

RELIGION & SOCIETY

IN EAST AND WEST

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Dear Reader

On 25 May Petro Poroshenko was elected Ukrainian president. The election of the millionaire "Chocolate King" was universally expected. The surprise was that Poroshenko was able to achieve a majority in the election's first round. This resounding victory is an expression of the Ukrainian people's hopes for an end to the power vacuum at the top of their state's political system and that Poroshenko might be able to protect Ukraine's unity and independence in the face of Russian aggression and the escalating violence in the east of the country.

Ukraine now has a head of state whose legitimacy is rooted in democratic processes. The interim government established following the fall of the previous president, Viktor Yanukovych, came to power through a revolutionary act – the mass protests on Kyiv's Independence Square and other Ukrainian cities: in short, after the Maidan. All the authors invited to contribute to the present edition of RGOW share the view that the recent events in Ukraine amount to a revolution in the tradition of the political upheaval of 1989/90. We made a conscious decision to place the emphasis on voices from within Ukraine in order to present their experiences and analysis of the Maidan. (For more on the conception of this edition, see the introduction by Denis Dafflon and Nicolas Hayoz.)

Most of the contributions were completed before the presidential elections, but in many respects they outline the considerable challenges facing Poroshenko: first and foremost divisions within the country must be overcome, divisions that do not lie between East and West or between Ukrainians or Ukrainian-speakers and Russians or Russian-speakers, but between opposing values; while reactionary factions cling to post-Soviet paternalist structures, the Maidan demonstrators hope for fundamentally new politics based on the rule of law and free from corruption. It remains to be seen whether the oligarch Poroshenko is the right man for such a new start.

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Stefan Kube, Chief editor

Andreas Kappeler

IT ISN'T INTERNAL PROBLEMS, BUT EXTERNAL INTERVENTION THAT POSES THE GREATEST THREAT TO UKRAINE

Most recent commentaries on the Ukraine crisis highlight the weaknesses and the disjointedness of the Ukrainian state. In so doing, many observers forget that the conflict only broke out once Russia intervened and began to destabilise Ukraine. Ukraine is not on the brink of collapsing as a result of internal problems, but because Putin has intervened via economic, political and military means. The twenty-year history of an independent Ukraine is not the history of a failed state, but, relatively speaking, something of a success story.

Far from a failed "artificial" state

When in December 1991 Ukraine achieved independence together with the other 14 Soviet republics, including Russia, the mass media predicted the swift collapse of this "artificial" state or even spoke of the danger of a civil war between Western and Eastern Ukraine. These scenarios proved to be unfounded. On the contrary, Ukraine became established internationally and was able to integrate the population into the new state. All the polls suggest that despite the historical and ethnic differences between the individual regions, the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian citizens support an independent state. Before March 2014 there were no separatist movements to speak of. A civil state has developed that embraces the differences of the regions and ethnic groups (Ukrainians and Russians).

I do not wish to underplay the enormous problems still besetting Ukraine. Yes, Ukraine's economy is underdeveloped, the country has huge social problems, imperfect constitutionality and is characterised by omnipresent corruption. On the other hand it has achieved a level of democratisation that is yet to be seen in Russia and most of the other post-Soviet states. The presidential and parliamentary elections have been, for the most part, above board and, as is typical of democracies, have usually rung in a change of political direction. The media landscape is diverse, unlike in Russia, where state power enjoys a virtual monopoly. In contrast to Russia, human rights are rarely abused and in politics there is greater room for manoeuvre.

Democratisation has come under threat twice, both times from Viktor Yanukovich, the former governor of Donetsk supported by Putin. In the autumn of 2004 the presidential elections were rigged in favour of Yanukovich, which sparked the "Orange Revolution". A spontaneous mass movement forced the re-holding of elections, from which Viktor Yushchenko emerged victorious over Yanukovich. After the heroes of the Orange Revolution had used up all their credits, Yanukovich was elected president in 2010. This was also a victory for Putin, who had been too quick to congratulate Yanukovich on his 2004 victory and who has never overcome this loss of face. The new president immediately began to reverse the process of democratisation, creating an authoritarian regime that threw political opponents such as Yulia Tymoshenko in prison and lining his own and his family's pockets with impunity.

Opposition to the authoritarian kleptocratic president grew, and when he reneged at the last minute on his binding promise to sign the EU Association Agreement, matters came to a head. During the Euromaidan hundreds of thousands of people engaged in peaceful protest against Yanukovich and his

government for almost three months. When he failed to make concessions and increasingly used force against the peaceful demonstrators, he was toppled and parliament removed him from office. Following his flight the parliament elected an acting president and an interim government. Both revolutions on the Kyiv Maidan represent the largest mass movements of civil society in Europe since 1989/91. The Ukrainians have demonstrated a degree of political maturity surpassing all expectations of them. This unique fact has been forgotten in recent weeks; instead, there is criticism of the interim government, which has hardly any room for manoeuvre following Russia's intervention and which cannot implement reforms or establish a new constitution before the election of a new president. This is why the elections of 25 May are so important.

An asymmetric relationship

The key to explaining the crisis thus does not lie with Ukraine's internal problems, but in its relationship with Russia. Here it is helpful to take a look through history. Russia's policy under Putin has taken on an increasingly imperial orientation in recent years, drawing on the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Its goal is to bring as many former Soviet republics under Russian domination as possible and to unite them in a Eurasian Union. Ukraine occupies a central role in these plans.

Two aspects must be considered here. The Russian governments and Russian society have never accepted the existence of an independent Ukrainian state and an independent Ukrainian nation. Even under the Tsars, the Ukrainians or Little Russians were considered part of an Orthodox Eastern Slavic "All-Russian" nation. The loss of Ukraine would have threatened the existence of the Russian nation. This is the attitude that Putin has adopted.

Russians and Ukrainians have an undeniably close relationship. As many polls confirm, on the personal level there has seldom been antagonism. Some 8 million ethnic Russians live in Ukraine, and 3 million ethnic Ukrainians live in Russia. (One seldom hears about the latter.) Ukraine is a bilingual country, and Russia's claims that it has to protect its "countrymen" from a violent Ukrainisation are pure fabrication. Ethnic and linguistic backgrounds do not equate to political orientation. On the Maidan a great deal of Russian was spoken. The constitution defines Ukrainians not as an ethnic nation, but as a nation of citizens including Russians, Crimean Tartars and other minorities.

This friendly relationship is now endangered by Russian threats to cause a civil war in Eastern Ukraine, by Russian propaganda labelling the Ukrainian government and the Euromaidan as mercenaries hired by the USA and as "Fascists". "The hate that was created and fuelled by Russia is now spreading within society", warns the writer Serhei Zhadan, who comes from Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine. Chasms are opening up that will not be easy to bridge – a scenario that is ominously reminiscent of the conflicts in post-Yugoslavia.

Abridged guest column in Die Presse from 26.05.2014.

Andreas Kappeler, Prof. emeritus of East European History at the University of Vienna.

SWITZERLAND

Annual G2W Conference on the Ukraine Crisis

On May 21 the University of Zurich hosted the annual G2W conference. Following the general assembly, in which the chair and colleagues provided information on the development of the institute, its journal and its project in Russia, the institute convened in the evening with the Department of East European History at the University of Zurich's Historical Seminar for a public discussion of the question "What Next for Ukraine?"

In his introductory talk on "Russia and Ukraine: an Asymmetric Relationship", Andreas Kappeler, Professor emeritus of Eastern European History at the University of Vienna, elaborated on the history of the neighbouring countries and their entanglement. Common to both countries, he argued, is that they are young, less established states and nations; while most people stress this aspect in relation to Ukraine, the Russian Federation is also a new state following the collapse of the Soviet Union and is facing similar problems to its neighbour. Along with this symmetry, Professor Kappeler also highlighted the asymmetrical nature of Ukrainian-Russian relations: Russian

policy under Vladimir Putin has become increasingly imperial in recent years, drawing on the traditions of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and posing a long-term threat to the development of the Ukrainian state and nation. Against this background it is hardly surprising that the Ukrainian nation has chosen to develop away from Russia. Professor Kappeler concluded that Russia's aggressive policies towards Ukraine was endangering what had been good relations between Russians and Ukrainians and that there would presumably only be losers in the present conflict. (Cf. also his piece in this issue, p.3.)

This paper was followed by two short statements by Thomas Bremer, Professor of Ecumenical Matters, the Eastern Churches and Peace Studies at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Münster, and Jonas Grätz, researcher at the Centre for Security Studies at the ETH Zurich. Professor Bremer shed light on the complex situation concerning the Churches in Ukraine and showed how the Churches had reacted differently during the Maidan protests. Jonas Grätz

outlined the catastrophic economic situation in Ukraine and the urgent need for western aid. He placed particular emphasis on Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia due to gas prices. It is especially worrying that the conflict has seen reconsolidation of oligarchic structures in the east of Ukraine despite the Maidan's great efforts to counter this very aspect.

Following the papers Professor Nada Boškowska of the University of Zurich then chaired a lively panel discussion which focussed mainly on the current developments: the escalation of the situation in Eastern Ukraine, the challenges facing the new Ukrainian government after the presidential elections and the appropriate response of the western states to Russia. While Thomas Bremer and Andreas Kappeler were rather sceptical concerning the future, presuming Putin would try to influence Ukraine's internal affairs for as long as possible, Jonas Grätz expressed guarded optimism regarding the future prospects for Ukraine's new government.

Stefan Kube

UKRAINE

Churches point the finger at each other

Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Churches are deteriorating: Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), director of the Russian Orthodox Church's Department for External Church Relations, has accused the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) of intensifying the current crisis in Ukraine through its "interfering in politics". He claimed that through the political alignment of its head, Major Archbishop Svyatoslav Shevchuk, and his predecessor, Lyubomir Cardinal Husar, the UGCC had stoked the conflict in Ukraine with the effect that it could escalate into a "bloody armed conflict".

For Metropolitan Hilarion, Major Archbishop Shevchuk and the UGCC had not only advocated Ukraine's integration into Europe, but had also supported Western intervention in the Ukraine conflict. Metropolitan Hilarion further accused the head of the UGCC and Patriarch Filaret (Denisenko) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kyiv Patriarchate of advocating military intervention in Ukraine in the USA (cf. RGOW 3/2014, p.4).

In turn the secretary of the UGCC's episcopal synod, Auxiliary Bishop Bogdan Dziurach, in an interview with the Catholic news agency KNA accused the Russian Orthodox Church of approving of

Russian military intervention in Crimea, claiming that Patriarch Kirill's statement on Ukraine failed "to describe Ukraine as an independent country or to condemn Putin's military attack" even though he was also the head of the Church for millions of Ukrainians. Bishop Dziurach argued that if Patriarch Kirill was "only worried about victims among the civilian population, then one wonders whether the general platitudes about the brotherhood of the Russian, Belarusian and Russian people are not a blessing for Putin's violent actions in Ukraine".

Kathpress, 13, 27 March 2014 – S. K.

Metropolitan Sofronii (Dmitruk): "Putin is a bandit"

The Ukrainian-born Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP), Sofronii (Dmitruk) of Cherkasy and Kaniv, has voiced strong criticism of Russian military intervention in Crimea and Putin's policies.

He called for Ukrainians in service of the Russian state not to pursue policies against their own country.

Addressing the highest state officials of Ukrainian origin, especially the Chairwoman of the Federation Council, Val-

entina Matvienko, who had advocated Putin's annexation of Crimea, and the Russian Minister for Culture, Vladimir Medinskii, the Metropolitan wrote: "I am ashamed for you, Valentina Matvienko, I met you when you came to Cher-

kasy. [...] I feel sorry for your relatives still living in Cherkasy. Your school is here, the medical institute, at which you studied – you grew up here, how could you be so mean towards your people and appeal to this bandit Putin (one cannot call him anything else) to send the army here, against your people. I would like to look the Minister of Culture from Smely [a town near Cherkasy] in the eye: what is his culture? Does he know about the history, the suffering of Ukrainians?"

To his other countrymen in the Russian civil service the Metropolitan wrote: "Dear people, come to your senses!

Whom are you serving? Why have you betrayed your homeland, have left Ukraine and are constructing a happy life for Russians that in reality does not exist there? Why don't you want to build such a life for Ukrainians? If you are so clever and have over 4 % of your mental faculties, then come to your senses. Put right the terrible and criminal mistakes you have committed against your people, for God will not forgive you for them!"

Several other bishops and priests of the UOC–MP have protested against the annexation of Crimea. Archpriest Alexander Akulov, speaking on behalf

of many priests of the UOC–MP, called the invasion of Ukraine a "false move by the Russian leadership". Metropolitan Avgustin (Markevych), head of the UOC–MP's synodal department for relations with the forces, blessed the Ukrainian defence of their fatherland. Bishop Filaret (Kucherov) of Lviv, wrote an open letter to Putin, calling for him to withdraw his troops from Ukraine and warned him of his responsibility before God.

*www.risu.org.ua/ru,
4, 21 March 2014 – O. S.*

Critical report of the Human Rights Council on the situation in Crimea

A delegation of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, including the renowned civil rights activist Svetlana Gannushkina, was sent by Vladimir Putin to Crimea to report on "the problems of the population of Crimea". The report of 21 April hardly met Putin's expectations, however, since it came to the conclusion that the referendum on Russian annexation of Crimea was massively rigged. The sensitive findings of the report, which draws on the statements of local officials, priests, journalists, public figures, lawyers, civil rights activists as well as normal citizens, are to be found in its final section: according to the Russian government, of a turn-out of 80 %, 97 % voted in favour of joining Russia. However, the report states: "In the opinion of virtually every expert and citizen we spoke to, the overwhelming majority of the population of Sevastopol (with a turn-out of 50–80 %) voted for annexation by Russia; in the rest of Crimea, various reports say that of a turn-out of 30–50 %, 50–60 % of eligible voters were for Russian annexation. The population of Crimea voted not so much for annexation by Russia but, as they put it, 'for the end of unbridled corruption and the gangster-like supremacy of the protégés from Donetsk'. The population of Sevastopol on the other hand voted for annexation by Russia. Fear of illegal

armed groups was greater in Sevastopol than elsewhere in Crimea."

The report also examines the problem of issuing Russian passports, for which too few passport offices have been set up and for which too short a time window had been set for naturalisation. The situation is particularly bad for people who wish to retain their Ukrainian citizenship. People are generally unhappy with a lack of information from the Russian authorities; the citizens have not been informed what consequences retaining Ukrainian or acquiring Russian citizenship will have for residency and settlement permits, pensions, state support and welfare, medical care etc. The many Crimean Tatars are particularly worried; in the 1990s the Ukrainian authorities turned a blind eye to their settling in Crimea illegally. They now fear for their houses and other property given the unclear legal situation.

The legal situation is another cause of dissatisfaction: in theory, until 31 December 2014 Ukrainian and Russian law are supposed to exist parallel to each other, but a number of courts are said to be already applying Russian law. Another cause for concern is the situation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kyiv Patriarchate; the new rulers do not want to extend the leases of their buildings rented for ritual and other purposes. Journalists also told the delegation of the Human

Rights Council of the many restrictions the new Russian leadership was imposing on them.

On 7 May the Human Rights Council published the following rebuttal: "Since large sections of the media have taken the report 'Problems of the Population of Crimea' to be an official document of the 'Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights' and the appraisal of the referendum in Crimea [contained therein] to be an official appraisal by the Human Rights Council, we hereby declare that it is no such thing. One of the authors of the report, Yevgenii Bobrov, undertook a private visit to Crimea from 16 to 18 April and compiled a summary of the problems of the local population in a variety of areas. [...] The summary contains neither appraisals of the political situation, results of official polls, studies nor expert reports. It features merely the personal observations and opinions of the authors. In particular with regard to the referendum the authors of the report exclusively reproduce the appraisals of the people they spoke to without providing judgement on their objectivity or accuracy in any way. [...]"

http://www.president-sovet.ru/structure/gruppa_po_migratsionnoy_politike/materialy/problemy_zhiteley_kryma.php?print=Y – O. S.

Church response to Odessa arson attack

In the port town of Odessa pro-Russian demonstrators clashed with supporters of the Ukrainian government on May 2. After street battles the pro-Russian demonstrators fled to the trade union building, which their opponents set on fire

with Molotov cocktails. 46 people died and 214 were injured, 27 severely.

