth century. From the 1960s on, this new scepticism brought about a less fanatic and more pluralist view of the world.

However, in the early twenty-first century, mistrust in beliefs or convictions has become ubiquitous. Believing in something has become obsolete and old-fashioned. The spread of this kind of scepticism is no less dangerous than fanaticism: it undermines one of the most important human capacities, the capacity to distinguish between good and bad, and between better and worse. Total scepticism leads to indifference: if I do not believe in anything, then everything must be equally bad.

Russian propaganda throughout the world plays on this mistrust as one of its key traps. Iran might be bad, but the United States is equally bad, it says. Totalitarianism is bad, but democracy is no good either. The annexation of Crimea was bad, but recognising Kosovo was bad too. "We are as bad as you are", Russia says to the West.

Russia does bad things, but it does bad things because someone else did bad things. The West's era of critical and sceptical thinking contained one important moral dimension: mistrust was needed so as to become better. The Kremlin reverses all that: mistrust is needed so as to become as bad as all the rest.

I have argued before that Europe today has two faces: the Europe of rules and the Europe of faith.[8] The first Europe, which is too prominent within the EU itself, follows its rules without believing in its mission. The other Europe believes in Europe's mission without really following European rules. Ukraine is part of this "Europe of faith". Both Europes have their advantages and disadvantages, but both need each other, since faith without rules is anarchic, and rules without faith are desperate.

Ukraine needs European rules, but Europe equally needs to regain its convictions, its belief in itself. Ukraine's Euromaidan showed that the European idea is still able to inspire change. The events in Ukraine showed that the European project keeps expanding, even if Europe itself does not know it. European values are expanding faster than the European institutions.

All you need is to believe.

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8   Volodymyr Yermolenko, "Dreams of Europe", *Eurozine*, 6 February 2014, available at http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-02-06-yermolenko-en.html.

Anton Shekhovtsov

The spectre of Ukrainian "fascism": information wars, political manipulation, and reality

8

The 2014 Ukrainian revolution made the country's far right a topic of international debate. Once the object of only a few academic studies, it suddenly became a key point of the information war unleashed by the Kremlin and Russia's state-controlled media, first against the anti-government protesters and later against the new Ukrainian authorities.[1]

The focus on the far-right element in the protests and the revolution was aimed at advancing three major interconnected and mutually sustaining propaganda narratives. Firstly, presenting the protest movement as "neo-fascist" was intended to lower its support among Russian citizens, among Ukraine's ethnic Russian/Russian-speaking community, and from the European Union.

Secondly, the revolution's supposed "neo-fascist" or "ultranationalist" character was held up as evidence of a conspiracy by the United States and NATO against Russia and the "Russian World". This was part of the larger conspiracy theory that the anti-government protests were inspired by the West, specifically the US, to further Western expansionism and

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1   On the Kremlin's information war, see Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money* (Princeton: Institute of Modern Russia, 2014).

the enlargement of NATO and to undermine Russia's standing in its sphere of influence. This conspiracy theory eliminated Ukrainians as such from the geopolitical equation, depriving them of any agency.

Thirdly, the myth of the "fascist junta in Kyiv" aimed to invoke the heroic Soviet imagery and rhetoric of the "Great Patriotic War" to mobilise the population in eastern and southern Ukraine (the Kremlin's "Novorossiya") to start an "anti-fascist struggle" against the new Ukrainian authorities. After the (belated) adoption of EU and US sanctions, the same narrative was used to portray Russia as a victim of Western aggression, referencing the USSR's suffering as "a victim" of the Third Reich. This narrative has found particularly fertile ground in Germany, with its *Kollektivschuld* (collective guilt) that overwhelmingly "singles out as the object of German guilt only Russia but not Ukraine as the legitimate heir to the Soviet Union".[2]

This is not to say that the Ukrainian far right was not involved in the revolution or the later political process. However, ultranationalist elements were far from dominant, and the circumstances of their presence were much more complex than was presented either by the Kremlin and its media or by the Ukrainian revolutionary movement and the new Ukrainian authorities. Furthermore, Moscow ignored the far-right element among pro-Russian separatists and Russian volunteers in the war in eastern Ukraine.

Svoboda

Two major far-right movements took part in the protests and the revolution: the Svoboda (Freedom) party and a coalition of minor far-right groups and organisations that became collectively known as Pravy Sektor (Right Sector).

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2   Anna Veronika Wendland, "Levy neoimperializm i sostoyanie 'rossiyskikh' issledovaniy: Participant Observation nemetskogo diskursa ob ukrainskom krizise", *Ab Imperio*, 2014, p. 193. See also Timothy Snyder, "Fascism, Russia, and Ukraine", the *New York Review of Books*, 20 March 2014, available at www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/mar/20/fascism-russia-and-ukraine/.

Svoboda first made headlines when it obtained 10.4 percent of the proportional vote in the 2012 elections. In over two decades of independence, no far-right party had ever won seats through the party-list system, although a few ultranationalists had been elected in single-member constituencies. The Ukrainian far right had been largely fake actors in Ukrainian political life, at least at the national level.[3] Former presidents Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych used them to disrupt social protests, rig the vote, or serve as "scarecrow" images of "greater evil" to mobilise popular support for the regime.