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, condemned the attack and the bloody conflict in eastern Ukraine: "Again there is bloodshed in

Ukraine. The clashes in the Donetsk area and the tragic events in Odessa have led to the deaths of dozens of people and to further destabilisation in the country. Many are devastated and fear for their lives and the lives of those closest

to them." The Patriarch also criticised the approach of the Ukrainian government at least indirectly, saying they were denying citizens in the east of the country freedom of expression: "The responsibility for what is happening now lies foremost with those who choose violence ahead of dialogue. It is particularly worrying that heavy military equipment is used in areas where citizens are fighting one another. Violence is often the choice of those who follow political radicalism and deny citizens freedom of expression. Under the conditions of today's Ukraine, a single political position cannot be claimed to be the only possible and compulsory one. That is disastrous for the country. I am convinced that one must finally desist from attempts to push through one's own position using violence. I call on all sides to lay down their weapons and to solve all questions through negotiations. In the short term, Ukraine needs a cease-fire at the least – in the long term, it needs a stable and uncontested peace. Ukraine can only heal and set out to create a dignified life for its citizens if it becomes a common home for people of various and vastly differing political convictions. There is no alternative to dialogue."

In contrast, Patriarch Filaret, head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kyiv Patriarchate, held Putin and the Russian secret service primarily responsible for the escalation of violence in the east and

south of the country: "No one can be indifferent to the latest tragic events in Ukraine. Because of armed clashes, there is once again bloodshed, people are dying. An undeclared war is being waged against our country. Let me emphasise that every citizen has the right to express his political opinion peacefully and without armed violence. But every attack on the constitutional structure, the unity and the integrity of Ukraine's territory and its borders are not a political act, but a crime that must be stopped and punished by law. [...]"

"A great deal of irrefutable evidence, on which the international community also bases its conclusions, confirms that the secret service agencies of the Russian Federation are behind these outbreaks of violence and terroristic actions, agencies for whose deeds the political leadership of Russia and its president are personally responsible. The members of the Russian special units, the agents they have recruited from the Ukrainian population and Russian mercenaries, are doing everything to fuel clashes, to provoke, to increase the number of victims. Their goal is to destroy Ukrainian statehood, to pave the way for overt Russian invasion and the occupation of Ukraine.

"The media controlled by the Russian rulers are continuing a campaign of lies on an unprecedented scale, lies which are also an integral component of the undeclared war on Ukraine. Those involved in

this campaign should remember that to deliberately spread lies is to serve Satan. While the Russian state leadership does evil, it tries to conceal the truth – just as it did with the annexation of Crimea, when it refused to admit that the occupying troops belonged to Russia. [...]"

"We need a broad societal dialogue, we must overcome hostility and summon all our strength to build a better Ukraine. But the constitutional order, the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine are axioms that no one has the right to question, irrespective of their political convictions. These are questions that can only be decided by the will of the Ukrainian people as a whole, not by a single party, a single group or the population of certain areas. I wish to stress that in Ukraine there is no hostility towards Russia as a country or towards the Russians as a nation, and there cannot be any in the future either. Language and differing political opinions should also serve the welfare and the unity of the Ukrainian people and should not be an excuse for fuelling hatred. [...]"

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate, on the other hand, avoided one-sided recriminations and appealed for donations for the victims of Odessa.

*www.patriarchia.ru, 3 May;
www.risu.org.ua, 4 May;
KNA-ÖKI, 4 May 2014 – O. S.*

Metropolitan Hilarion prevented from entering Ukraine

The director of the Russian Orthodox Church's Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Volokolamsk, claims that on 9 May he was held "for a long time" by Ukrainian border guards at Dnipropetrovsk airport and prevented from entering Ukraine. Metropolitan Hilarion intended to take part in the 75th birthday celebrations of the Dnipropetrovsk Metropolitan Ireney (Serednii). Instead, they were only able to meet at the airport. Hilarion passed on to Iriney the returns of the Moscow Patriarch Kirill and awarded him a high Church honour.

The Russian Orthodox Church issued an official statement protesting against the decision: "The decision of the Ukrainian authorities, which comes at a time when the Ukrainian people are being severely tested and the Russian Orthodox Church is doing everything it can to restore peace and harmony to the country and create dialogue, is a matter of great dismay and deep regret. The planned

visit of Metropolitan Hilarion was for the Church celebration of the birthday of Metropolitan Ireney [...], one of the most meritorious and revered hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. [...] In various countries, including Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church unites millions of people with different political convictions. It categorically condemns any attempt to raise the political conflict and the discord between the citizens in Ukraine to the religious level and declares on behalf of its Patriarch its strong protest against measures that restrict its capacity for humanitarian action, hinder its missions for peace and work against overcoming the enmity of citizens on Ukrainian soil."

Metropolitan Hilarion himself declared in an interview with the radio station *Rossiya-24*: "Obviously my name and the names of other Church hierarchs features in a list of persons who are not permitted to enter Ukraine. That raises many questions in so far as the Church,

as is well known, only pursues a peace-bringing mission."

The Russian foreign ministry described the denial of entry as an "unprecedented provocative incident" and demanded an explanation from the Ukrainian authorities. The foreign ministry further criticised the fact that now the canonical Orthodox Church had come under attack. In response the press officer of the Ukrainian foreign ministry stated that his ministry had no connection to the incident and was not able to comment on it, since such questions lay beyond the ministry's remit: "The right to allow someone to enter the country or not lies with the border protection authorities. They act on the basis of corresponding requests of the judicial organs of Ukraine, should they receive any."

*www.portal-credo.ru, 10 May;
www.pravmir.ru, 12 May;
www.interfax-religion.ru,
13, 14 May 2014 – O. S.*

Denis Dafflon and Nicolas Hayoz

Euromaidan: Different Perspectives on an Epochal Revolution

The current events in Ukraine and the fall of the former president Viktor Yanukovych are much more than mere regime change, they are a revolution. This revolution was brought about by a citizens' movement seeking greater freedom and a reduction in state corruption. The Euromaidan thus stands in the tradition of the "Orange Revolution" of 2004, whose promise of reform remains unfulfilled. – S. K.

The events that have taken place in Ukraine since November 2013 have taken the world by surprise. The successful Maidan Revolution has shown once again that large numbers of Ukrainian citizens do care about freedom, rights and political and social change in their country. They had the courage to oppose and overthrow a kleptocratic and corrupt regime that was ruining the country. This is a lesson for many Western analysts, who tend to view post-Soviet societies as generally apathetic. Particularly after the failed Orange Revolution and the return of Yanukovych to power, many observers thought that the potential of civil society to mobilise against the increasingly authoritarian character of the Ukrainian regime was rather weak. And others had never paid much attention to what happens in Ukraine or were looking at matters through the lenses of the Russian "imperial" perspective and seeing a poor periphery caught in a kind of "colonial" dependency. Moreover, the events of the last few months have also confirmed that Ukraine is not only a fragile state but also a nation which still has to overcome its divisions.

More than just a regime change

A lot has already been written about the Maidan events and the changes that have ensued, both internally and internationally, both positive and negative.¹ The idea of this special issue is to give a voice to academics and intellectuals, whose views have been reported less than those of journalists and politicians. We gave "carte blanche" to 15 renowned scholars and asked them to share with us what lessons they have learnt from these events. The social science perspective that most of the authors provide brings originality to the analysis.

The authors come from various backgrounds, disciplines and regions, but interestingly, on many aspects there is unanimity. First, most share the view that the Maidan events represent more than just regime change. The Maidan revolution opens a new era of thinking about the relationship between citizens and the state, about national identity, and about the past in Ukraine. A revolution is always about values. The Ukrainians have in fact shown to the world that the spirit of 1989 was still alive, as the journalist Paul Berman wrote in a column in the *New Republic*,² Maidan was about freedom and democracy, the liberal values at the core of the European Union, which itself is in a way the product of the 1989 revolutions.

Second, most authors agree that this was a bottom-up movement with the citizens at its core. The will to maintain Euromaidan as a citizens' movement and not to include political forces says a lot about the distrust towards the political class that characterizes the country. It also contradicts many reports on the manipulation of the protestors by political parties and

external actors. Finally it brings hope for a new relationship between citizens and the state, based on the accountability of politicians towards voters, and a stronger relation of checks and balances.

Third, the authors confirm the fact that the protests were more about the dignity of the Ukrainian people, seeking justice and tired of being ruled by a corrupt state, than about the very issue of the non-signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union. As a matter of course, the link between the protests and the European Union was very much in the foreground in the sense that the European Union symbolises the values that the protesters are so desperately calling for in their own state: the rule of law, social justice, democracy, fair treatment and equality. In an era in which the European Union is heavily criticized within the societies of many member states, it is refreshing to see that the EU still has the power to gather societies around the values that it symbolises. Anne Applebaum made a good point recently when stating, after the Ukrainian presidential elections, in which Ukrainians voted for "European values", and after the rise of anti-EU far-right parties in the European elections of 25 May that "those who don't have democracy, stability, or "European values" want them desperately. And those who have them don't appreciate them – and perhaps cannot."³ In that sense, Maidan is also a lesson for Europeans.

Finally it is hard to speak about Maidan without mentioning the Orange Revolution of 2004. Several authors place 2014 in a similar context to 2004, stressing the fact that the Orange Revolution was a failed revolution and that lessons have to be learned in order to avoid a similar outcome. Ten years ago we were not the only ones enthusiastic about the Orange Revolution. At that time we wrote that "*the chances are quite good that Ukrainians will be able to build a democratic state. The masses were sick and tired of being subjects to a rich, corrupt and all-powerful regime. Millions have stood up and proclaimed loudly that they no longer accept a regime based on corruption and lies and that they want a fundamental change in politics – de facto signalling the end of the post-Soviet period*".⁴ This can also be said about Maidan 2014. The leaders of the former revolution wasted the opportunity to implement the promised reforms. Let's hope the promises will not be wasted a second time. Of course, the situation differs fundamentally in 2014 with the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, which put the existence of the Ukrainian state itself at risk and make the challenge even tougher.

Internal perspectives

This issue clears up some misconceptions or stereotypical views about Ukraine often reported in the media, including the divide between East and West, the strength of far-right movements

and the manipulation of the protestors by external forces. By giving a voice to scholars we are able to present a different and more distanced internal perspective. The first paper by Andriy Portnov and Tetiana Portnova is very useful in this respect, as it offers a detailed summary of the events since November 2013. It shows the reader the very nature of the protests, led mainly by middle-class citizens who were fully aware of the potential for manipulation of their movement by political forces, hence their complete distrust of political parties.

Despite the fact that the revolution has shown the readiness of thousands of citizens to defend their dignity and their championing of European values as a model for Ukraine, the challenges the country has to face are huge. Many authors point to the fact that the country has to find a way out of its deep economic crisis, that it has to find ways to negotiate with Russia, which occupied Crimea and is destabilising the south-eastern part of Ukraine, and that it has to rebuild a state and a nation adapted to the needs of a divided nation. As Olexiy Haran and Petro Burkovskiy write, the civil protests resulted not only in a change of regime but also in the need to rethink national identity and national unity, far from the East-West stereotypes presented by the media. Keeping the media perspective, Anton Shekhtosov's paper deals with the Ukrainian far-right movements and parties "Svoboda" and "Pravyi Sektor" (Right Sector). Anton Shekhtosov shows that Svoboda and Pravyi Sektor were indeed present in Maidan but were in fact quite marginalised. He also shows that these movements failed to benefit from Maidan, as shown in the score of their candidate in the presidential elections, thus showing that there is an information war going on – one that the new authorities seem however to have lost.

Will Ukraine be able to change its political culture and integrate the European values the protesters called for into the political system? Viktor Stepanenko, in his paper, gives a very thoughtful insight into the peculiarities of Maidan, and of the changes it might bring for Ukraine, thus stressing that "the Maidan protest movement and later people's uprising were an attempt to de-institutionalise post-Soviet politics" and that "Maidan and its practices were a challenging experience in constructing new institutions, rules, and values that were not post-Soviet in their essence". Despite all the difficulties that ensued in the country following the protests, Viktor Stepanenko still thinks that the protests will prove to have been worthwhile if the ideals of Maidan are realised. This view is shared by Mykola Riabchuk and Andrej N. Lushnycky in their contribution showing that the Maidan events are the third attempt to depart from the Soviet era and the Soviet mentality in which a certain section of Ukrainian society is still entangled. Interestingly, they show that Ukraine is highly divided, but not split, thus giving hope for the country's reconciliation. They highlight that the country is not divided between East and West, or Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers but between proponents of liberal values and proponents of a Soviet-style Putin-like regime.

Oleksandr Fisun and Anton Avksentiev give us some insight into how Euromaidan was viewed in other parts of the country. Whereas in Kyiv Euromaidan was viewed as a revolution of dignity (see the contribution by Yuriy Shveda) and a return to justice and a possible end to a regime of impunity for the mighty (cf. the contribution by Yaroslav Pylinskyi), these two authors confirm that the protests were highly contested in the East and South-East of Ukraine. They show that Ukraine is crossed by different and confronting narratives about national identity, Russia and Europe that tend, unfortunately, to reduce events such as Euromaidan to a zero-sum game with only winners and losers in the end. The zero-sum game model can also

be applied to the consequences of the Ukrainian events in the international context, as shown by Sergiy Fedunyak. He shows very convincingly that Russia is compelled to review its institutional framework of cooperation in the former Soviet Union. From another perspective, the whole crisis has also shown the weakness of the Western security framework and the Western-based model of territorial integrity inherited from the Second World War.

In her contribution on the strong role of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the Maidan movement, Maryana Hnyp concludes that the Church is not only an important part of Ukrainian civil society. It is also a voice that can contribute to the rediscovery of national and religious identity. And finally Kontantin Sigov's article on the freedom of Ukraine and the light of the Maidan reinterprets Maidan for what it also stands for: solidarity, a struggle against fear and lies. It also points to a position of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is radically different to that of the Russian Orthodox Church, underlining freedom from ideology, propaganda or "political orthodoxy".

A platform for analysis and critique

This special issue on Ukraine was once again funded by the ASCN. The ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET (ASCN) is a programme aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus. The programme seeks to encourage constructive debate on society, which in turn contributes to the region's transformation process. In that sense ASCN provides support to initiatives, offering platforms for analysis and critique in other eastern European, particularly post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine, which still has a long way to go before it reaches the shores of a stable democracy based on the rule of law.

But as the Maidan revolution has shown all the cynics of the incumbent power in Kyiv and Moscow: even under the conditions of a repressive police state people start to rebel when they experience a regime exploiting the country and treating its citizens with disdain. And sometimes their revolution is successful and may initiate real political, economic and cultural changes.

Notes

- 1) See for example now in German language: *Euromaidan. Was in der Ukraine auf dem Spiel steht*. Ed. Juri Andruchowytch, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp (2014); *Majdan! Ukraine, Europa*. Ed. Claudia Dathe und Andreas Rostek, Berlin: edition.fotTapeeta_Flugschrift (2014); *Kiew – Revolution 3.0. Der Euromaidan 2013/14 und die Zukunftsperspektiven der Ukraine*. Ed. Simon Geissbühler, Stuttgart: Ibidem (2014).
- 2) See Paul Berman, *The Revolutions of 1989 are not over*, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116920/ukraines-crisis-goes-back-1989>.
- 3) See Anne Applebaum, *A Tale of Two Europes*, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2014/05/ukraine_marine_le_pen_and_european_parliament_european_far_right_s_dangerous.html.
- 4) See Nicolas Hayoz, Andrej N. Lushnycky (ed.), *Ukraine at a crossroads*, Berne, Peter Lang, 2005, p. 30.

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Andriy Portnov and Tetiana Portnova

The Dynamics of the Ukrainian “Eurorevolution”

The protests on the Kyiv Maidan against the decision not to sign the EU Association Agreement quickly became a mass movement opposing the Yanukovich government. The initial wavering of opposition politicians could not convince the Maidan. The death of dozens of demonstrators in the course of the violent clashes in February ultimately led to the collapse of the Yanukovich regime. – R. Z.