In 2012, Svoboda was successful precisely because Yanukovych used it as this kind of "scarecrow" party. The party's media visibility dramatically increased, especially on government-controlled television channels. Yanukovych and his associates wanted to damage the mainstream opposition by elevating the significance of Svoboda. They were positioning Svoboda's leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, to be Yanukovych's opponent in the second round of the presidential election in 2015. With state media support, he would cruise through round one, but all opinion polls predicted that he would be unelectable in round two. In February 2013, Mykhaylo Chechetov, then first deputy head of Yanukovych's Party of Regions parliamentary faction, declared that Yanukovych would win the 2015 presidential election and that "Tyahnybok would be his contender. We know about this."[4]

Once in parliament, Svoboda allied with the other two opposition parties: Arseniy Yatsenyuk's Fatherland and Vitaliy Klitschko's UDAR (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform). However, Svoboda failed to live up to its image of being the most radical opposition to Yanukovych. By 2013, it was already losing support.

When the pro-European protests began in November 2013, Svoboda sought to take an active part. Svoboda believed European integration

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3 On political manipulation in Ukraine, see Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

4 Dmytro Barkar, "Rehionaly vvazhayut' Tyahnyboka yedynym real'nym konkurentom Yanukovycha", *Radio Svoboda*, 1 February 2013, available at http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/24889869.html.

would represent for Ukraine a definitive turn away from all Russia-led Eurasian integration projects. Plus, in light of its dwindling support, it wanted to use the protests as a platform for self-promotion and propaganda.

But the revolution proved to be a political catastrophe for Svoboda. Polarising events like the march to remember ultranationalist leader Stepan Bandera ran counter to the spirit of the Maidan. Svoboda was increasingly seen as a noisy nuisance whose radical rhetoric did not match its actions. When non-partisan protesters became radicalised in response to the regime's brutality and demanded bold and direct action, Svoboda failed to rise to the challenge. As one commentator put it, "within just a few weeks, the country had witnessed a real fiasco for the party that flashily promised to lead the revolution, but instead not only became its obstacle, but also its most flawed element".[5]

After Yanukovych's flight in late February 2014, Svoboda was given four ministerial posts in acting Prime Minister Yatsenyuk's interim government. This was inconsistent with the party's declining public support: in March 2014, only 5.2 percent of voters backed Svoboda. But Klitschko's UDAR refused to join a government that was likely to enact unpopular measures, meaning that, without Svoboda, there would have been a one-party government controlled by Fatherland – which would have been a political disaster. Ironically, Svoboda's brief involvement in the interim government only reduced the party's popularity further.

Right Sector

Partly because Svoboda could not match its radical rhetoric with action, some of the protesters' sympathies shifted to Right Sector. Right Sector was a broad coalition of far-right organisations and groups that came together at the end of November 2013. Then, Right Sector comprised Tryzub (Trident), the Ukrainian National Assembly – Ukrainian People's Self-Defence (UNA-UNSO), and

5 Ostap Drozdov, "Ruka zdryhnulas", *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*, 14 February 2014, available at http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/ruka-zdrignulas-_.html.

Patriot of Ukraine (PU), along with smaller groupuscules and individual activists. At the end of January 2014, activists from Right Sector said their movement had around 300 members.[6] Their numbers apparently grew to 500 during the more violent part of the revolution in late January–February 2014.

Ideologically, these organisations ranged from the national conservatism of Tryzub to the right-wing radicalism of UNA-UNSO and the neo-Nazism of PU. However, none of these ideological strands represented a unifying force for Right Sector activists. And because PU was low down in the hierarchy of Right Sector, the neo-Nazis were a fringe element. These disparate groups were loosely united at grassroots level by vehement opposition to Yanukovych's regime, the desire for "national liberation", and romantic militarism. The consensus was reinforced by the leadership of Dmytro Yarosh, the head of Tryzub and of Right Sector as a whole: contrary to Yarosh's demonisation in the (pro-)Russian media, he tried to moderate the movement by publicly denouncing racism and anti-Semitism.

To the Russian, pro-Russian, and pro-Yanukovych media, Right Sector was a neo-Nazi movement, and provocative neo-Nazi imagery was indeed employed by some – not all – activists of Right Sector. But the consensus structure made Right Sector an increasingly inclusive movement; in the second half of the Euromaidan protests, it was joined by activists of various ethnic backgrounds. Around 40 percent of the movement comprised ethnic Russians or Russian speakers.[7] Right Sector seemed to be a disciplined and efficient fighting unit – one of several, but one that attracted many a young protester.

However, Right Sector had another aspect, one that was hidden from outside observers: behind the scenes, political manipulation was taking place. Right Sector's leadership included many members of UNA-UNSO, who had long been directly or indirectly involved in pro-Yanukovych and pro-government "political technology" projects. PU was also involved in dubious activities ranging from

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6 Interview with the author, Kyiv, January 2014.

7 Interview with the author, Kyiv, January 2014.

attacks on Asian merchants, to intimidating Asian and African students, to illegal seizures of businesses (*reyders'ke zakhoplennya*). PU also provided paid security services to the demonstrations and protests of other political forces. In the Kyiv region, PU activists were involved – along with pro-Yanukovych politicians – in blocking observation of local elections, land-lease schemes, disrupting social and anti-government protests, and so on.

This is not to say that the whole of Right Sector was a fake movement or was part of "political technology" in the service of Yanukovych's regime. However, during the protests and the revolution, it seems likely that, on several occasions, Right Sector activists deliberately attacked the police to provoke a violent response towards other protesters.

After the revolution, Right Sector gradually distanced itself from some of its more dubious elements. In spring 2014, the movement expelled the neo-Nazi groupuscule, White Hammer, and parted ways with PU. Later, it also lost many members of the UNA-UNSO.

The presidential and parliamentary elections

In May 2014's presidential election, Tyahnybok won only 1.2 percent and Yarosh 0.7 percent. With Yanukovych gone, the far right lost their major source of negative-voter mobilisation. Before the revolution, Tyahnybok could position himself as the leader of allegedly the only patriotic party. But during the revolution, and especially after Russia's annexation of Crimea, all popular democratic parties became patriotic, so Svoboda lost its "monopoly". Moreover, Tyahnybok lost the covert patronage of the old regime.