The events in Ukraine that followed the decision of the Yanukovich government not to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union came as a surprise to both the European Union and Russia. Meanwhile, the dynamic situation has shown that broad sections of the Ukrainian people desire in principle a new (“European”) political and economic structure to their lives. In the following we will provide a chronological commentary on the most significant events from November 2013 to February 2014 and examine various aspects of a political and economic crisis that is without parallel in Ukraine’s post-Soviet history.

The initial spontaneous protests

The first protest on the Kyiv Maidan, Ukraine’s independence square, took place in the night between 21 and 22 November. As early as Saturday 23 November, tens of thousands of people, the largest assembly since the “Orange Revolution” of 2004, gathered to demonstrate and shout slogans in support of European integration. The majority of the demonstrators were angered not so much by the “abandonment” of negotiations with the EU as by the way it was communicated: society was confronted with the decision without public mention of the question, and after representatives of the government had confirmed only the previous day that they would most certainly be signing the agreement at the EU summit in Vilnius. It was this cynical manner of going about things that brought about a wave of protests of such magnitude.

In the first night of protests, it was not political activists who assembled on the Maidan; not a single political leader had called for a demonstration. It was a spontaneous act of protest on the part of outraged users of social networks amounting to a few hundred. Originally, even at the meeting on the Saturday that mobilised thousands of people on the “Euromaidans” of Kyiv and other cities the demonstrators stressed that they only demanded that the EU Association Agreement be signed and that this demand would not become subordinated to any other political goal. It must be emphasised that the text of the agreement provided neither for the prospect of joining the EU nor for a visa-free zone. That is, the demonstrators’ expectations vastly outweighed the document’s content.

At the EU summit in Vilnius of 28–29 November, President Yanukovich did not even sign the declaration of intent, and in a corridor conversation with the German chancellor Angela Merkel he complained that he alone was being manoeuvred into facing a “very strong” Russia.

At 4 a.m. on 30 November the special police unit *Berkut* entered the Maidan under the pretext of safeguarding the erection of the New Year’s tree (!) and mercilessly beat the students who had spent the night on the square. News of the violent

clearing of the Maidan along with the news of the resignation of the director of the president’s office and the resignation of a number of parliamentarians from the government Party of the Regions saw up to a million outraged citizens gather in Kyiv on the Sunday. The protest was directed firmly at the government: the idealistic slogans of European integration were now joined by demands for the resignations of both the president and the prime minister.

The leaders of the three opposition parties represented in parliament – Arsenii Yazenjuk (*Batkivshchyna*), Vitalii Klichko (*Udar*) and Oleh Tyahnybok (*Svoboda*) – were prepared neither for the organisation of such a mass protest nor for media reports whose goal it was to show horrific scenes of violence.

But who was behind the “bloody tree”? Who gave the order to storm the Maidan? Although both President Yanukovich and the Director of Prosecutions condemned the use of violence the next day, there were no resignations from the police command. Political responsibility certainly lay with the president, who at the very least had proven incapable of stopping the violence.

The failed storming of the Maidan

On Monday, 2 December 2013, after thousands had demonstrated in Kyiv and other cities throughout Western Ukraine, President Yanukovich remained silent. Yet the opposition leaders merely demanded that parliament take a vote on the withdrawal of the government. The practical consequences of millions protesting in Kyiv were that a few administrative buildings (including the mayor’s office) were occupied and that people returned to the Maidan. On Tuesday, 3 December, a parliamentary majority did not support the government’s withdrawal. On the same day Yanukovich left on a state visit to China. Meanwhile, the Kyiv courts arrested nine people suspected of being involved in the storming of the president’s office. Thus innocent people became hostages of the regime, to be used in later negotiations.

No less importantly, President Yanukovich ignored the advice of the representative of the United States state secretary Victoria Nuland and the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy Catherine Ashton to urgently call a roundtable and form a coalition government that would be responsible for the inevitably painful economic reforms. At the very time high-ranking guests from the EU and the USA were visiting Kyiv, and after a roundtable had taken place with three former Ukrainian presidents, during which Viktor Yanukovich was clearly annoyed by the critical contributions of his predecessors, in the night between 9 and 10 December another attempt was made to clear the Maidan with the use of force and to dismantle the barricades erected by the demonstrators. The official version of events declared that there had been a “clearing of the

Photo: Wikimedia commons (VO Svoboda)



Euromaidan in Kyiv
on 29 December 2014.

streets” for city traffic. It was not possible to follow the events on television. As the police approached, the bells of Mikhailovskii Cathedral rang out the alarm. Within a few hours thousands had gathered on the square. As a result, the police ended their efforts before the morning.

The Maidan celebrated. Thus the protest had become, finally and irreversibly, a movement against the Yanukovich regime. After the failure of the “storm on the Maidan” new, more solid barricades were erected. Eventually, on Friday 13 December a roundtable discussion took place between President Yanukovich and the three opposition leaders. The meeting was not broadcast by a single national television station.

The Anti-Maidan

The next day, on 14 December, a mass event in support of the president took place 200 metres from the Maidan. Its participants had been specially bussed in to Kyiv. Here Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov declared that Ukraine did not need a visa-free regime with the EU if that meant it would have to legalise gay marriage. The official message of the Anti-Maidan however was more or less: “For Europe, but later and on better terms!” Nevertheless, one of the representatives of the Party of the Regions called for the assembled masses to chant “Putin! Putin!”

In a parallel step, the state prosecution announced it suspected a breach of authority in the case of the violent clearing of the student Maidan on 30 November, implicating three high-ranking officials, including Kyiv mayor Oleksandr Popov. Virtually at the same time one could read on the internet copies of his interview, in which he named a person whose orders he appeared to have followed: the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, Andrii Klyuev. However, that Klyuev was not involved in the events of 30 November was confirmed by both the state prosecution and the politician himself, in an interview not with Ukrainian, but with German (!) journalists.

The Anti-Maidan was clearly the government’s attempt to show that it was not the people protesting against the government, but one part of the Ukraine against the other. This manipulation was made easier by the circumstance that in the east and in the south of the country distrust of the government was not

reflected strongly in regional voting, since in these regions the “national democratic” opposition parties were not perceived to be the people’s “own” parties. The governing Party of the Regions could thus claim that people should vote for them so that “the nationalists don’t get in”.

That is not to say, however, that there are, in a sociocultural or political sense, two geographically defined “Ukraines”, one of which dreams only of “re-unification” with Russia while the other will do anything to combine pro-European attitudes with a “cult of ultra-nationalism”. The constantly invoked theory that Ukraine is not a single cultural entity or that a “peaceful division” would be desirable is to confuse present-day Ukraine with Czechoslovakia.

Pressure from Russia

On 17 December President Yanukovich departed on state business to Moscow, where Ukraine was promised a loan of 15 billion US dollars and the reduction of gas prices from 400 to 268.5 US dollars per thousand cubic metres. President Putin, obviously enjoying the role of fairy godmother, spoke of help for a “fraternal country” without “any conditions”. Of course, the gifts from Moscow were nothing if not serving self interest, and certainly were not open-ended (for example, the gas deal was to be reviewed on a quarterly basis), and they were quite clearly dependent on Ukraine behaving “correctly”. There was no talk of formal membership of the Customs Union; instead a new integration model was drafted involving Russian control of strategic areas of the Ukrainian economy – and it would have only been a small step from this to demanding a “concordance” of foreign policy.

It would appear that Russian financing bought Yanukovich some time. But Ukraine was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy not because of the impending signing of the EU Association Agreement but as a consequence of the excessive burden the state had placed on the economy, an unfavourable trading climate, total corruption and the irresponsible populism of the country’s leaders.

To understand the significance of the December agreement to Russia, it helps to recall Putin’s oft-repeated conviction that Ukrainians and Russians are “one people” as well as the conflict

of interpretation sagely observed by James Sherr: while for Brussels the Association Agreement represented an alternative to Ukrainian membership of the EU, Moscow considered it EU expansion by alternative means.¹

The organisation and content of the Maidan

At the Sunday evening gathering on 22 December, an event that had already become an established routine, the opposition leaders announced from the Maidan stage the creation of a societal organisation, the “National Maidan Association” (NOM). This amorphous structure with a committee consisting of parliamentarians, journalists, musicians and the rector of Kyiv’s Mohyla Academy under the *de facto* leadership of the opposition, created without public discussion, immediately raised many questions. Above all, the suspicion was that the opposition was trying to give the impression of activity while in fact lacking a strategy and resolve. It became increasingly clear that the opposition could not satisfy the Maidan’s demands for a programme of reforms and a new socio-political force.

How can the phenomenon of self-organisation on the Maidan be explained? Most of the Sunday events on the Maidan were organised by educated and enterprising middle-aged people who combined the hopes for transformation with a broadly conceived Europeanisation. Most of these people were united by their rejection not only of the corrupt government but also of the entire political and economic situation in post-Soviet Ukraine. The positive content of the Maidan consisted primarily of elements of nationalism and a European mythology.

Indeed, the Maidan also served to legitimise nationalist slogans (“glory to Ukraine – glory to the heroes!”) and flags (the black and red symbol of the nationalist underground during the Second World War) as symbols of pro-European protest. It is telling that the black and red flag was raised on the spot where on the evening of 8 December the Lenin monument in Kyiv was toppled. The right-wing extremist party Svoboda proudly claimed it was responsible for this action. As far as the slogan “Glory to Ukraine” is concerned, it seems to me to be fitting to speak not only of its legitimising, but also of a shift in meaning; on the Maidan it came to be a non-party slogan in support of the European revolution.

The pro-European rhetoric of the Maidan created the myth of Europe as a space where law, social justice, freedom of movement and expression prevail – a myth that exceeds not only the content of the unsigned agreement, but also the reality of the European Union.

Repressive legislation and the outbreak of violence

On 16 January 2014, despite the attempts of the opposition to block the benches and the speaker’s box, the parliament voted for a state budget in line with the agreement between Yanukovich and Putin. In the course of a few minutes a majority, loyal to the government, agreed without discussion and by a mere raising of hands to a whole series of openly repressive laws resembling Russian legislation. Yanukovich immediately added his signature to these laws but did not take his usual step of hurrying to make them public.

On Sunday, 19 January, tens of thousands once again assembled on the Maidan awaiting a plan of action from the opposition leaders and the election of a leader of the resistance. Instead they received emotional speeches devoid of content, and the leader of Batkivshchyna, Arsenii Yazenjuk, declared that “only leader is the Ukrainian people”. One of the activists then called from the stage for the people to move towards the parliament building (which at this time was empty). On Hrushevskii Street, a few meters from the parliament, the demonstrators were awaited by

a police cordon. And here the protest immediately lost its peaceful character.

Within a few hours one of the streets of central Kyiv became a battlefield with Molotov cocktails, pyrotechnics, stun grenades and gas. The clashes were initiated by a group of young people who some called activists from right-wing extremist groups, others simply provocateurs. What is clear is that the attempts of both Arsenii Yazenjuk and Vitalii Klichko to call the people back to the Maidan failed. In the night between 19 and 20 January Klichko negotiated with Yanukovich about discussions on how to end the crisis. The next night the scandalous and unlawful laws were published in the government newspapers. (Incidentally, one photograph of the voting shows two fewer hands than the 235 that were recorded.)

The first deaths and the regional expansion of the protests

22 January was a black day in the history of Ukraine. On Hrushevskii Street some demonstrators were shot dead by snipers: Serhii Nigoyan and Mykhailo Zhizhnevskii; Roman Sedyk died a few days later from his injuries. There were no words of condolence or official mourning from the government. Instead, Prime Minister Azarov described them as “marauders, terrorists and criminals”.

During the negotiations between the president and the leaders of the opposition on 23 January a ceasefire on Hrushevskii Street was agreed to. At the same time, demonstrators in Ternopil occupied the regional administrative headquarters. The same was soon to happen in other regions of Western Ukraine. The following night on the Maidan, the opposition leaders presented the results of the discussions with the government in a fashion that was incomprehensible, to put it mildly. The minor concessions suggested, lacking any structural transformation, were not accepted by the assembled masses. The opposition leaders then announced that they would not take part in further discussions with the government, only to continue them the next day while the protests grew in the provinces. As early as the third day of these protests, they crossed the boundaries of Western Ukraine and reached the eastern part of the country in Sumy, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv. In the East and the South the protests were not limited to the occupation of administrative headquarters, but often ended in open clashes in which many were injured and arrested. The deployment of “titushki”, (i.e. informal groups of hired young people who used force under the protection of the “organs of law and order” – the term comes from the “sportsman” Vadym Titushko, who had been in the media spotlight) provides the clearest illustration of the Yanukovich regime’s departure from legal measures.

Unsuccessful negotiations

On 25 January, in an atmosphere in which the violent clearing of the Maidan and the declaration of martial law were expected at any time, at a time when the government’s resources were limited and, just as significantly, the opposition leaders were neither willing nor able to fulfil the Maidan’s expectations, President Yanukovich offered Arsenii Yazenjuk the position of Prime Minister and Vitalii Klichko that of Vice President for Humanitarian Affairs. Many suspected this unexpected proposal to be a trap, while others viewed the beginning of negotiations as the government capitulating. The next day Yazenjuk announced that he would not be accepting the office of Prime Minister.

On Tuesday 28 January parliament began an extraordinary meeting. Shortly before the parliament convened, Prime Minister Azarov’s resignation was announced. The Party of the Regions and the Opposition voted to repeal most of the laws of 16 January, conveying, for a short while, the impression they were

Photo: Viktor Stepanenko



To the memory of the fallen heroes of Euromaidan, Kyiv, 21 February 2014.

prepared to compromise. But the “Amnesty Law” (concerning the release of the “instigators of mass rioting”) shattered all premature illusions. After unfruitful talks behind closed doors and Yanukovich’s speech in parliament that evening, in the night of January 29 the parliamentarians loyal to the government supported a law that only provided for amnesty on the condition that the demonstrators leave the occupied government buildings within 15 days. And the opposition’s bill concerning the unconditional release of the state’s hostages did not even make it to the vote.

The next day Yanukovich went to hospital. But his unplanned appearance in parliament demonstrated that great tension had developed within the hitherto monolithic Party of the Regions, in particular since many of its members did not accept the idea of violently clearing the Maidan and declaring a state of martial law. Without the resources necessary for the overt use of force, the regime waged a peculiar partisan battle with the protesters. The most horrific images of these clashes were the murder of the seismologist Yurii Verbytskii (his body was discovered in some woods outside Kyiv on 22 January) and the torturing of Dmytro Bulatov (found alive on 30 January).

Death of the “Heavenly Hundred” and the president’s flight

The temporary ceasefire did not solve any problems: the government still rejected genuine talks or concessions, and the people on the Maidan were clearly fed up with the opposition speeches. The peaceful procession to the parliament on 18 February quickly escalated into another clash with the police. Once more, people died on Kyiv’s streets. The police attacked and were on the cusp of storming the Maidan with military assistance. That did not happen however. But on the morning of 20 February snipers began to shoot at demonstrators in the centre of Kyiv. Within a day no less than 80 people died – they have become known as the “Heavenly Hundred”. Ten police officers were also shot. These events have yet to be investigated thoroughly.

Following further negotiations involving the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and France and a special representative from Russia, Yanukovich signed an agreement with the opposition leaders. The most important point was the bringing forward of the presidential elections to no later than December 2014. The Maidan could not accept this agreement after people had been mercilessly gunned down in the centre of Kyiv. Even if the snipers on the Maidan had been an act of provocation, the government completely delegitimised itself by its failure to unequivocally condemn these actions.

The Ukrainian political elite reached consensus on the night of 22 February, when it agreed to depose Yanukovich. The following day Yanukovich left his residence and then Ukraine itself. The leader of the Party of the Regions faction, Oleksandr Efremov, then appeared in a video message to say that Yanukovich had “deceived, robbed and betrayed” the country. Yanukovich’s representative in the parliament, Yurii Miroshnychenko, burst into tears before rolling cameras and begged for forgiveness for the president’s crimes.

Yanukovich’s flight with his closest companions (the minister of defence, the minister of the interior, the director of prosecutions, the head of the state security service and others travelled to Russia) created a situation in which the parliament remained as the sole legitimate body of government. A deep crisis of sovereignty and the state provided ideal conditions for the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the subsequent military operations in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Conclusion

The events on the Kyiv Maidan and in the provincial regions of Ukraine have made necessary far-reaching reforms in all areas of Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian state. We consider the most important challenges to be finding an appropriate political form for Ukraine’s post-Soviet hybridity: a constructive compromise structure for a country with two languages, three Orthodox and one Greek-Catholic Churches and a diverse culture of local historical memory. Ukrainian society has to achieve this at a time of deep financial crisis and in the face of a Russian policy of intervention aiming to further destabilise Ukraine.

During the Eurorevolution however millions of Ukrainians have discovered the myth of the nation state. The death of the “Heavenly Hundred” and the fact that thousands of people are prepared to die for a better future for their country have created a psychological resource of identification with an idea of Ukraine that no politician can afford to ignore.

Note

- 1) <http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/ukraina-rossiya-evropa-otravlenny-treugolnik-.html>.

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Olexiy Haran and Petro Burkovskiy

Before and after Euromaidan: European Values vs. pro-Russian Attitudes

According to opinion polls before Euromaidan there was no reason to doubt the cohesion of Ukraine. The demonstrations since November 2013 against the decision not to sign the EU association agreement, the Russian propaganda and the increasingly uncompromising stance of pro-Russian and pro-Western European actors has deepened the chasm between eastern and western Ukraine. Mutual distrust and a lack of consensus regarding future developments pose a greater danger to the integrity of Ukraine than a Russian invasion. – R. Z.

In order to understand the roots of the Euromaidan movement and the subsequent turmoil in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine we must make a precise distinction between, on the one hand, the existing problems of the different political attitudes toward “the West” and “the East” and, on the other, intentionally imposed propagandistic clichés regarding unbridgeable internal “East-West” divisions.

Ukraine before Euromaidan

Since the early years of independence, major political parties and leaders used the issue of choice between European and Euro-Atlantic integration and Russia to mobilize their supporters and to position themselves as political representatives of the respective collective identities, based on different regional attitudes. Such identities were usually imposed in a “top down” manner to determine only the electoral behavior of the citizens in the different regions.

In 2004–2009 there were four national electoral campaigns (two presidential and two parliamentary) that lasted for seven to eight months each. People, parties and leaders used to accept “East-West” controversies as “pre-determined” sustainable patterns of political choice in the different regions of Ukraine. It was argued that inhabitants of the different parts of Ukraine perceived the struggle between these imposed pro-Russian and pro-Western identities as a “zero sum game” which might destroy national unity.

The issue of foreign policy orientation was usually low on the list of political priorities of the Ukrainian people compared to the urgent political, economic and social welfare issues. However, it served as an indicator of which political, economic and social practices and standards, European or Russian, a given political force or leader would implement if elected. In essence, it was a test of the integrity of politicians who had to prove their claims to be “European” by making relevant decisions in the spheres of accountability, transparency, fair competition, justice etc.

Since 2004, despite disappointment with the outcome of the “Orange Revolution” and rivalry between pro-Western and pro-European political parties, people continued to back them. And when the actions of President Viktor Yanukovich and his government threatened existing, though modest, achievements on the way to European standards, Ukrainians reacted by increasing their support for the opposition parties.

One of the key points is that in the 2012 parliamentary elections three oppositional parties, which position themselves as pro-European – *Batkivshchyna* (led by ex-Speaker Arseniy Yatseniuk and controlled by jailed ex-PM Yulia Tymoshenko), *UDAR* (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms, headed by former world boxing champion Vitaliy Klychko) and *Svoboda* (right-wing nationalists with Oleh Tyahnybok at the helm) received 49.94 % of the vote, while the Party of Regions and the Communists combined won only 43.18 %¹.

Pro-European and pro-Western political forces gained impressive support in the several important eastern and southern industrial regions on a level unheard of in previous years (see Table 1.). For instance, in the Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson regions they achieved an unprecedented 40 % of the vote.

At the same time, pro-Russian forces, the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine lost some ground in their strongholds. The most sensitive losses, comparing the elections of 2007 and 2012, were in the Donetsk region (220 thousand votes), the Luhansk region (206 thousand votes), and the Dnipropetrovsk region (146 thousand votes).

Among the main causes behind this electoral shift were disappointment with the inability of the Party of the Regions and President Yanukovich to follow through on their campaign promises and the widespread corruption and impunity of the officials who committed crimes against ordinary people. The most striking example of popular anger and dissatisfaction with the authorities was the besieging and storming of the local police station in the town of Vradiivka in the Mykolaiv region on 29–30 June 2013. The only demand behind the uprising was a fair investigation of a rape case and detention of the suspected police officers. This was the first time an unarmed but highly motivated crowd without a single or political center of control took on a law enforcement establishment and forced the authorities to retreat.

In May 2013, one of the polls showed that people could go to protest against the decrease in well-being (34.5 % of respondents), delays in the payment of salaries or pensions (32 %), and unpopular economic decisions of the government (24 %). Meanwhile, only 13 % respondents were ready to protest against the deterioration of democracy, and 8.7 % would take to the streets to force Yanukovich to resign.² In November 2013, before the Cabinet of Ministers ruled out signing the Association Agreement with EU, another poll³ discovered that

Voting (in percent and 1000 votes) for pro-Russian and pro-Western political parties and blocs between 1998 and 2012 in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine.

	1998		2002		2007		2012	
	Pro-Russian	Pro-Western	Pro-Russian	Pro-Western	Pro-Russian	Pro-Western	Pro-Russian	Pro-Western
Dnipropetrovsk region	30.52 % 524	6.24 % 119 .7	36.44 % 671 .9	6.35 % 117 .1	55.77 % 915	27.26 % 447 .2	55.17 % 766 .9	38.17 % 530
Zaporizhzhia region	43.71 % 456 .4	9.4 % 98 .3	38.61 388	7.93 % 79 .7	63.75 % 593 .7	19.38 % 180 .5	62.11 % 496	31.18 % 249
Odesa region	38.44 % 477 .6	7.79 % 96 .9	30.38 % 344 .1	6.62 % 74 .9	58.38 % 588	20.21 % 203 .7	60 % 520 .6	32.56 % 282
Mykolaiv Region	48.52 % 321 .9	8.42 % 55 .9	34.24 % 216 .9	5.99 % 37 .9	61.58 % 344	22.43 % 125 .4	59.6 % 281 .7	33.74 % 159 .5
Kherson region	49.69 % 309 .8	6.82 % 42 .5	35.55 % 213 .4	11.82 % 70 .9	52.32 % 259	32.13 % 159	52.68 % 226	40 % 172
Kharkiv region	51.48 % 791	4.26 % 65 .7	35.86 % 535 .2	5.92 % 88 .4	57.89 % 769	24.46 % 325	61.82 % 700	31.86 % 361
Donetsk region	41.47 % 1001 .8	5.8 % 140 .4	34.36 % 853 .3	2.69 % 66 .9	81 % 1934	5.55 % 132 .8	83.95 % 1664 .2	11.17 % 219
Luhansk region	55.58 % 753 .7	3.49 % 47 .4	46.1 % 591 .5	3.62 % 46 .4	84.85 % 1076 .4	6.83 % 86 .6	82.2 % 834 .9	11.52 % 116 .8
Crimea	53.11 % 519 .5	7.55 % 73 .9	43.47 % 418 .6	9.77 % 94	72.7 % 639 .7	15.16 % 133 .4	71.75 % 526	21 % 156

Pro-Russian: 1998 – Communists and Progressive Socialists (and “Union” Party in Crimea), 2002 – Communists and Progressive Socialists (and Russian Bloc in Crimea and Luhansk), 2007 – Communists and Party of Region (and Progressive Socialists in Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk), 2012 – Communists and Party of Regions.

Pro-Western: 1998 – People’s Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) and Party “Reforms and Order”, 2002 – “Our Ukraine” Bloc, 2007 – “Our Ukraine – People’s Self-Defence” Bloc and Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, 2012 – Batkivshchyna Party, UDAR and “Svoboda”.

only 22 % of Ukrainians were prepared to take part in protest activities.

The division between supporters of association with the EU and proponents of membership of the Customs Union did not completely overlap with the division lines between voters of opposition and pro-presidential forces as well as Russian- or Ukrainian-speaking respondents.

In September 2013, Russia introduced customs restrictions halting virtually any imports from Ukraine. The new poll⁴ revealed that if asked to vote in a referendum 41 % of Ukrainians would back EU membership (73 % in the Western regions, 45 % in the Central, 26 % in the Southern and 18 % in the Eastern regions) while 35 % would say “yes” to the Customs Union (57 % in the Eastern regions, 46 % in the Southern, 25 % in the Central and 13 % in the Western regions). Sociologists also admitted that there was a generation gap between proponents of the “East-West” choice. While people aged 18–49 tended to support the EU, respondents aged 50–70 and older were more pro-Russian.

Considering the results of elections in 2012 and sociological data we can assume that neither the people nor the opposition parties intended or planned in advance mass protest movements demanding a choice between the EU or Russia or the overthrow of the government. Moreover, between May and November due to cooperation with the opposition factions the government succeeded in passing 75 % of its bills. The opposition leaders hoped that after signing the Association Agreement with the EU the President and the government would have to adapt to European demands and liberalize political and economic conditions in the country.

However, economic performance in Ukraine was getting worse and the government faced the urgent need either to review the budget and cut spending or to look for new sources of revenue. Negotiations with the IMF were frozen due to the unwillingness of the Cabinet of Ministers to eliminate preferential energy prices for the steel mills and chemical plants, owned by oligarchs. Thus Prime Minister Mykola Azarov initiated talks with his Russian counterpart Dmitriy Medvedev on stabilization loans or lowering gas prices. For their part, the Russians made it clear that substantial negotiations could begin once the Ukrainians stopped the association process with the EU and considered membership of the Customs Union. After two consecutive closed meetings between President Yanukovich and President Putin, the formal decision to put the association agreement on hold was approved by the government on 21 November 2013. Three weeks later, on 17 December 2013, the Ukrainian government accepted a Russian loan of 15 billion US dollars (3 billion provided immediately and the rest in several installments until the end of 2014) to finance the budget deficit. Although this step helped to save social payments and ensure temporary social stability, it couldn’t stem growing dissent throughout the country.

Maidan: from the Euro-protests to the national fight against the regime

The biggest rallies of several thousand people gathered in Kyiv and the western city of Lviv between November 22 and 30. At the same time there were virtually no significant mass events in the Eastern and Southern cities in support of the Customs

Union or against the EU. On 30 November the forceful crackdown of pro-European protesters in Kyiv triggered the largest protests in the capital since 2004. It was only in the middle of December, on the eve of signing loan agreements with Russia and after a failed second attempt to destroy the protesters' camp in the center of Kyiv (December 11) that the loyal Party of the Regions organized an alternative "Anti-Maidan" camp near the parliament. However, it proved ineffective, since the government and the Administration of the President couldn't control media coverage favorable to "Euromaidan" protesters or prevent dissemination of information about the staged and hired nature of the "Anti-Maidan" protests.

The Yanukovich administration then proposed a bill drastically restricting freedom to demonstrate, the activities of NGOs and freedom of information. These laws were passed on January 16⁵, 2014, without formal discussion. Furthermore, the next day, January 17, President Yanukovich signed the laws and dismissed his Chief of Staff (Head of the Administration of the President) Serhiy Lyovochkin, who was an advocate of negotiations with the opposition and EU mediators and who prevented the influential TV channel "Inter" from becoming a propaganda tool in December 2013.

However, public opinion polls warned that the President's decision to abort the protest movement with the use of force could be counterproductive from the point of view of maintaining law and order and national unity. According to a survey of December 2013,⁵ 50% of Ukrainians supported "Euromaidan" (80% in Western Ukraine, 63% in the central regions, 30% in the East and 20% in the South, including Crimea) while 42% opposed it (71% in Southern Ukraine, including Crimea, 65% in the eastern regions, 28% in Central Ukraine and 7% in the West).

On the other hand, 57% of Ukrainians did not support the "Anti-Maidan" movement (89% in Western Ukraine, 75% in the central regions, 38% in the East and 22% in the South) and only 27% approved of it (54% in the South, including Crimea, 43% in the Eastern Ukraine, 14% in the central regions and 3% in the West). At the same time, the majority of the population (72%), regardless of regional location, considered the "round table" approach to be the way out of the crisis. This idea was supported by 73% in the West, 64% in the center, 80% in the South and 78% in the East. Also, the majority of respondents from all regions agreed with the statement that police forces were biased and more violent toward opposition protesters compared to their treatment of the pro-governmental supporters.

Police overreaction and abuse of civil rights was one of the main factors behind further escalation of the protests. And on 19⁶ January, when the opposition leaders failed to present a workable plan of action against the government, the radical protesters marched on the parliament and clashed with the riot police and paramilitary police units of the Internal Armed Forces.

The violent stand-off in Kyiv continued for four days and cost 7 lives (five shot by police and two captured and tortured to death), with hundreds wounded, including 42 reporters, and dozens detained without due legal procedure. On January 22 the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, representing all the major and influential Orthodox churches in all regions of Ukraine, appealed to the President and opposition, calling for an end to the violence, taking on the role of a mediator. This address was very important, since it demonstrated the consolidated position of rival churches, especially that which was oriented toward the Russian Orthodox Church and dominated the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine.

On 23 January people in the western and central regions began to storm and take over regional state administrations. The mass protests in the vast Eastern industrial cities of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia on Sunday 26 made Yanukovich think immediately about defusing the crisis and proposing concessions to the opposition and the Maidan movement. His administration agreed to amnesty for all detained activists and to abolish "dictatorship laws". Additionally, President made opposition leaders the offer that they could nominate a new Prime Minister if Maidan dissolved itself.

Although President Yanukovich accepted the resignation of the pro-Russian Prime Minister Azarov and the parliament repealed "dictatorship laws" and adopted a conditional amnesty, the Maidan protesters refused to end their activities, accusing the President of crimes against the state and demanding his resignation. At this point, two opinion polls, conducted between January 24⁶ and February 18⁷ showed that the majority of Ukrainians (63.3%) favored negotiations as a tool with which to achieve protesters' demands. At the same time 39% of Eastern Ukrainians and 41% of Southern Ukrainians said they did not support any side in the conflict.

The Russian factor

Hence, despite uneasy and fragile temporary agreement between the opposition and President Yanukovich, both sides continued their ideological battle for the country. In this situation, regarding the people's will to end confrontation by peaceful means, the Maidan leaders and the President should have sought ways out of the conflict and possible mutual concessions.

A survey (KIIS, February 2014) found that 57.4% respondents in the East and 44% in the South were persuaded that it was the Western influence that was fuelling the protests, while 45% of Easterners and 35% of Southerners were afraid that the protests were inspired by the nationalistic sentiments of active participants. These patterns of negative interpretation of the nature of protests were broadcasted by the mass media loyal to President Yanukovich, such as the press, TV channels and Internet sites. In the case of the Crimea and the Eastern regions bordering with Russia, these propaganda clichés were disseminated by the Russian media. Contrary to that, the President and his loyalists in the Party of the Regions played the "nationalist threat" and "Western collusion" card against the "brotherhood of Ukraine and Russia". Protesters were described as "radicals", "terrorists" and "outlaws". Prominent leaders of the Party of the Regions and representatives of the local elites in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine began to build "civil movements" to create the impression of huge pro-Russian and pro-President activism.

On 24 January 2014, when the center of Kyiv was occupied by protesters and riot police, the Speaker of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARK) Vladimir Konstantinov called for all regional administrations of the Eastern and Southern regions to fight against a "coup d'état". On 27 January the Supreme Council of the ARK⁸, exceeding its authority, prohibited the far-right parliamentary party "Svoboda" conducting its activity in Crimea. The decision demonstrated that pro-Russian parties, represented in the Crimean council, did not see any reason to negotiate with the opposition.