Far-right leaders, as representatives of populist, anti-system forces, often benefit from their opposition to existing elites. Ukraine in May 2014 had no full-fledged political establishment to oppose. The times were more suited to the demagogic and "political technology" populist Oleh Lyashko, who railed against unseen enemies on behalf of unseen oligarchic sponsors, and won 8.3 percent.

In the parliamentary elections in October 2014, Svoboda secured only 4.7 percent of the vote and failed to pass the 5 percent electoral threshold. However, it won six single-member districts. Right Sector received only 1.8 percent, though Yarosh was elected in Dnipropetrovsk and PU's leader, Andriy Biletsky, gained a seat in Kyiv. Lyashko's Radical Party, with 7.4 percent, attracted most of the populist vote.

After PU distanced itself from Right Sector in spring 2014, it briefly cooperated with the Radical Party. PU also formed the core of the notorious Azov battalion, a volunteer detachment loosely responsible to the Ministry of Interior and headed by Arsen Avakov. But this was more about nepotism than ideology: Avakov has cooperated with the leaders of PU since 2009–2010.

The (pro-)Russian far right

Most analyses of the far right in Ukraine overlook domestic anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian far-right actors, as well as external, that is Russian, far-right groups. Even as the Kremlin attacked the "fascist junta in Kyiv", it relied heavily – at least initially – on pro-Russian far-right actors in Ukraine. In Crimea, the Kremlin supported and installed as "prime minister of Crimea" the ultranationalist Sergey Aksyonov, leader of the right-wing party Russian Unity. This tiny party obtained only 4 percent of the vote in Crimea's 2010 regional elections. In Donetsk, the Kremlin initially supported Pavel Gubarev, a former member of the neo-Nazi organisation Russian National Unity, as self-proclaimed "People's Governor".

The Kremlin has been supporting (and inciting) pro-Russian ultranationalists in southern and eastern Ukraine since the 1990s, but it has done so more actively since Yanukovych's election in 2010. Many Russian far-right organisations have established local branches, including Russian National Unity, Aleksandr Dugin's International Eurasian Movement, Eduard Limonov's National Bolshevik Party, and Russian Image. The most important example is the organisation Donetsk Republic, founded in 2005. In 2006, its

leaders went to Russia to participate in the summer camp of the fascist Eurasian Youth Union, established with money from the presidential administration in 2005 on the initiative of Aleksandr Dugin and Vladislav Surkov, then deputy head of the presidential administration. That summer camp aimed to further indoctrinate activists and offered training for fighting against democratic movements in neighbouring states. Instructors from the security services taught espionage, sabotage, and guerrilla tactics. Among the participants were Andrei Purgin, now one of the leaders of the separatist "Donetsk People's Republic", and one of the top members of the Eurasian Youth Union, Aleksandr Proselkov, briefly a "deputy minister for foreign affairs" of the "Donetsk People's Republic" before he was killed in summer 2014 in eastern Ukraine in unclear circumstances.

Conclusion

The Kremlin's focus on the Ukrainian far right and its allegedly dominant role in the 2014 revolution was part of an information war intended to delegitimise the opposition to Yanukovych's regime and, later, the new Ukrainian authorities.

Moscow's arguments were ultimately undermined by the low electoral results of the Ukrainian far right and by Russia's use of ultranationalists in its invasion of Ukraine, as well as its flirtations with the European far right (which require a separate discussion). But, by then, the damage had been done.

The far right of course exists in Ukraine and, in the case of Svoboda, was even briefly relatively successful. But it is important to stress the element of political manipulation in its rise. Far-right parties and organisations were often exploited in different political games, either as "scarecrow" parties or fake opposition, or as private "security firms" employed by more powerful political actors. Hence, for all the Kremlin's rhetoric, Ukrainian ultra-nationalism will most likely remain an extra-parliamentary force – as it was in the 1990s – until it is again involved in another "political technology" project.

CAN UKRAINE REFORM?

Olena Tregub
Do Ukrainians want reform?

9

The word "reform" is being used in public discourse in Ukraine more frequently than ever before. The 2014 Euromaidan revolution was the second attempt by Ukrainians (after the Orange Revolution of 2004) to break with the corrupt and ineffective post-Soviet state. But this time Ukrainians aspired to "change the system, rather than the names", as one Euromaidan motto put it.

The elites who came to power after the revolution promised change through "root-and-branch" reforms. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk called himself a "political kamikaze", ready to sacrifice his political future to implement unpopular reforms. President Petro Poroshenko's election slogan was "Living the New Way". The parliament elected in October 2014 is dominated by a majority in favour of reform and of the European Union.

The reform agenda is rhetorically omnipresent in Ukraine's politics as well as in Ukraine-related discourse in the West. But much less attention has been paid to how ordinary Ukrainians understand reforms and to which reforms they see as priorities.

Reform agenda-setters: government, civil society, and the West

In an ideal world, citizens form policy agendas and elected officials implement policies to further these agendas. In practice, the political and economic elites that control the media are often able to impose their agenda on the public. In Ukraine, for example, a third of the population say they want to nationalise oligarchs' property. However, media channels – in most cases owned by the very same oligarchs – avoid the topic.

In Ukraine, three main groups currently form the reform agenda from above: the government, civil society, and the West. None of them necessarily have the same priorities as Ukrainian society as a whole.