On 1 February 2014, the Kharkiv governor and head of the Kharkiv regional organization of the Party of the Regions Mykhaylo Dobkin announced the establishment of the civil movement "The Ukrainian Front". The name of the new organization resembles the title of the Red Army groups fighting against the Germans in 1943–1945. Dobkin speculated that almost "150 thousand volunteers" from the "Ukrainian Front"

would protect Kharkiv and other eastern regions from the “fascists” and help to “liberate” Kyiv from Maidan “radicals”. When the confrontation in Kyiv escalated to the new bloody clashes on 18–20 February 2014, Dobkin acknowledged that he had approved sending hundreds of “volunteers” who assisted the police in dispersing protesters.

The accusations of “radical nationalists” and “western agents” being behind the staging of protests and violence in Kyiv were repeated by all regional heads of the Party of the Regions and governors in all the regions of Ukraine. However, only in the eastern and southern parts of the country were these messages followed by the establishment of paramilitary organizations, consisting of private security guards, martial arts sportsmen, former police and military servicemen motivated by money or hatred of people from the Western Ukraine or hatred of Ukrainian-speaking men and women. After the sudden and unexpected fall of Yanukovich all these organizations ceased to exist, with some leaders leaving for Russia or, like Dobkin, renouncing their loyalty to the President.

The role of propaganda in sustaining a sense of hatred should not be underestimated. In January and February, especially after the protests turned violent, the loyal and Russian media concentrated only on the far-right participants of the protests, comparing them to German Nazis and accusing them of “anti-Semitism” and “nationalism”. They intentionally concealed the facts concerning broad and massive support for the protesters from activists within the Jewish community, from the Orthodox churches, veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and hundreds thousands of the ordinary inhabitants of the capital. For more than a week TV channels covered up the fact that the first protesters to be murdered were ethnic Armenians and Belorussians.

On the other hand, the opposition was slow to react to these allegations even when it took power after President Yanukovich had escaped from Kyiv (after special police units killed more than one hundred peaceful protesters on February 20). Moreover, on February 23 the parliament voted to abolish the controversial law on the fundamentals of the language policy, a decision for which the far-right “Svoboda” faction lobbied in order to remove legal grounds for the “Russification of Ukraine”. The opposition leaders then missed the opportunity to visit Crimea before it was invaded by the Russian troops to explain their position and future policy concerning the economic and social problems of the peninsula. As a result, the people in Crimea remained without any real choice, regarding “friendly” Russian military occupation as a way to protect them from the “fascist coup” in Kyiv.

By mid-March it became clear that the separatist sentiments in the Eastern and Southern Ukraine were too weak to receive wide popular support and justify Russian invasion. On the other hand, the new interim government failed to win a minimal degree of loyalty of the population in Donbas. Thus it became evident that the exiled President Yanukovich and his Russian allies were at pains to use the legitimacy vacuum in the eastern and southern regions to spread fear of retaliation by “radical” Maidan protesters and opposition and provoke them to perform “Maidan-like” violent protests and capture administrative buildings.

Comparing voting patterns with recent separatist activity we can argue that it is only in the three regions (Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk oblast) with the highest level of support for pro-Russian political rhetoric that separatists have managed to achieve temporary local success and secure substantial backing from the population. However, they were unable to meet the expectations of their supporters that they would provide

economic, social and security benefits. As a result radical pro-Russian activists have either to start negotiations with Kyiv about mutual concessions or to continue the escalation of violence in order to provoke a Russian invasion.

Conclusion: post-Maidan challenges

The three months of mass civil protests in Ukraine resulted not only in regime change but also in the beginning of the transformation of legitimacy, national unity and national identity.

Hopes for a consistent and transparent foreign policy, focusing on building ties with the European Union, transformed into a strong demand to change the rules of political decision making and remove the authoritarian, corrupt and lawless government. However, a deep sense of mistrust between “winners” and “losers” of the Maidan Revolution, disagreements among various groups of the “revolutionaries” and the lack of popular consensus concerning the essence and timing of the urgent reforms are greater threats to the stability and integrity of Ukraine than Russian military intervention.

Still, the breakthrough of the Maidan movement, which made people understand their power and solidarity, created a window of opportunity for gradual democratic improvement with respect to all citizens of Ukraine. In essence, in the eyes of Ukrainians, meeting European standards of governance, regulation of the economy and management of the complex social problems have become the main factors legitimizing political power.

Notes

- 1) All elections results and data can be found on the official site of the Central Election Commission: www.cvk.gov.ua
- 2) Poll conducted by the “Democratic Initiatives” Fund (DIF) and the Razumkov Center between 17 and 22 May 2013. All-Ukrainian sample of 2,010 respondents. Sample theoretical error – 2.3 %.
- 3) Poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) between 9 and 20 November 2013 *po ky*. All-Ukrainian sample of 2,011 respondents. Sample statistical error: 3.3 % for figures close to 50 %, 2.8 % – for figures close to 25 %, 2.0 % – for figures close to 10 %, 1.4 % for figures close to 5 %.
- 4) Poll conducted by the KIIS between 13 and 23 September 2013. All-Ukrainian sample of 2,044 respondents. Sample statistical error: 3.3 % for figures close to 50 %, 2.8 % – for figures close to 25 %, 2.0 % – for figures close to 10 %, 1.4 % for figures close to 5 %.
- 5) Poll conducted by the DIF and the Razumkov Center between 20 and 24 December 2013. All-Ukrainian sample of 2,010 respondents. Sample theoretical error – 2.3 %.
- 6) Poll conducted by the KIIS and Center of the Social and Marketing Research “SOCIS” between 24 January and 1 February 2014. All-Ukrainian sample of 2,400 respondents. Sample statistical error +/- 2.0 %.
- 7) Poll conducted by the KIIS between 8 and 18 February 2014. All-Ukrainian sample of 2,032 respondents. Sample statistical error 2.2 %.
- 8) Representative body of the Crimean people without real legislative authority but some special prerogatives in the budget and economic spheres.

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Anton Shekhovtsov

The Ukrainian Far-Right before and since the Revolution

Despite its anti-liberal and anti-EU stance, the Ukrainian far right – the Svoboda party and the Right Sector – participated in the pro-European demonstrations on the Maidan, since they see Russia as an even greater enemy. Despite their apparent role in Euromaidan, the far right hardly gained any votes in the presidential elections of 25 May. Nevertheless they cannot be dismissed as a political entity. – S. K.

The Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, which started in November 2013 as a social response to the decision of the former Ukrainian government to withdraw from signing the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) and then evolved into a fully-fledged revolution that ousted former president Viktor Yanukovich on 22 February 2014, were characterized by the participation of the two main far right movements.

Svoboda and the Right Sector

One was represented by the political party All-Ukrainian Union “Freedom” (*Svoboda*). It was founded in 1991 in Lviv as the Social-National Party of Ukraine (SNPU). The SNPU unsuccessfully took part in several parliamentary elections, and the only relevant political success of the party until recently has been the election of one of its leaders, Oleh Tyahnybok, to the Ukrainian parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*) in 1998 and 2002, representing single-member districts in the Lviv oblast. In 2003, Tyahnybok made an attempt to revive the party: following the SNPU congress in 2004, it changed its name to Svoboda, with Tyahnybok as the head of the party, and made several other changes intended to make it more respectable in the eyes of voters, thus moving from SNPU’s neo-fascism to radical right-wing populism. By obtaining a startling 10.44% of the proportional vote and winning in 12 single-member districts at the 2012 parliamentary elections, Svoboda entered Ukrainian political history as the first party to form a far-right faction in the Verkhovna Rada.¹

The other far-right movement was represented by the *Right Sector*, an umbrella movement of several right-wing groups which came together in the first days of the Euromaidan protests in November 2013: “Stepan Bandera’ Trident” (*Tryzub*), Ukrainian National Assembly (UNA), “Patriot of Ukraine”/ Social-National Assembly (PU/SNA), and “White Hammer” (expelled from the Right Sector at the beginning of March 2014). Ideologically, these organisations ranged from the radical national conservatism of Tryzub to the right-wing radicalism of the UNA to the neo-Nazism of the PU/SNA and White Hammer. However, none of these ideological strands was a unifying force for the Right Sector activists, while the neo-Nazis – due to the lower position of the PU/SNA and White Hammer in the hierarchy of the Right Sector under the leadership of Tryzub’s Dmytro Yarosh – constituted a fringe element. What united these groups on the grassroots level was a combination of vehement opposition to Yanukovich’s regime – widely considered anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian – national liberationism and Romantic militarism. It was exactly this combination that established a minimum consensus for the activists.²

Euromaidan itself was a broad protest movement that, to a certain degree, reflected the large segments of Ukrainian society. Despite the plurality of revolutionary voices,³ the idea of Ukraine’s rapprochement with the EU was a core motif of the protests, and this prompted several commentators to call them collectively the “Euro Revolution”.⁴

The far right and the pro-European revolution

The participation of both far-right movements in the pro-European revolution in Ukraine constitutes a paradox: the far right is inherently anti-liberal and generally anti-EU. For many years, Svoboda criticized the EU and rejected Ukraine’s European integration. As Svoboda MP Andrii Illenko argued in 2010, Ukraine’s rapprochement with the EU implied “acceptance of a cosmopolitan ideology, dissolution of the modern liberal empire, and submission to the [...] gradual loss of national identity”.⁵ For Tryzub, one of the main groups behind the Right Sector, the EU (and the West in general) appeared to be connected to “political correctness, multiculturalism, the ideology of gender, juvenile justice and demo-liberal totalitarianism”.⁶

Why, then, did the Ukrainian far right support the pro-democratic and pro-European Ukrainian revolution? One explanation of this paradox is common for both Svoboda and the Right Sector: since the most important element of the Ukrainian far right’s agenda has always been the idea of a decisive break with Russia, the prospect of signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU was widely seen, not only by the far right, as an almost irrevocable withdrawal from the Russian sphere of influence as represented by the Customs Union, as well as the Eurasian Union to be launched in 2015.

From the very beginning, Ukraine’s choice between the EU and the Customs Union was presented as a “zero-sum game”. In February 2013, European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso said that “one country [could not] at the same time be a member of a customs union and be in a free trade area” with the EU.⁷ The same argument was acknowledged by Russian president Vladimir Putin.⁸

As the perceived Russian threat to Ukraine had always been the most powerful mobilising element in Ukrainian far-right ideology, Svoboda and the Right Sector had no other choice than to actively support the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU. Thus, as the “zero-sum game” unfolded, the “modern liberal empire” was seen as a lesser evil than the Customs Union, “a smokescreen for the revival of the Russian Empire in the new old Soviet Union”.⁹

Although this anti-imperialist, national-liberationist thrust of the Ukrainian far right was never the sole component of their doctrines – they obviously featured elements of

authoritarianism, social conservatism, ultranationalism, populism, etc. – it has always constituted a very important, distinctive feature of the Ukrainian far right as a broad movement. This national-liberationist ethos in particular has been typical of Svoboda and some of the groups that have constituted the Right Sector, first and foremost Tryzub and the UNA. However, the anti-imperialist aspects have been less prominent in the ideological narratives of Svoboda's neo-Nazi wing "C14", as well as the Right Sector's PU/SNA and White Hammer.

There were two other reasons for Svoboda to support the pro-European revolution: (1) the party has recognised the pro-European attitudes of its voters and (2) Svoboda used the revolution as a platform for self-promotion and propaganda to recover its popularity. Let us consider these explanations in more detail.

First of all, Svoboda enjoyed the support of the most pro-European electorate among any Ukrainian party elected into the Verkhovna Rada in 2012. According to the opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation,¹⁰ 71.4 per cent of Svoboda's voters were in favour of Ukraine's integration into Europe. At the same time, the numbers for the electorates of UDAR and Fatherland were 69.5 per cent and 63.8 per cent correspondingly. When asked whether they considered themselves Europeans, 51.2 per cent of Svoboda's voters gave a positive reply; the figures for the electorates of UDAR and Fatherland are 44.5 per cent and 40.6 per cent. It may seem surprising or even confusing that supporters of the far-right party at the 2012 parliamentary elections turned out to be more pro-European than voters for the two democratic parties. However, this problem appears confusing only at first sight: for many Ukrainian voters, the rejection of Russian-led integration projects was underpinned by the rejection of authoritarianism and the collapse of the rule of law usually associated with the contemporary Kremlin's policies. Thus, Svoboda's radically negative attitudes towards Putin's Russia were re-interpreted by many Ukrainian pro-democratic voters as radical opposition to authoritarianism and backwardness. Svoboda's leadership could not ignore the distinctly pro-EU stances of the majority of its voters, and abandoned the anti-EU rhetoric that might have alienated most of its electorate.

Second, the revolution seemed to be a good opportunity to reclaim the popular support that Svoboda had lost within a year of the party's success in the 2012 elections. Svoboda obtained 10.44 per cent of the vote in October 2012, but in November 2013 only 5.1 per cent of the voters would have cast a ballot for this party.¹¹ Even more dramatically, Tyahnybok's presidential rating fell from 10.4 per cent in March¹² to 5.8 per cent in May¹³ and to 3.6 per cent in November 2013.

However, Svoboda, which coordinated most of its activities during the revolution with the other two opposition parties represented in the parliament (UDAR and Fatherland), yet at the same time clashed with various elements of the civic protest movement, was increasingly seen as a noisy nuisance whose radical rhetoric did not match its actions.¹⁴ As one commentator put it in his article on Svoboda's "parasitic role" in the revolution, "within just a few weeks, the country has witnessed a real fiasco for the party that blatantly promised to lead the revolution, but instead not only became its obstacle, but also its most flawed element".¹⁵ Two months after the start of Euromaidan, less than three per cent of Ukrainians thought that Tyahnybok ought to become a leader of the protests¹⁶ – a figure that suggested Svoboda had effectively failed in the revolution. At the end of January and beginning of February 2014, only 3.8 per cent of voters were prepared to cast their ballot for Tyahnybok in the presidential elections, and 5.6 per cent for Svoboda in the parliamentary elections.¹⁷



Foto: Viktor Stepanenko

Members of the Right Sector during combat training on the Maidan.

The presidential election

The results of the presidential election, which took place on 25 May 2014, partly confirmed the political trend that had already emerged during the revolution: despite the active participation of the far right in the revolution, its political role became comparatively marginal. In the presidential election, which led to the victory of democratic candidate Petro Poroshenko in the very first round (54.70%), Svoboda's Oleh Tyahnybok obtained 1.16 per cent of the vote, while the Right Sector's Dmytro Yarosh won 0.70 per cent.¹⁸

The failure of both far-right candidates in the presidential election has been determined by a combination of the following factors:

1. The popular vote in the presidential election has been largely tactical. Since March 2014, public opinion polls showed that Poroshenko appeared the most popular democratic presidential candidate, and this even led to the decision of Vitali Klichko, another popular democratic candidate, not to stand for the election and to support Poroshenko instead. In April 2014, the idea of electing a new president in the first round of the election became increasingly pervasive, especially against the background of the separatist activities in Eastern Ukraine and the ongoing aggression of the Russian Federation. Many Ukrainians felt that "doing away" with the presidential election as soon as possible in order to focus on the anti-terrorist and anti-separatist activities in the East would be good for the country, so they voted for Poroshenko as the most popular candidate. These included adherents of the far right. For example, in Kyiv, where the presidential election took place at the same time as the Kyiv Council elections, some adherents of Svoboda preferred to support Poroshenko for president and Klichko for mayor of Kyiv, yet they still supported Svoboda for the Kyiv Council.

2. With the ousting of Yanukovich, the far-right organisations have lost the major source of negative voter mobilisation. Svoboda's success at the 2012 parliamentary elections was partially determined by its image as the most radical opposition to Yanukovich's regime (the image promoted by the regime itself¹⁹), so Svoboda could be considered an "anti-Yanukovich party". Without Yanukovich, its *raison d'être* became – at least in the eyes of the voters – debatable. Moreover, if before the revolution Svoboda could position itself as the only patriotic party, it lost its "monopoly" on patriotism when during the revolution and, even more so, after the Russian invasion and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, all popular democratic parties became patriotic. In the conditions in which Ukrainian patriotism became a natural, almost instinctive emotion, the far right failed to capitalise on the Russian invasion and aggression in Eastern Ukraine.



Oleh Tyahnybok, Chairman of Svoboda, on the Maidan on 10 December 2013.