The first group consists of the reformers in government, especially the young activists and business executives who entered politics after the Euromaidan. One such "professional reformer" is the deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Dmytro Shymkiv, who used to be the CEO of Microsoft in Ukraine. Since July 2014, he has chaired the Executive Committee of the National Council of Reforms.[1] Shymkiv authored the "Strategy of Reforms – 2020", which lists more than 60 reforms and ten priorities. These priorities are governmental renewal, anti-corruption reform, judicial reform, decentralisation, deregulation and the development of entrepreneurship, reform of law enforcement, reform of the national security and defence system, healthcare reform and tax reform, an energy independence programme, and the promotion of Ukraine in the world.[2]

Shymkiv made bold promises in the "Strategy of Reforms – 2020": Ukraine's GDP per capita would increase from $8,508 to $16,000 by 2020; the country would become one of the top 20

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1   The National Reform Council (NRC) was established by presidential decree in August 2014 to consolidate and coordinate the country's reform efforts, plus a Reform Executive Council and Project Management Office (PMO) in support.

2   "Dmytro Shymkiv: 'Strategy of Reforms – 2020' is the achievement of European living standards", the Official Website of the President of Ukraine, 29 September 2014, available at http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/31305.html (hereafter, "Dmytro Shymkiv: 'Strategy of Reforms – 2020'")..

countries in the world in which to do business; foreign direct investment would increase to $40 billion; the average life expectancy would increase by three years; and military expenditure would grow from 1 percent to 5 percent of GDP.[3] Shymkiv's plans were similar to another 50-page document titled "Coalition for Reforms", signed by the new coalition in November 2014 – but, by then, defence sector reform had become the top priority.[4]

Poroshenko set a new trend of hiring foreigners to reform Ukraine; many were granted Ukrainian citizenship just a few hours before their appointment. US citizen Natalie Jaresko is minister of finance, Lithuanian investment banker Aivaras Abromavicius is minister of economy, and a Georgian, Alexander Kvitashvili, is minister of health. More recent arrivals include the former deputy interior minister of Georgia, Eka Zguladze, who took over the same post in Ukraine, the Estonian Jaanika Marilo, an adviser to Abromavicius, and Gia Getsadze, a lawyer from former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili's team, who is deputy minister of justice.

After the Yanukovych era, foreigners have a certain prestige. Zguladze is expected to deliver a similarly effective police reform to the one she undertook in Georgia. Others are powerful agenda-setters, such as Saakashvili himself, the late Georgian economist Kakha Bendukidze, and the Polish economist Leszek Balcerowicz, all of whom act or have acted in advisory or symbolic capacities. However, it remains to be seen how successful the foreigners will be in implementing reforms and maintaining their long-term symbolic authority. They face real challenges, including a lack of knowledge of the workings of Ukraine's Byzantine bureaucracy and the absence of any independent political force behind them.

The next group of reformers is commonly described as "civil society". This includes professionalised civil society, such as NGO activists

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3 "Dmytro Shymkiv: 'Strategy of Reforms – 2020'".

4 "Koalitsiiuna Ugoda", Samopomich, November 2014, available at http://samopomich.ua/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Koaliciyna_uhoda_parafovana_20.11.pdf.

and experts, who help draft reform legislation, push for its adoption, and monitor its implementation. Organisations of this kind include the Anticorruption Action Center, Transparency International, and others. The media also forms part of this group, as do active citizens who monitor the progress of reform.

Most civil society groups are sectoral; they lobby for and track the reforms most relevant to their particular professional environment. NGOs focused on fighting corruption helped to draft the anti-corruption package, while the SME community, one of the most active groups in Ukraine, concentrates on tax reform and deregulation.

One lobby group, the Reanimation Package of Reforms (RPR), looks at the broader picture. This body was launched soon after the revolution specifically to catalyse the reform process. It brought together a large network of experts, activists, journalists, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and other professionals, who set up different working groups to come up with blueprints for specific reform bills. On paper at least, the RPR and the government reform agendas are fairly similar.

A more diffuse but still vocal group includes online media, citizen journalists, and influential bloggers and opinion shapers who act as reform "watchdogs". They tend to be more critical of the political class and of old ways of running the government, including corrupt practices and the lack of transparency in decision-making. Journalists have also campaigned for a public television service.

Because they are not part of the government or do not feel close to it (unlike some of the NGOs), such groups are freer in their criticism of the government and the way it leads reforms. For example, the new ministry of information was seen by some as a valid attempt to start working on Ukraine's positive image at home and abroad at a time of war, but journalists condemned the idea as being both slightly Orwellian and an uncomfortable echo of Russian

propaganda. They also pointed out that the new minister of information was a family friend of the president.

The third group of reform setters consists of various foreign donors, such as the International Monetary Fund, the US Agency for International Development, the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The priorities of international donors and partners differ widely depending on their mandate and mission, which raises a real and worrying prospect of possible overlap and duplication of work, as well as of pulling the Ukrainian government and its scarce resources in different directions. Unsurprisingly, most foreign donors focus on cutting corruption and bloated state structures, along with energy sector reform. The IMF has repeatedly insisted on spending cuts and tax rises, and on unpopular increases in retail gas and heating tariffs, by 56 percent and 40 percent in 2014 and 20–40 percent in 2015–17.

Like domestic civil society, the West is very critical of the slow pace of Ukraine's reforms and doubtful as to whether there is enough political will among Ukrainian elites to really change the country rather than just pass rafts of new laws. But the different groups – government, civil society, and Western donors – are most effective when they collaborate. For example, the bill to set up the National Anti-Corruption Bureau that came into effect in January 2015 was prepared by a group that included NGO professionals and experts, MPs and officials from the Ministry of Justice, and Western consultants.