3. While the far right, as a populist, anti-system force, may benefit from their opposition to the political elites, post-revolutionary Ukraine, to a certain degree, still lacks a fully-fledged political establishment to oppose. Moreover, even if anti-establishment sentiments were relevant in the run-up to the presidential election, Tyahnybok and Yarosh seem to have yielded the palm of populism to Oleh Lyashko, who obtained 8.32 per cent of the vote. Lyashko ran a relatively successful campaign and reportedly took part in the anti-terrorist operation in Eastern Ukraine in person. While not a far-right politician himself, Lyashko has managed to lay claim to almost all populist sentiments in Ukrainian society, however limited in their salience they were.

The failure of the far right in the presidential election does contribute to the marginalisation of Svoboda and the Right Sector, but it does not imply that far-right politics has no future in Ukraine.²⁰ The separatist activities in Eastern Ukraine and the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine may hold a key to the revival of far-right politics (not necessarily in the form of Svoboda and the Right Sector), especially if mainstream democratic politicians – the political establishment in the making – fail to address the pressing problems.

Notes

- 1) On Svoboda see more in Anton Shekhovtsov, "The Creeping Resurgence of the Ukrainian Radical Right? The Case of the Freedom Party", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2011), pp. 203–28; idem, "From Para-Militarism to Radical Right-Wing Populism: The Rise of the Ukrainian Far-Right Party Svoboda", in Ruth Wodak, Brigitte Mral, Majid KhosraviNik (eds), *Right Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 256–8; Viacheslav Likhachev, "Right-Wing Extremism on the Rise in Ukraine", *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 51, No. 5 (2013), pp. 59–74; Andreas Umland, "A Typical Variety of European Right-Wing Radicalism?", *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 51, No. 5 (2013), pp. 86–95.
- 2) On the Right Sector see more in Anton Shekhovtsov, "Der Rechte Sektor. Zwischen Polittechnologie, Politik und Straßenkampf", in Juri Andruchowytch (ed.), *Euromaidan – Was in der Ukraine auf dem Spiel steht* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2014), pp. 159–72.
- 3) Anton Shekhovtsov, "The Ukrainian Revolution is European and National", *Eurozine*, 13 December (2013), <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2013-12-13-shekhovtsov-en.html>.
- 4) Anders Åslund, "Euro revolution in Ukraine", *KyivPost*, 3 December (2013), <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/anders-aslund-euro-revolution-in-ukraine-332865.html>;
- William Risch, "A Euro Revolution for the Long Haul?", *Sean's Russia Blog*, 27 December (2013), <http://seansrus-siablog.org/2013/12/27/euro-revolution-long-haul/>.
- 5) Andriy Illenko, "Natsiya chy koloniya?", *Svoboda*, 24 July 2010, <http://www.svoboda.org.ua/dopysy/dopysy/015905/>.
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Yuriy Shveda

The Revolution of Dignity in the Context of Social Theory of Revolutions

The catastrophic economic and social situation in Ukraine and the curtailing of democratic liberties were a considerable factor contributing to the Euromaidan revolution. The inability of politicians to reform the country led to growing dissatisfaction among the population, especially among young people. Young Ukrainians demand new politics fundamentally different to the old Soviet and oligarchic structures. – D. W.

Revolution or munity? – this is first basic question that arises for every political scientist analyzing the events in Ukraine. And although the events in Ukraine were named “The Revolution of Dignity”, it is obviously too early to define them by the categories of a social revolution. There are a lot of definitions of the notion of revolution, but it is possible to summarize them as follows: “Revolution is a successful attempt to subvert an existing political regime, the fundamental transformation of political institutes and legitimization of political power which is implemented by illegal or violent actions of popular movements and at least partly according to the demands made by them”.¹

Obviously the current events in Ukraine are aimed not only at changing power, but first and foremost at making fundamental social and political transformations. Time will tell however how willing and able the new power is when it comes to implementing the slogans of the revolution in practice.

Social division and a crisis of confidence

The reason for the development of the protest movements was the Ukrainian president’s decision not to sign the European Union Association Agreement. Precisely this unexpected decision by the government made thousands of demonstrators (predominantly young students) take to the streets. After the “Berkut” special forces had brutally beaten the peaceful protestors on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the protest took on another qualitative form – student protests against not signing the European Union Association Agreement turned into a mass revolt against the existing power.

The reason for such a rapid transformation of the direction of civil resistance is an extremely critical attitude of the people towards the policy which was being implemented by the government and towards the government itself. Thus, according to the index of the population’s confidence in institutions of government, Ukraine has the lowest rating of all European countries. The index of confidence in the parliament was 1.99 on a ten-point scale.²

And it tells us that, in fact, the current power has lost its legitimacy because we understand it not only in terms of the legality of its formation, but rather in terms of how it is perceived by broad social classes. In modern societies lacking a clear distinction between the elites and the people, for a revolutionary situation to occur it is enough to delegitimize the power in the eyes of the representatives of urban areas. According to some studies, if the amount of those convinced exceeds 10%,

the idea gains nationwide prevalence. While the delegitimizing of a democratic regime does not mean an automatic delegitimizing of the regime itself (it is possible to change the power during the next elections), in the case of authoritarian regimes the delegitimizing of power automatically leads to the delegitimizing of its entire structure. In particular, this concerns so-called artificial democracies, where power is based on the belief that the ruler enjoys the people’s support (although falsified through elections), habit, the fear of dramatic changes and repressive measures.

A serious escalation of the social and economic situation, total corruption, systematic curtailment of democratic rights and freedoms, an inability to solve the existing problems in a legal way and follow democratic procedures are the factors that pushed people into revolutionary actions. This led to the formation of a revolutionary situation in Ukraine, the classic features being: 1) the “crisis” of the ruling elite and its inability to govern in the old way, 2) an aggravation of people’s suffering beyond what was considered normal, 3) a significant increase in the political activity of the masses.

Reasons for the revolutionary crisis

For example, in Ukraine, GDP per capita is less than 7,500 dollars and for this indicator the country ranks 136th in the world. Behind us lies only Iraq, destroyed by the war (7,200 dollars). Even states such as Albania (8,200 dollars) and Turkmenistan (8,900 dollars) are above Ukraine for this indicator. It is interesting that during the economic crisis of 2008–2009 GDP was higher than in the period of the “improving” policy of Mykola Azarov’s government. Ukraine is in fifth place among CIS countries for the average wages indicator, at \$398.60. Russia occupies first place (870 dollars), in second place is Kazakhstan (685 dollars) and in third place are Belarus (572.4 dollars) and Azerbaijan (543 dollars). Ukraine occupies the last place for wage increases among the CIS countries.³

According to international institutions, since the last parliamentary elections democracy in Ukraine has “slipped” from 53rd place (incomplete democracy) to 79th (hybrid mode). Of all European countries the biggest setback in the field of democracy was registered in Ukraine. For this indicator, Ukraine is placed seventh – it was “outdone” by only six countries: Fiji, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt and Gambia.

National experts also gave an extremely negative evaluation to the status of development in the country. Thus, in the expert

Confidence of Ukrainians in national and international organisations

	2005	2007	2009	2011
Trust in parliament	4.80	2.32	1.66	1.99
Trust in the judicial system	3.91	2.45	1.91	2.26
Trust in the police	3.30	2.61	2.27	2.50
Trust in politicians	3.74	2.04	1.51	1.85
Trust in political parties	3.61	2.31	1.66	1.99
Trust in the European Parliament	4.83	3.89	3.58	3.97
Trust in the UN	4.73	3.75	3.56	3.99

survey of the “Democratic Initiatives” Fund according to Ilko Kucheriv, on a ten-point scale the lowest score was obtained for legality index of 1.6. Experts also gave a very low rating to the levels of free enterprise (2.8), democracy (2.9), the economic situation (3.0), and freedom of expression (3.1). Indeed, experts have noted a very high level of corruption (8.4). Commenting on the study, the director of the “Democratic Initiatives” Fund, Irina Bekeshkina, said that “Ukraine is not rolling, but has already slipped into authoritarianism, and the main question that remains to be raised next year is whether authoritarianism will remain of a soft type, or whether it will be that of a dictatorship”.⁴

All these factors were the reason that caused those people to perform acts of resistance to the current ruling power. However, usually a decline in only one area of the social and economic situation and the critical level of civil rights and liberties are not sufficient reasons for social revolution. There are no such outbreaks in other countries with even worse indicators. Social revolutions usually start when people are completely disappointed by the ability of the power to improve their life.

During 9 months of 2013, losses of enterprises increased by 31.3 % from the same period the previous year. Government banking system debts amounted to USD 258.3 billion, and debts for government securities stood at USD 250.4 billion, debt thus growing by 30 %, and the revenue of the National Bank dropped to a critical level, amounting to only 0.24 billion. The budget deficit for 10 months in 2013 amounted to USD 40.8 billion, and a negative foreign trade balance for the first 9 months amounted to 10.5 billion dollars. For the year, the monetary base increased by 20% and the money supply by 15%. Foreign exchange reserves declined rapidly. Their rate for Ukraine is 30 billion dollars, but after repayment of the debts 17.8 billion remained. In fact, such foolery made Ukraine bankrupt.⁵

An important factor influencing the spread of revolutionary mood is the presence of discrimination among the population. When in their eyes the government does not possess full legitimacy, national or religious counter-elite leaders often speak of revolutionary actions. In this respect it is instructive that the bulk of the protesters are mainly Ukrainian speakers from Western Ukraine and of the Greek Catholic faith. Solidarity with the protesters was expressed by the Crimean Tatar population of Crimea and almost all major religious denominations – except for the ROC.

How the spark became a flame

But the main reason why people rose in the act of public opposition is the failure of the new (post-Soviet) political elites to begin the reformation of Ukraine. The country has retained its independent existence as an inefficient hybrid of old (Soviet) and new (oligarchic) methods of management and leadership. The current political crisis in Ukraine is only an external expression

of a deep systemic crisis in what has remained an unreformed state since the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

Ukraine has the lowest index of economic freedom of all European states (49.3 out of a 100 possible points). Ukraine has been listed in the group of countries where economic freedom is inhibited (49.9–0). The average rate in the world is 60.3 points. If you take the world average index for economic freedom, Ukraine lies in 155th place out of 178. Last year Ukraine was in 161th place. In last place lies North Korea, in the penultimate place Cuba. Russia ranks 140th and took 41st place out of 43 European countries.

The difficult social and economic situation is complicated by total corruption. Thus, according to the data of the international organization Transparency International, Ukraine ranked 144th – along with Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Iran, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, gaining three fewer points than the previous year. According to the Corruption Perception Index, which is determined by a 100-point scale, Russia was in 127th place with 28 points, Kazakhstan ranked 140th with 26 points, while Ukraine came 144th with 25 points. At the foot of the league table for the countries of the former Soviet Union lie Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which shared 168th place with 17 points each. Anything less than 30 points is considered to be, in the terms of the Transparency International organization, a “disgrace to the nation”.⁶

For many Ukrainians, the European integration process outlined not only the geo-strategic vector of its development, but also inspired hope for the reversal of the “rules of the game” and as a result the modernization of economic and political life. The withdrawal from the European integration process – meaning the collapse of hope – was the spark that aroused the flame of Ukrainian revolution. The logic of events is as follows: an increasing number of revolutionaries, a lowering of the fear threshold to enter the mass arena and the reduction of the number of people not prepared to protest. Clearly, the beating of protesting students by “Berkut” troops ignited (contrary to the government’s expectations) a flash of revolutionary recovery.

The waves of revolution and democratization

All the current problems facing Ukraine today occurred not in isolation but in the context of the global political process. Ukrainian events undoubtedly affected global political processes, but not least it was the past that influenced the course of the Ukrainian revolution. Most modern social revolutions (except the 1917 revolution in Russia) were attempts to modernize society through westernization. In this regard, one cannot ignore a certain continuity of revolutionary actions in Ukraine with the so-called Velvet Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990.

It is noticeable that the outbreak of revolutionary activity tends to be repeated at regular intervals, and hence they are called revolutionary waves. They cover the country with close cultural proximity and historical destiny. They are caused – in the first stage – by the prevalence of national factors, while in the second stage they are brought about by the prevalence of social and other factors. The modern era has seen the following waves of revolutionary movements:

1968 – a wave of protest movements in Western Europe (mainly in France),

1989 – the Velvet Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, 2004 – the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

Despite their distance, the events of the so-called Arab Spring are also likely to have had some influence on the course of political events in Ukraine. We are talking about the collapse of the imitative democracies, among which Ukraine is included.

“Fueling material” of the revolution

This notion refers to people who are ready to enter the arena and take part in revolutionary activities despite the existing risks. Among European nations, Ukrainians were the least satisfied with their life compared to citizens of 26 European countries (4.82 points on a 10-point scale), felt less happy (5.86 points), and were dissatisfied with government activities (2.25 points). Regarding the state of the economy (2.25 points), only the Greeks felt worse than the Ukrainians.

Ukraine’s worst position in the social well-being index was in 1998: 33.7 points, while the best position was reached in the spring of 2009 (before the crisis): 39.4 points. The next index dropped significantly, to 38.6 points in 2010 and 37.4 points in 2012. And in 2012, the decline in social well-being was not primarily due to the deterioration of material parameters, but rather due to such factors as the determination to achieve their goals, self-reliance, initiative and independence in solving life’s problems. And the most deterioration occurred in confidence for the future: in 2012 it was missing for 72 % of the population, and in 2010 for 64 %. In 2012, 51% of Ukrainian citizens were dissatisfied with their position in society, and only 19 % were satisfied. As for the expectations of 2013, only 15 % of the population believed that life would more or less get back to normal, and 51 % felt that no improvement would come.⁷

Another interesting fact is that the “fueling material” of the Arab Spring was the youth, especially the students or even young people with higher education. This phenomenon is connected to the devaluation of education in these countries and the inability of graduates to find proper use for their knowledge. Even Europeans in the current economic crisis have become familiar with the acronym NEET, meaning “no education, no job, no studying.” In Ukraine, according to official reports, on September 1, 2013 the number of people registered unemployed stood at 435,400, including 183,300 young people (aged 14–35), some 42.1 %. In 2012, 887,900 people under the age of 35 were registered unemployed by the State Employment Service, or 48.6 % of the total number of people registered. 52,900 of them were college graduates, 33,500 had completed vocational schooling and 6,300 had completed secondary school. Among young people aged 24–29, the unemployment rate increased to 9.5 % vs. 9.2% in 2011. Almost one-third of the total number of unemployed young Ukrainians had been at the labor exchange for more than a year since the figures were released.⁸

Some studies hold that the revolutionary material is most active when the third generation comes to the forefront, the generation which has not smelled the gunpowder and did not participate in the revolutionary events of the past. The Ukrainian youth, especially students, participating in protests showed themselves to be the major “fueling material” of the Revolution of Dignity. They *de facto* declared a “new policy” qualitatively different from the previous one, not only in name, but also in terms of form and content, similar to how the revolutionary speeches of 1968 in Western Europe were directed not so much against the government itself as against the existing system – against a conservative society and its legacy of political and ethical values. It was a struggle between generations, parents and children. And it ended with the formation of modern Western society.

The success and completeness of revolutions

A revolution is successful when it eliminates the existing government. A revolution is completed when the new government (at least partially) implements the slogans and demands of the revolutionary masses. The Orange Revolution of 2004 was successful, but incomplete, because the new political elite has not



Foto: Viktor Stepanenko

Young people were particularly well represented among the demonstrators on the Maidan.

implemented the revolutionary tasks that were outlined. Thus, The Revolution of Dignity is, in fact, a continuation of the Orange Revolution and another attempt of Ukrainian society not only to change the ruling elite, but also to make it realize its revolutionary program.

Revolution is a shift from a traditional to a rational type of legitimacy. That is why we now have the problem of the complete reloading of society, a movement from a “blank sheet”, requiring both a well-thought-out program and its professional and, what is more, moral implementers. In the political arena there is a new political force that is dictating a new agenda for Ukrainian politicians. And it is encouraging that the Revolution of Dignity will be not only successful, but also complete!