However, it is clear that different agents, who have different agendas and answer to different constituencies, are not completely on the same page as regards every aspect of the reforms in Ukraine. The government tends to describe the IMF's most unpopular measures as external pressures and does not "own" them in programmatic documents or official statements. Civil society also largely avoids lobbying for unpopular measures. Rightly or wrongly, society is clearly unhappy with the pace of reforms and the lack of positive results from the Euromaidan revolution to date.

The population's reform agenda

Sociological data confirms that the elite and the public do not share the same reform agenda. The economic crisis and the ongoing war in the Donbas are the two most powerful factors influencing public opinion, but polls show that Ukrainians are more worried about their own economic and physical survival than about reforming their country.

Asked what they thought were the most urgent problems for Ukraine to solve, 79 percent of respondents said ending the war in the Donbas was most important.[5] Meanwhile, 48 percent said raising salaries and pensions was essential, 43 percent prioritised kickstarting economic growth, and 38 percent thought fighting corruption was urgent.[6]

Another poll at the end of 2014 showed that ordinary citizens perceive reforms primarily as a way of both bringing governmental officials to justice and of improving their own economic situation.[7] The question "What are the reforms for you?" had 30 options from which to choose. The most popular choices were: scrapping MPs' immunity (58 percent), raising salaries and pensions (51 percent), and scrapping immunity for judges (48.3 percent) and for the president (34.4 percent).

The standard of living of ordinary Ukrainians has plummeted dramatically since the Euromaidan. Ukraine's economy is in its second year of recession, as the war ravages industry and investment. The decline in real GDP in the third quarter of 2014 was 5.1 percent, after drops of 4.6 percent and 1.1 percent in the first and second quarters. The depreciation of the exchange rate of the hryvnia to the dollar between January and October 2014 was 58.9 percent. The consumer confidence indicator has deteriorated
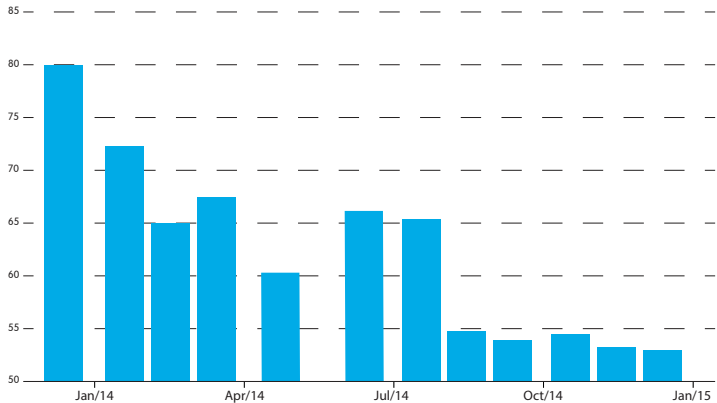
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5   "Gromads'ka Dumka: pidsumki 2014 roku", the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, December 2014, available at www.dif.org.ua/ua/polls/2014_polls/jjorjojkpkhpkp.htm.

6   Other responses were: 30 percent – curbing inflation, 27 percent – reducing unemployment, 26 percent – medical and pension reform, 24 percent – energy security, and 22 percent – purging state institutions of corrupt officials.

7   Poll by the KIIS, 4–19 December 2014, published by *Zerkalo Nedeli*, available at http://opros2014.zn.ua/reforms.

dramatically, from 80.3 points in January 2014 to a low of 52.6 points a year later (see figure 1).[8]

Figure 1: Ukrainian consumer confidence

The GfK Consumer Index ranges from 0-200, it equals 200 when all respondents positively assess the economic situation and less than 100 when there is a prevalence of negative respondents.

Ukrainians feel unsure about their future, especially since their government as well as Western observers have openly speculated about the possibility of default. Ukrainians also feel vulnerable, both because their own government could not protect Crimea and cannot resolve the Donbas conflict, and because foreign allies have shown that they are unwilling to engage militarily even after Russia invaded Ukraine.

At the same time, Ukrainians feel strongly that their officials should be punished for decades of mismanagement and corruption: 58 percent prioritised scrapping the immunity of MPs and 34 percent would decrease the salaries of state officials, including ministers and MPs, to the national average – even though many anti-corruption experts would argue for doing the opposite.

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8 "Ukraine Consumer Confidence", *Trading Economics*, 2015, available at www.tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/consumer-confidence.

In terms of sectoral reform, Ukrainians' top priority was healthcare reform, followed by judicial and defence reforms (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Which reform do you see as a priority?
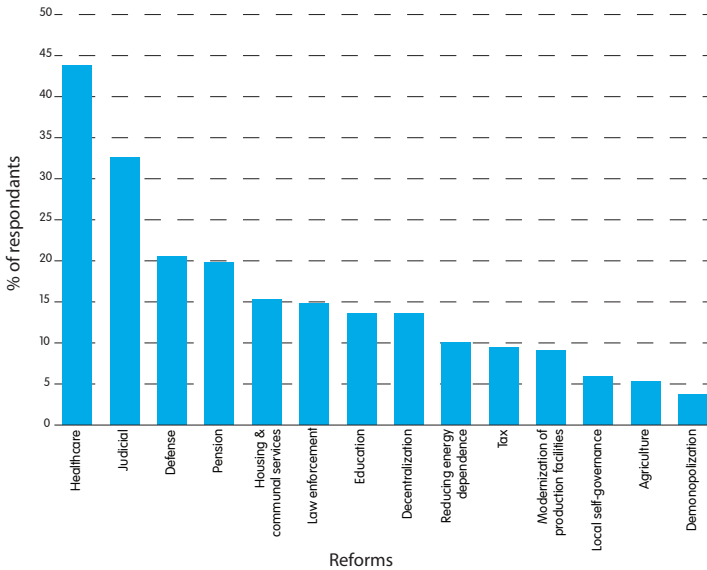
Source: Poll by the KIIS, 4–19 December 2014, published by Zerkalo Nedeli

This is hardly surprising, given the deterioration of Ukraine's healthcare system since Soviet times as well as the fact that Ukraine has one of the lowest life expectancies in Europe. But while judicial and defence reforms are high on the agendas of both the government and civil society, healthcare reform receives much less attention.

The poll also demonstrated that some reforms favoured by international actors, such as deregulation, are much lower down the public agenda. They remain the brainchild of a professionalised ruling elite and of foreign advisers who understand the link between deregulation and boosting the economy. For Saakashvili, recently appointed by Poroshenko as the Head of Advisory International Council of Reforms, deregulation is the most important reform of

all.[9] But only 0.9 percent of the public see deregulation of the permit system as a priority.

Between war and reform

The October 2014 parliamentary elections were supposed to dispel early frustrations with the lack of reform. The vote produced a pro-reform majority and removed most of the reactionary forces from parliament.

But the new parliament has been slow to foster change. Some doubt that the current political elite will ever summon enough political will to enact meaningful change. Both the president and the prime minister have said that it is difficult to instate reform while Ukraine is at war. "After spending most of the day looking at military maps and studying the situation on the frontline, it's not easy to switch straight away to addressing the subject of promoting peace", Poroshenko complained at the end of January.[10]

Civil society argues that the war should not serve as an excuse for everything, although while the war continues they temper their criticism. They also understand that there is an external enemy that could exploit any new unrest to create a hypothetical "Maidan 3". The war has also refocused civil society's attention from pushing for reforms in government to volunteering in the Donbas war.

Not only did the war make citizens pay less attention to reforms, it also thwarted some of the reform processes. The lustration reform that started after the revolution as a result of bottom-up pressure aimed to clean the state apparatus of corrupt officials from the Yanukovych era and collaborators with the KGB. But the war has short-circuited the process. The anti-oligarch movement was also stopped as the oligarchs came to be seen as allies of the state in the war with Russia.

9 "Hromadske International. The Sunday Show – 'Putin is a Little Bit Weird', Says Fmr Georgia President Saakashvili", Hromadske.tv, 15 February 2015, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM7Zo_Qotik.

10 "War takes precedence over reforms in Ukraine", *DW*, 4 February 2015, available at www.dw.de/war-takes-precedence-over-reforms-in-ukraine/a-18234907.

However, Ukrainians understand that even if it is harder to reform during the war, structural reform remains a precondition for Ukraine's ability to defend itself militarily and thus to survive. Ukraine's military campaign has been constantly weakened by government inefficiency and corruption. The army leadership has not been lustrated and has not adopted modern methods of military command, creating considerable mistrust between NGOs supporting the army and its commanders.

Conclusion

Ukrainians do want reforms, but they feel disoriented and endangered. It is hard to ask society to take the lead in reforms when the majority are either struggling to survive the economic crisis or worried about their personal security.

The overall pace of reform is glacial, but there are several effective teams and individuals inside and outside the government striving to transform the country. The West should rely on these individual reformers and provide finance only in sectors that have concrete reform programmes, like that of the traffic police launched by Eka Zguladze.

Ironically, Ukraine is still a long way from creating the kind of democratic model that the Kremlin clearly fears. But if the Russian regime manages to crush Ukraine's ongoing democratic experiment and redraw the borders of Europe, the future of the whole of Europe will be insecure.

Serhiy Leshchenko

Sunset and/or Sunrise of the Ukrainian oligarchs after the Maidan?

10

One year after Viktor Yanukovych was ousted, his methods remain firmly entrenched in the reality of Ukrainian life. Despite the country's Revolution of Dignity and continued Russian aggression against Ukraine, local oligarchs have become even more powerful and influential, and pose a significant threat to Ukraine's European development. Oligarchs control the state apparatus, mass media, and whole sectors of industry. Therefore, they can simply put the brakes on reform as soon as their financial interests are threatened.

Under the previous government, the oligarchs were strictly subordinated. Yanukovych was the "super oligarch", the main beneficiary of the regime. Below him came the traditional oligarchs, who had to share their profits with Yanukovych. Rinat Akhmetov, for instance, was granted control of metallurgy and energy, Igor Kolomoisky had the oil industry, and Dmitry Firtash and Sergei Levochkin controlled the gas, chemical, and titanium sectors.

Last year, after Yanukovych's flight, the oligarch clans lost their patron – but they gained the chance to extend their personal power. Now, one year after the Revolution of Dignity, a few have seen their influence diminished, but only because Yanukovych is gone, not because reforms have been made. The oligarchs soon found a

common language with the victors of the Maidan, providing them with financial help, access to television channels, and votes in parliament. This unofficial pact prevented the eradication of the clans' wealth-generating systems, traditionally powered by corruption, conspiracy, and crushing competition.

A disoriented and weakened state apparatus proved unable to oppose the oligarchs. The new government lacked the political will to break with its predecessors' schemes. No real economic reforms were introduced to give new impetus to small and medium-sized enterprises, the only real potential challengers to the oligarchic order and guarantors of democratic reforms.

The government has blamed the ongoing war for the failure to implement reforms. However, it is difficult to accept that the war necessarily prevented the government from implementing fiscal reforms, simplifying business rules, dismissing corrupt traffic police, or setting up sanitary-epidemiological services, as borne out by the model of Georgian reforms after the Rose Revolution in 2003.