Notes

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Oleksandr Fisun and Anton Avksentiev

Euromaidan in South-Eastern Ukraine

In Kharkiv and other cities in south-eastern Ukraine the protests of urban intellectuals have taken place under conditions different to those in Kyiv. Notwithstanding the bullying tactics of the authorities and the negative portrayal in the media, these protests have also failed to gain support from the majority of the population. This macro-region can only be integrated into a unified Ukraine on the basis of a civil identity. – R. Z.

As the “Euromaidan” played out on the central square in Kyiv, the residents of the south-eastern regions displayed their solidarity with the movement in their own cities. The driving force of the protest movement was the representatives of societal organisations, urban intellectuals and students; it was only later that the political parties seized the initiative. A particularly important role was played by football fans, who gave the south-eastern Euromaidan a second wind: on the one hand they joined the movement and thus increased its numbers significantly, while on the other hand they provided the demonstrators with protection from the “titushki” hired by the authorities to disperse the meetings.¹

The regional “Euromaidans” had to overcome specific obstacles: in contrast to the western regions, the local administrators and mayors, most of whom belonged to the counter-revolutionary *Party of the Regions*, actively opposed the protest movement in a variety of ways. The “Euromaidan” activists were not only confronted with negative reporting of events by the government-controlled media but also with a lack of support from the majority of the local population. EU integration was not necessarily welcomed in the southeast, for reasons related to the mentality, ethnicity, and culture of the region, but above all due to economic considerations: the region’s sales markets are in Russia, other countries of the CIS and Asia. Only the slightest percentage of products are exported to Europe. Nevertheless, foreign policy became a marginal consideration both for the Kyiv “Euromaidan” and for the regional movements; citizens protested principally against government corruption, censorship, the inactivity of law enforcement agencies and social injustice.

Following the victory of the Ukrainian Revolution and Viktor Yanukovich’s flight in late February, the south-eastern regions saw a dramatic development. Taking a gamble on the counter-revolutionary atmosphere in these regions, Vladimir Putin made a play for the annexation of Crimea. In the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk fighting continues between Ukrainian soldiers, the National Guard and armed right-wing extremists on one side and pro-Russian separatists on the other. At the same time, new personnel have been inducted into positions of leadership in the regional and district administration – in most cases representatives of Juliya Tymoshenko’s *Batkivshchyna* party.

Electoral Geography of Eastern Ukraine

Events since November 2013 have revealed Ukraine’s regional heterogeneity once more. The level of support for Euromaidan has been diametrically opposed throughout the various

regions. According to statistics of the sociological Rasumkov Centre, 50 percent of Ukrainians support the protest, while 42 percent oppose it. 30 percent of Eastern Ukrainians are for Euromaidan, while two thirds of the population are against it.²

But any talk of “Eastern Ukraine” is to simplify and distort the reality. The cultural, economic, ethnic, mental and religious differences between the regions can best be grasped by electoral behaviour; despite the changes in politicians and the names of parties, election maps of Ukraine since independence show insignificant changes.

The entire territory of Ukraine can be divided into four macro-regions. The first, the “heart of radical Ukrainian nationalism”, comprises the three western regions (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil), where the protest has been at its strongest. The complete opposite of this bloc is represented by the Donez Basin (the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk) and Crimea – this second macro-region has traditionally been the centre of Russian influence. This should come as no surprise, incidentally, if one considers the latest Ukrainian census figures: 38 percent of the population of the Donez Basin are ethnic Russians. In Luhansk the figure stands at 39 percent, in Crimea at 60 percent.³ We consider it to be the ethnic factor that has led to most dramatic events of the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict taking place in these regions. The third macro-region, which is often erroneously subsumed under the second, is “south-eastern” Ukraine, comprising six regions (Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporozhyia, Mikolaiv, Kherson and Odessa). This is a highly urbanised and industrialised area in which the Russian population varies from 15 to 25 percent and in which the opponents to Euromaidan outnumber its supporters twofold. All the other regions of Central and Western Ukraine form the fourth, primarily agricultural and “pro-Ukrainian” macro-region, in which the overwhelming majority supported Euromaidan. In view of this regional heterogeneity we can call the Kharkiv region a kind of “Vendée”,⁴ a counter-revolutionary region. That does not mean however that there was no Euromaidan in the south-eastern regions – it certainly did exist there, but in a quantitatively and qualitatively different format.

The Peculiarities of the “South-Eastern Euromaidan”

On 21 November 2013 the Yanukovich government announced that the preparations for signing the EU Association Agreement were to be stopped. The very next night Ukrainians assembled on the main squares of cities in almost every region to demonstrate. The Euromaidan in Kharkiv

began with eight people; the initiator was Dmytro Pilipez, who appealed to his friends through social networks to take part in the open-ended protest. In most other regional centres of south-eastern Ukraine, in its first few days Euromaidan consisted of individual or a few dozen activists. After the demonstrators in Kyiv were violently dispersed on 30 November however, in the south-eastern regions a hundred and in some cases a thousand people participated in the protests. The driving force behind the development were representatives of societal organisations, business people, civil rights activists, journalists, bloggers, artists, students and “normal” local citizens who did not remain indifferent. It was only after the events of 30 November that the local groups of the three largest opposition parties – *Batkivshchyna*, *Svoboda* and *Udar* – took a serious interest in Euromaidan. The local party elites received the order from Kyiv to provide organisational and financial support, above all to ensure the transport of active party members to the “Sunday assemblies” in Kyiv and to lead and control the regional protest movements.

A week after its inception, a further section of the population joined Euromaidan – the football fans. While the extremists of the right-bank Ukraine (the “Carpathians of Lviv, the ‘Volyn’ of Luzk) descended on Kyiv in their masses and joined the ranks of the “Right Sector” and the “Self-Defendants of the Maidan”, in the southeast the fanatics have taken part in the regional protests since January 2014. Through the announcement of an open-ended ceasefire, the fanatics became *de facto* the armed wing of the regional Euromaidans, protecting the demonstrators from “titushkis”.

In most south-eastern regions of Ukraine Euromaidan assembled once a week in city centres on Sundays – the exception being the Kharkiv Euromaidan, which conducted activities every evening so that all interested parties could take part outside of their working hours. A further peculiarity of the Kharkiv protest was its “cultural component”: the poet and band leader Serhiy Zhadan became the voice of Euromaidan. Each day, verse was recited and live music was played on the Euromaidan, whereupon the movement gained a significant increase in participants, in particular students. The “Romanic protest” in Kharkiv was of an exclusively peaceful nature, at least until late February 2014, when regular clashes began between football fans and right-wing extremists and supporters of the “Anti-Maidan”.

The reaction of the authorities to the Euromaidan activities was harsh from the very outset; the “titushis” inflicted material damage and physical harm on the leaders of the protest movement. On 24 December 2013 the initiator of the Kharkiv Euromaidan, Dmytro Pilipez, was stabbed fifteen times (although none of the wounds were potentially fatal). In December and January the cars of protesters were regularly set on fire. Thus we can highlight some peculiarities of the Euromaidan in the south-eastern regions:

- the small number of participants (partly because many activists had travelled to Kyiv, partly because relatively few people in this region supported Euromaidan and its European leanings);
- the measures of the local authorities, represented in the absolute majority of cases by the *Party of the Regions*;
- the negative reporting on the regional Euromaidans by the local media;
- the absence of a “nationalist tone” in the rhetoric and actions of the demonstrators (until late February 2014);
- the peaceful character of the protest – in contrast to the regional Euromaidans in the Western Ukrainian regions;

- the demonstrators went to work despite participating in the evening or Sunday assemblies. (The attempts of the leaders of what was then the opposition to realise an open-ended strike did not gain support in the Southeast).

In a sense, the south-eastern protest was no less heroic than the central Kyiv Euromaidan. Of course, the terror of the Yanukovich regime did not reach the same levels as on 19–21 February in Kyiv, but those who regularly demonstrated from November 2013 to February 2014 were not only forced to overcome the resistance of the authorities, but also had to defend an opinion that remained unpopular throughout the region.

After the Maidan: War and Peace in the Southeast

Unfortunately it is in south-eastern Ukraine that Euromaidan has had the most dramatic consequences. The Crimean territory has been annexed by Russia. The peninsula is now *de facto* part of the Russian state, although *de jure* it still belongs to Ukraine. Incidentally, the conquering of Crimea without a single shot being fired is not the worst result of recent events; the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are the scene of fighting which has brought much suffering for the local population. In the south-eastern belt of Kharkiv–Odessa the authorities have largely been able to maintain order, although constant clashes between armed groups (right-wing extremists, self-defence troops and ultras on the one side and pro-Russian separatists on the other) have claimed their victims in numbers unprecedented in the history of Ukraine. Many people in the Southeast are convinced that Euromaidan has not only driven out corrupt autocrats, but has also opened a Pandora’s box from which armed extremists have sprung. Things are relatively quiet in the regions of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporozhye, while in Kharkiv and the port regions of Odessa, Kherson and Mikolaiv there could be a repeat of the Donbas scenario at any time.

As far as the changes in the political elites is concerned, there is a clear asymmetry between the proclamation of “new faces”, i.e. the number of Euromaidan leaders in the government, and actual changes in personnel. The *Batkivshchyna* faction has *de facto* taken over the parliament, not only dominating both executive centres – represented by both the interim president and the prime minister – but also providing 17 heads of the regional administrations (the others being representatives of *Svoboda*). Taking the Kharkiv region as an example, one can confidently claim that the 2005–2010 government has been completely reinstated (under President Yushchenko and Governor Arsen Avakov). In Kharkiv on 1 March it became quite clear that the factionists would follow the instructions of their cadres: pro-Russian separatists took the regional government headquarters, where the Euromaidan supporters had barricaded themselves, and subjected this minority to brutal beatings. The Euromaidan supporters were very much outnumbered, since the party activists of *Svoboda* and *Batkivshchyna* had left the building of their own accord – having received instructions to do so from their leaders, who had been appointed to the cabinet of ministers. (The leader of the Kharkiv *Batkivshchyna*, Arsen Avakov, became minister of the interior and Ihor Shvaika of *Svoboda* became minister for agriculture.)

Nevertheless, many experts observe the influence of Euromaidan in the formation of a new political nation. In addition to the image of the “enemy from without” in the form of Russia, the Ukrainians have formed an identity within an extremely short space of time and chosen their attributive



The Ultras of Metalist Football Club support the Euromaidan in Kharkiv.

symbols. It is against the nationalist character of these symbols that many inhabitants of Crimea and Donbas are protesting. Due to their ethnic, historical, religious and linguistic background, most of them have adopted the rhetoric of Kremlin propaganda and define their identity as “Russian” as opposed to “Banderist”.⁵ It must be stated that Euromaidan has reduced inhibitions concerning radical Ukrainian nationalism; the Svoboda factionists, in 2012 still considered “fascists”, now seem harmless liberals in comparison to the “Right Sector” and its organisers (in particular the Social-National Assembly, founded in Kharkiv, or the Kyiv-based racist organisation “White Hammer”).

An Ethnic or Civil Concept of Nation?

The macro-region comprising Kharkiv, Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, Mikolaiv and Kherson is a borderland. On the one hand nobody here wants to adopt the Lviv model of Ukrainian identity (which is spreading across the whole of western and central Ukraine), but on the other hand the Kremlin’s propaganda does not work here either (or certainly not to the same extent as in Donbas or Crimea), and Russian identity is less attractive here. Presumably the Ukrainian government now has to make a decision that will determine the nation’s fate: they can establish a “nation state” under the red and black colours of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA, 1943–1956), or they can discipline the right-wing extremists, especially the armed groups, and adopt the compromise model of a voluntary nation. The words of the American political scientist Alfred Stepan, who in 2005 recognised the nationalist subtext of the first Ukrainian maiden of 2004 (the “Orange Revolution”) seem particularly prophetic: in his article “Ukraine: Improbable democratic ‘nation-state’ but possible democratic ‘state-nation’?” he stresses the potential negative consequences of pursuing a policy of assimilation by brute force and the significance of the “Russian factor”.⁶

We assume that the self-identity of the majority population in the south-eastern corridor will to a large extent depend on who pursues the more aggressive policy: the new Kyiv government and the extreme right, for whom the local population consider the Ukrainian government to be responsible, or Vladimir Putin with his neo-imperialist doctrine. Whoever

makes the most mistakes will drive south-eastern Ukraine into the arms of their enemies.

For the south-eastern Ukrainian territories, Euromaidan has become much more than the regional imitation of the centre. Here the protest took on a unique form, overcame particular obstacles and met with incomprehension on the part of the local population. In the cities of the Southeast, the internet and social networks in particular were an important factor for the organisation of the protest movement. The driving force behind the protests in this part of Ukraine was society; the politicians of the local opposition parties played a secondary role. At the same time, the events of Euromaidan in the Southeast have not entirely fulfilled the expectations of the participants. Given the fact that those in the vanguard of the protest have been ignored for political office, that Crimea has been annexed by Russia, that fighting is raging in Donbas, and given the tragic events in Odessa, the lesson remains that political reality is always cruder and more pragmatic than revolutionary illusions.

Notes

- 1) The martial artist Vadim Titushko had attacked two journalists in May 2013. His name has come to denote thugs hired by the government.
- 2) <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/01/21/7010495>.
- 3) For these and other data, see: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua>.
- 4) It was from the Vendée that an uprising against the French Revolution emanated in 1793.
- 5) Stepan Bandera (1909–1959): Ukrainian nationalist politician, the subject of some controversy: considered a national hero in western Ukraine and a Nazi collaborator in the east.
- 6) Stepan, Alfred: “Ukraine: Improbable democratic ‘nation-state’ but possible democratic ‘state-nation’?”. In: *Post-Soviet Affairs* 4 (2005), 279–308.

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Viktor Stepanenko

Ukraine's Farewell to post-Soviet Politics

In contrast to the "Orange Revolution" of 2004, the current Ukrainian protest movement was initiated and driven mainly by civil actors critical of party politics and political institutions. By creating a new set of values, the Maidan has attempted to depart from post-Soviet politics. Ukrainians have paid a heavy price for demanding their country's independence. – R. Z.

Ukraine is experiencing an ongoing process of dramatic social-political changes, the final outcomes of which are far from predictable. The reasons for and lessons of Ukraine's protest movement still require detailed analysis and historical examination.

However, it is clear that the streets begin to "speak" whenever and wherever the conventional political mechanisms of at least formally democratic and consensual regulation are either broken or substantially corrupted. In examining the case of Ukraine, I will refer to two interconnected concepts explaining Ukrainian political situation and the country's 2013–2014 revolution: post-Soviet politics and (de-) institutionalisation. "Post-Soviet politics" are understood as the mechanisms and logic of command of administratively centralised decision-making, which is heavily burdened with the institutional memory of historical Soviet (and now the present Russia's) state-bureaucratic and single-party machinery. "Institutionalisation" is used in its sociological meaning, referring to shaping the system of formal and informal rules, norms and values regulating social interaction, particularly political ones.

My general thesis is this: the Maidan protest movement and later the people's uprising were an attempt to de-institutionalise post-Soviet politics. The wave of dismantling Lenin monuments throughout Western and Central parts of the country, including the capital Kyiv, during the protests was only the simplest action, albeit, importantly, a symbolic one, in a complex process that is still underway in the country. Changing public mentality and attitudes is a much harder task. In this sense the Maidan and its practices were a challenging experience in constructing new institutions, rules, and values that were not "post-Soviet" in their essence. One may call them "true democratic", European, based on the rule of law, respecting individual rights and human dignity, appealing to human justice. In the political sphere the Ukrainian "revolution of dignity" appeared to also be the unique experience of mass public engagement in searching for new forms of both direct and representative democracies and also for statehood in their ideal-normative social imaginations. The institutional trap lies in the inevitable split between the ideal public's aspirations and their practical (actually possible) realisation. Ukrainian post-Maidan development has already revealed this trap: for example, immediate election of the president and the parliament hardly seems realistic because of the many legislative restrictions imposed in the Constitution for the sake of the continuity of elemental governance versus the state of anarchy.

Yanukovich's post-Soviet politics

The country's socio-political landscape had been drastically changing from 2010 onwards with the presidential victory of Viktor Yanukovich. These changes were about de-democratisation,

shrinking constitutional human rights and freedoms (above all the freedom of the press and freedom of assembly), and total political and administrative control by the Party of the Regions (often ironically called "the party of (one) region", since it is mostly used to represent the interests of the Donbas financial oligarchic clan close to Yanukovich's family circle). At the institutional level the manipulative decision of the Constitutional Court in 2010 meant the return to tough presidential power, monopolising control over the whole spectrum of executive and legislative authorities and also over the judicial system, the army and the police.