Yanukovych's clan

After Yanukovych fled Ukraine, the EU imposed sanctions against 18 individuals who embodied the old regime. The list included Yanukovych himself along with his two sons Oleksander and Viktor Jr, other former government members, and Serhiy Kurchenko, the man behind multiple business schemes for the Yanukovych family. Interestingly, none of the influential oligarchs who accumulated wealth during Yanukovych's reign were on the list.

The heaviest losses were sustained by Yanukovych's clan, headed up by his eldest son, Oleksander, who assigned key posts to his friends, Serhiy Arbuzov, Oleksander Klymenko, and Vitaliy Zakharchenko. Their accounts in Europe were frozen and some of their assets were blocked. In Ukraine, however, the Yanukovych family assets were mostly in the hands of "straw men". The family's main path to wealth was not acquisition of private

property, but corruption and appropriation of state assets. This explains why the losses incurred by Yanukovych's circle are still inconsiderable.

The All-Ukrainian Development Bank, which served as a shop front for Yanukovych's son's business, ceased its activities only in December 2014, after the introduction of an interim administration by the National Bank of Ukraine. Donbasenergo, a company that held two electric plants privatised to benefit Yanukovych's family, continued to receive payments throughout 2014.

Financial institutions belonging to Yanukovych's circle carried on functioning throughout 2014. One example is Unison Bank belonging to former revenue minister Oleksandr Klymenko, Kurchenko's business partner and the main paymaster of the Yanukovych family.

Yanukovych's subordinates' media empires are still operating. None of the publications by Kurchenko's Ukrainian Media Holding group have been stopped, Zakharchenko-linked television news channel 112 continues to broadcast, and, in Kyiv's metro, people are still queuing for *Vesti*, a free newspaper associated with Klymenko.

Even with Yanukovych's people removed from their posts, corrupt courts of justice have continued to pass judgement in the former president's favour: for example, one of the snipers who targeted people at the Maidan was released from house arrest, Arbuzov's money in Ukrainian banks was unblocked, and the decree forbidding Ukrainian state payments to the electric plants owned by Yanukovych's family was cancelled.

In January 2015, Yanukovych was placed on the Interpol wanted list, accused of economic crimes. But Yanukovych was instrumental in reducing, by $30 million, the financial obligations of a company that went on to buy the state telecommunications company, Ukrtelecom. The new owner of Ukrtelecom also appears to be associated with the Yanukovych family.

Akhmetov and Firtash

Rinat Akhmetov's clan's influence has diminished because of Ukraine's loss of control over the occupied part of the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. These regions constituted Akhmetov's political and industrial base. Compared to 2014, Akhmetov's influence in parliament has considerably decreased. In the previous administration, he had control over several dozen Party of Regions MPs, as well as a number of key ministries, state monopolies, and regulators. Today, no more than 20 deputies from Akhmetov's camp are in the Opposition Bloc faction, formerly the Party of Regions. Some of his long-term allies have defected to the clan of his rival, Ihor Kolomoisky.

The legislative initiatives of Akhmetov and his people in parliament have no chance of being approved, since none of his contingent heads up any of the parliamentary committees. Today, the oligarch's main resource is his good relationship with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who has taken no steps in the past year to limit Akhmetov's voracious appetite. Akhmetov's enterprises continue to reap benefits in the industry and energy sectors, while the dubious privatisation that took place under Yanukovych goes unquestioned. Akhmetov even managed to acquire the thermal power plants Zakhidenergo and Dniproenergo through tender offers in which his supposed competitors only pretended to fight for the assets.

As a result, Akhmetov now owns 70 percent of Ukraine's thermal energy, and fixed tariffs guarantee him stable profits. He survived Yanukovych's flight from the country because of his willingness to share his money with all the political parties, as well as his far-reaching media holdings. He even succeeded in coming to an arrangement with the terrorists occupying Donetsk. His luxurious mansion stands intact in a town ruled by gangs of heavily armed "marginal" and Russian fighters.

Today, Akhmetov's problem is the absence of a brilliant political leader to replace Yanukovych and spearhead his revenge. This is

another consequence of the perverse political culture of the Party of Regions, in which the absence of internal competition has led to a shortage of party officials.

Another oligarch clan, centred on the corrupt gas broker RosUkrEnergo, incurred much greater losses after Yanukovych's escape. However, American law enforcement agencies rather than Ukrainian actions made this happen: at their request, Dmytro Firtash, one of the group's leaders, was arrested in Vienna. Firtash is now trying to avoid being extradited to Chicago, where he faces imprisonment. He has hired a group of influential American and Austrian officials to act on his behalf, including a former Austrian justice minister and the former Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff. Firtash wants to stay in Austria as long as possible; there, he is allowed to move freely within the country, while trying to settle his US criminal charges with the help of American lobbyists.

Firtash was held in custody for almost two weeks, then released on bail after paying €125 million, the largest sum in Austria's history. But these were not his only losses. Last year, he lost Nadra Bank as well as control over the titanium deposits he acquired under Yanukovych. Ukraine's prosecutor general has opened a criminal case over the fraudulent sale of Inter, Ukraine's leading television channel. Meanwhile, Firtash continues to wield control over two dozen deputies, including his close business partners, Sergei Levochkin and his sister Yuliya Levochkina, Yuriy Boyko, and Ivan Fursin.

Ukraine has not managed to eliminate one of the main elements supporting corruption: the differential in gas prices for households and industrial complexes, which can vary tenfold. Firtash still controls the largest network of gas distribution companies, where cheap gas destined for the people is "lost", but then reappears in his chemical plants that produce fertilisers sold at international-level prices. This is the source of his great financial wealth.

Kolomoisky and the new oligarchs

Ihor Kolomoisky's clan significantly increased its sphere of influence after Yanukovych's fall. Kolomoisky tries to present himself as a staunch opponent of Yanukovych, but this is far from the truth. He was ready to establish relationships with any authority and, before the 2010 elections, he decided to bet on Yanukovych, assisting him financially through his old friend Yuriy Ivaniuschenko. By doing so, he kept control of Ukrnafta, despite the fact that the state owned the majority of its shares. Kolomoisky was one of the main beneficiaries of Yanukovych's regime and even attended the former president's private birthday celebrations.

After Yanukovych's departure, Kolomoisky's strategy was to bet on his own political authority. Instead of spending money on external political projects, he invested in himself and became head of Dnipropetrovsk province, neighbouring the Donbas region occupied by Russian troops.

Kolomoisky created battalions of volunteers to defend the borders of Dnipropetrovsk province, and sometimes to act as private security for his organisations. They were even involved in corporate conflicts. For instance, they confiscated petroleum products belonging to Kurchenko.

In the new parliament, Kolomoisky's people have infiltrated various factions. They can be found in the Petro Poroshenko Bloc and the Popular Front, and among the unaffiliated MPs. Kolomoisky continues to control Ukrnafta, the oil refinery in Kremenchuk, and a network of state-owned pipelines. Immediately after Yanukovych's fall, raw material from these pipelines was processed in Kolomoisky's plant. He also controls Odesa province, governed by Ihor Palytsia, a former top manager of Kolomoisky's Ukrnafta. Kolomoisky's media empire, which includes the 1+1 television channel, is used to settle political scores.

Kolomoisky was fired by Poroshenko in March 2015, when as governor of Dnipropetrovsk province he crossed the line in using

public resources for his own enrichment. He refused to pay dividends of 1.8 billion hryvnia (approximately $70 million) to the state budget from Ukrnafta. Kolomoisky said he would "never pay the dividends" in spite of the fact that the government owns 50 percent plus one share in the company.

He also violated the law that prohibits dual citizenship, because he actually has not even two but three passports – from Ukraine, Israel, and Cyprus. And he involved former battalion fighters in protecting his management in Ukrnafta after legal changes that allowed the removal of the company's pro-Kolomoisky CEO.

The arrival of armoured personnel carriers and automatic weapons on the city's streets had looked like the first act of a military coup. Kolomoisky placed in doubt the president's monopoly on the use of force and undermined the legitimacy of Poroshenko and the whole government. It was a point of no return and his resignation was unavoidable. Kolomoisky has, in other words, been prevented from grabbing even more power; but it is still a key member of the oligarch system which survives intact.

This last decade has seen the almost invisible emergence of a new breed of oligarchs in the agrarian sector. The land reserves of Ukraine, their prime location, and the preferential treatment given to agriculture have all contributed to the rise of these magnates, whose fortunes can now compete with those of the "old" oligarchs. Their rise is reflected in the composition of the current parliament, which includes relatives and representatives of the main agrarian empires, including the son of the owner of Nubilon, the brother of the owner of Kernel, and lobbyists for the Myronivsky Hliboprodukt, UkrLandFarming, and Cargill corporations.

After the 2014 elections, when parliament sat for the first time, there were eight candidates to head the committee on agrarian policy in Poroshenko's faction alone. The agrarian lobby, which had until then acted from outside parliament, was now firmly established in legislative structures from where they could lobby for corporate interests.

How to move forward

More than anything, Ukraine needs to find a way of reducing the influence that oligarchs have on all aspects of life. This might take years, but if it does not happen, it will be impossible to build a fair and just society without corruption at the highest levels of government.

The oligarchs' financial influence over politics must be removed. The oligarch clans are currently important sponsors of political projects that are profitable for business, making Ukrainian elections some of the most expensive in the world. To weaken their influence, Ukraine should introduce state funding of political parties. This is a system that has been implemented in the majority of European countries, where parties receive yearly grants funded by taxpayer money to cover their expenses. Money from the state budget should become a real alternative to that from the oligarch clans.

Today, rivalry between the parties looks very much like a virtual purchasing power competition. Campaign teams buy airtime on television channels at great expense. One minute on the STB channel belonging to Viktor Pinchuk, son-in-law of former President Leonid Kuchma, cost between $15,000 and $20,000 during the last elections. Campaign teams would buy hours of airtime and accept the oligarchs' people on their lists in order to get discounts.

A major step towards reducing the oligarchs' influence, therefore, would be limiting or even banning political advertising on commercial channels. Advertising for political parties should be restricted to free slots on public television. This would encourage politicians to engage in new forms of communication with the electorate, face-to-face rather than through televised broadcasts.

Financing parties from the state budget and limiting political advertising would be a start, but it would by no means be enough. It will be impossible to curtail the oligarchs' influence over society without reforming television. Eighty percent of the population rely on television for information. Ukraine should, therefore, create a public state television channel, supervised by a board to ensure its

impartiality, which would not only give citizens an alternative source of information, but would also force the oligarch-controlled channels to cover information more objectively. Biased news, if competing against a comparatively unbiased viewpoint, would become less influential and popular.

Equally important is the reform of justice, which today does not serve the needs of a modern Ukraine. However, these complex reforms will only be achievable if Ukrainian civil society finds a permanent ally in Western governments and international institutions. Ukrainian officials and politicians are sometimes deaf to the demands of their citizens, but become much more receptive when these demands are reiterated by organisations providing financial assistance to Ukraine. Therefore, including anti-oligarchic measures in a reform package might well be the greatest service that European institutions could provide to Ukraine.

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