Furthermore, the regime actively reproduced the former Soviet identity and historical memory, involving the broad spectrum of propaganda myths and rituals of the Soviet historical past, – although one must admit that the pro-Soviet identity is still predominant for the significant part of the population of Eastern and Southern Ukraine and also for the Crimea. The substantial part of the regime's ideological Sovietisation was also reflected in the course of de-Ukrainisation undertaken in language and educational policies, in the cultural and media spheres.

The ideal model of the future Ukraine's political construction for Yanukovich was apparently the Russian "sovereign democracy." However, the attempt to reproduce Putin's authoritarian model and practices in Ukraine lacked at least two premises of Russian authoritarianism: 1) large economic and financial recourses; 2) strong historical traditions of *étatisme* also involving specific mass sentiments towards the state as an almost sacred object. The phrase "Ukraine is not Russia" also reflects other differences between the two countries. Ukraine's political and cultural complexity and the various interests of the regional political elite and oligarchs could hardly be fit into the schematic authoritarian design of "one party rules." The socio-demographic factor also appeared to be important. In the decade of the 2010s a new generation of Ukrainians, born in an independent country and who had never been members of the communist youth organizations in their school years, came into active social life.

Despite the worsening socio-economic situation, mass distrust of the state and institutions of political representation, under normal circumstances this conflict would have arisen in the late 2015 presidential elections and might have resembled in some points the scenario of the 2004 "Orange" electoral revolution. But the dilemma of orientation towards the European Union vs. the Russian-governed Customs Union added a new geopolitical drama to Ukraine's political crisis. For the majority of Ukrainians that dilemma was perceived as a choice between a pro-European chance for the country's potential changes in the future and the pro-Soviet authoritarian model echoing from



A variety of interest groups are represented on barricades of the Maidan.

the past. Yanukovich's refusal to sign the European deal just a week before the event was to be announced became the initial trigger for the Euromaidan in late November 2013. Pro-European activists rightly considered gathering and manifestations on the Maidan (the Independence Square in Kyiv) to be the only remaining, most effective and already proven political mechanism to express mass public discontent.

The Maidan as an institution of a new type

One of the first actions was the call to gather made by journalist Mustafa Nayem through social networks. And the algorithm of what was predominantly the public's self-organising rather than protest driven by the political elite appeared to be characteristic of the entire protest movement and its most decisive episodes. This also reveals the important dynamics in the recent Ukrainian socio-political process: 1) the extremely low level of public trust in the state and political institutions, including oppositional parties and 2) the trends of "de-partisation" (if not of depoliticisation) of Ukrainian civil society's manifestations in the 2010s. The consequence was the people's persistent criticism of the later attempts to monopolise the Maidan's voice by politicians. The public's scepticism toward the political opposition was also based on the experience of the 2004 "orange" Maidan: for many reasons, Viktor Yushchenko's rule was disappointing for many people. We shouldn't repeat the mistakes of 2004–2005, one must never rely on politicians, and civil society has to control them – those were the main lessons of the 2004 Maidan. And the protesters of 2013–2014 often articulated that in their slogans, actions and manifestations.

Most of the Maidan participants (92 percent), according to the survey¹ conducted among the protesters in the beginning of December 2013, were not members of any political parties, civic organisations or movements. And even though the political opposition and civic groups later united in the Maidan's shared space, one can say that this was due to a pragmatic decision taken in the mutual interest of both sides. For its sustainability and successful proceedings the protest needed resources (technical, financial, organisational). It also required the institutionalised political channels for the representation of its own demands. The parliamentary political opposition and its three leaders could provide or at least facilitate all of these. For its part, the political opposition found in the Maidan the most powerful political tool that could be effectively used to turn the country's governmental configuration in its favour.

The divergences of both sides' positions manifested themselves during the protest. The people repeatedly demanded from politicians a clear plan and vision, the selection of one principal leader from the oppositional pool and also open public discussion of all positions in negotiations with the authorities. However, in the turning points of the protests, it was the people, not politicians who made a decisive, though often unpredictable, impact on the situation. After two months of "staying and talking" on the Maidan, it was the initiative not of politicians, but of some protesters (mostly from the "Right Sector" and groups of soccer fan) to move to the parliament through Grushevskogo street on January 19–20. And then the final, radical stage of the conflict's escalation into an uprising began. After the mass killing of protesters on February 20, 2014 it was Volodymyr Parasiuk, the leader of one of many Maidan self-defence groups, not a politician, who on the Maidan stage expressed mass dissatisfaction with the deal with Yanukovich and issued him with the ultimatum to resign within eight hours. Parasiuk publicly swore he would otherwise attack the presidential office even if he and his comrades were not supported by the rest. In these and similar episodes the Maidan used its final say in decision-making concerning actions, it itself defined the protest agenda and pushed it forward. And the political opposition leaders had no choice other than to accept and represent these demands, though often in their own way.

Considering the Maidan as a social actor and the institution of a new type, one should understand that it was not a uniform hierarchical organisation. The Maidan was rather an open and diverse community representing, even by means of their flags, symbols and tents virtually all the Ukrainian regions and many representatives of the globe. It was combined of various social groups (students, Chernobyl and Afghan war veterans, owners of small and medium-sized businesses, the intelligentsia, anarchists, nationalists, rockers, soccer fans etc.). All these groups had their own interests, but they were united by shared dissatisfaction with the situation in the country under Yanukovich's rule and a desire for change.

The transformation of the Maidan

During the almost four-month protests the Maidan also undertook its own transformation. Firstly, at the initial stage of the protest, it was mostly the public arena on Kyiv's Independence Square where activists stayed and citizens gathered (usually on Sundays) to discuss the current situation and plan activities. More than ten Maidan-*viches* – named after a historical east Slavic tradition of direct democracy through tribal assemblies, predating the Kyivan Rus state (in Ukrainian: віче) – were usually conducted on Sundays, when many thousands of Kyivans and peoples from other regions came to these rallies from December 2013 to March 2014.

The Maidan's focal-point was its stage, from which the speeches were given, various announcements were made and regular morning prayer was conducted. Besides this, the Maidan had also been realising its informative and mobilising functions through the only remaining oppositional fifth TV channel and some Internet broadcasts and also through the plethora of virtual focal points created by activists and supporters on social media networks.

After the brutal beating of protesters by police on November 30, 2013 and as a result of the radicalisation of the protests, the

Maidan went under another incarnation and transformed into the *Maidan-sich*, a self-defensive camp surrounded by the rapidly growing barricades, named after the administrative and military centre for Ukrainian Cossacks (in Ukrainian: *Січ*). The Self-Defence turned into a revolutionary army that was self-organised on a voluntary basis with its own divisions (the hundreds), structure, and central command which coordinated all the activities with the headquarters of national resistance. The Self-Defence's direct and basic functions were protecting the Maidan activists and citizens and maintaining order and security at the territories under the control of protesters. However, even though the Self-defence was a para-military network, its members were not equipped with fire-arms, at least not during the period when the police began to use guns against protesters. Self-Defence hundreds were organised on the basis of regional locality (the Lvivska, Volynska and other hundreds) or on the principle of profile (the "Afghans", the Cossacks, the Right Sector and other hundreds). By the middle of February 2014 about 40 hundreds of the Maidan's Self-Defence were created. Besides self-defence groups the Maidan's sustainability was ensured by various units that provided medical, informational, logistical, food-supply and other services. One of the most effective structures in the protest movement was also the Auto-Maidan, a self-organised mobile group of activists who owned cars.

The Maidan's function as public control

The Maidan's other important function, namely as an institute of public control of the authorities, became particularly clear after President Yanukovich's flight from the country on February 21, 2014 and the new interim government was appointed by the Verkhovna Rada (the parliament). But firstly the approval of each member of the new government took place at the Maidan viche. Some active leaders of the protest movement, such as the head doctor of the Maidan medical unit Oleh Musiy, the leader of the Auto-Maidan Dmytro Bulatov, the rector of the university most active in student protests, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Sergiy Kvyt, and others became ministers. Two newly created institutions, the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Lustration Committee were also headed by the Maidan activists. However the new authorities are only partly compliant with the Maidan's demand to change not the faces, but the system. And not only because the principal ruling positions – those of the country's acting president before the May 25 elections, Oleksandr Turchynov and the Head of the Cabinet of Ministries Arseniy Yatsenyuk – are both from Yulia Tymoshenko's *Batkiivshchyna* (Fatherland) party. The main risks in preserving the strong gravity of the former corrupt political and governmental system lie in the firm convergence of big business and politics and in the persistence of old corrupt relations in the country's state machinery. In a post-revolutionary Ukraine currently rocked by separatist clashes in its South-Eastern regions and spiraling into deep economic troubles the new authorities also face the challenge of searching for inevitable compromises with various influential interest groups.

The Maidan's aftermath

The victory of the Maidan as a decisive (even somewhat radical) step in cutting the umbilical cord of post-Soviet politics and came at a high price for Ukraine. Hundreds of deaths, Russian military occupation of the Crimea and its annexation, the rise of armed separatism inspired and supported by Putin's Russia and the former president's clan in the South-Eastern regions, the harsh economic and financial situation – all these are the current characteristics of post-revolutionary Ukraine. Moreover, armed anti-Ukrainian separatists are claiming to use the same motives

and tactics of the Maidan with the argument "*why could Kiev, but we are not allowed?*"

Now the questions arise. Did Ukraine need its Maidan? Was it too high a price to pay for implementing a radical social project in rebuilding the country? And what did Ukrainians gain from the Maidan and the subsequent people's uprising in 2014?

The last question is particularly important. I think the answer lies so far in the sphere of values, particularly in the emphasis of social relations of honesty, responsibility, trust, solidarity, dignity and openness that vividly appeared in many cases of the protest movement, in gaining mass experience of real democracy and of patriotism. On the historical scale these values and norms could even be more valuable social capital than gaining an acceptable level of national economic wealth. Indeed for the first time since 1991 Ukraine as a nation should now actually affirm its right to exist. The country's independence of 1991 was attained without bloodshed and large civil conflicts. It happened mostly due to the pact of the former Soviet elite, through the institutionalisation of a new independent country within the administrative borders of the then Soviet Republic of Ukraine. Now Ukrainians have to prove their right to their own statehood in a real way, and the country's borders must be affirmed and protected.

Many Maidan activists were enthusiasts and Romantics who strongly believed in real changes for the country's better future, who shared belief in the virtues of human rights and freedoms, justice and personal dignity. One of programmatic texts of the revolution was written by Sergii Kemsykyi, a young political scientist, just a day before he was killed by a police sniper. The document includes the position on new relations between a society and the state and the demand to empower a society through the actual realisation of the constitutional provision of "the people as the only source of power in Ukraine" (Article 5 of the Constitution of Ukraine). The voice of the Maidan argued that new legislative mechanisms of direct democracy should enable the people not only to elect the authorities at central and local levels but also, in if necessary (in the case of their losing public trust, corruption, misdeeds etc.) to call for their resignation. As Kemsykyi wrote, "the citizens' demand is to turn the state from a feudalistic scourge to the tool of a society's self-organisation, [...] we don't need herdsmen any more, we need servants of the people's will, who would effectively coordinate social recourses for the achievement of shared purposes."²²

The Maidan and the peoples' uprising of 2014 were radical and sometimes desperate attempts at mass public engagement in the country's social reconstruction. Now Ukrainians face another task – if not to fully realise the Maidan ideals in practice, then at least to prove that the sacrifice of many Romantics and patriots was not in vain. And the everyday routine work in civilising the country is a much stiffer challenge than throwing the dictator from his throne.

Notes

- 1) Maidan-2103. The survey of Maidan participants was conducted on December 7–8, 2013; <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&cid=216&page=1>.
- 2) Kemsykyi, Sergiy. Chuesh, Maidane? ; <http://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2013/12/19/7007716/>.

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Mykola Riabchuk and Andrei N. Lushnycky

Ukraine's Third Attempt

The Maidan can be interpreted as the third attempt since Independence in 1991 and the Orange Revolution of 2004 to overcome post-Soviet, authoritarian structures in Ukraine. The political demarcation lines in Ukraine do not run between the Eastern and Western parts of the country, but along diverse values: there are those who mourn the loss of the paternalist Soviet system and those who look to the European West. The crucial task for the country's future is to integrate both these Ukrainians into the common state. – D. W.

For many Westerners, especially those increasingly skeptical of the EU, the mere fact that thousands of young Ukrainians took to the streets in the bitter winter of 2013 to defend an agreement with the EU that did not promise any immediate gains may look somewhat incongruous. Timothy Snyder, in his *New York Review of Books* blog,¹ put it bluntly “*Would anyone anywhere in the world be willing to take a truncheon in the head for the sake of a trade agreement with the United States?*” Certainly not and Snyder clearly knew the answer to his rhetorical question: it was not the Agreement per se that mobilized the protesters but their hope for a “normal life in a normal country” which the Agreement had symbolized and envisaged. “*If this is a revolution,*” he wrote, “*it must be one of the most common-sense revolutions in history.*”

Europe and “the Family”

There had been too many hopes and too many disappointments over the past 22 years – starting with national independence, endorsed by 90% of the citizens in 1991 but eventually compromised by the predatory elite, and culminating in the 2004 Orange Revolution that also betrayed its high expectations. The 2010 election of Viktor Yanukovich changed things only from bad to worse. Quickly the narrow circle of the president's allies nicknamed “the Family” usurped all power, accumulated gargantuan resources via corruption schemes, destroyed the court system, encroached thoroughly on civil liberties and violated human rights. To give one an idea of the extent of the embezzlement, cash flows out of Ukraine since 2010 are estimated by the Prosecutor General's office to be nearly \$100 billion². This nefariousness was accomplished as the ruling elite tauntingly proclaimed themselves pro-European and anti-corruption.

The dire results of their rule became evident not only in economic stagnation and the virtual collapse of the financial system, under the burden of international and domestic debts, but also in Ukraine's dramatic downgrading in various international ratings, and its relegation from a “Free” to a “Partly Free” country in the Freedom House rankings. However, probably the most damaging consequence of their misrule became the complete distrust of Ukrainian citizens in every single state institution. By the end of 2013, only 2% of respondents fully trusted Ukrainian courts (40% declared they had no trust in them at all), 3% trusted the police, the prosecutor's office, and Parliament, and 5% trusted the government. The only institutions with a positive balance of trust/distrust appeared to be the Church, the mass media, and NGOs.

Indeed, it might be a blessing in disguise that the Ukrainian government shelved the Agreement and that a country with such a ruling ‘elite’ was not brought ‘into Europe’.³ However, this would be to miss the point completely, as the members of

government, their oligarchic cronies and families have long been in Europe – with their sumptuous villas, stolen money safely tucked away in major banks, their children enrolled in the finest private institutions and diplomatic passports for trouble-free travel rendering the visa-free regime for the rest of their co-citizens superfluous. It was not them, but Ukraine – its forty-six million people – who were excluded “from Europe”, whereas the ruling elite enjoyed *la dolce vita* in what they mockingly call “Euro-Sodom” or “Gayropa” – Putinesque pejorative nicknames for the European Union.

The Revolution against “Putin's personal project”

Viktor Yanukovich's decision to not sign the Association Agreement was an explosive moment of truth. In fact, the Maidan meant a confrontation of two diametrically opposed worlds, two political systems and sets of values – the so-called Europe embodied by the EU and the so-called Eurasia embodied by Putinist Russia.

Indeed, the Maidan was neither a “nationalistic mutiny” nor “election technologies” applied by the opposition, as Viktor Yanukovich and his Kremlin patrons claimed. Rather, it was a classical social revolution, an attempt to complete the unfinished business of the 1989 East European anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial uprisings. Euromaidan was rather like, as Vaclav Havel said of the earlier revolution, “the power of the powerless”, or civil self-empowerment.

As Anatoly Halchynsky, a renowned Ukrainian economist argued, “*the goals of 1991, of Maidan 2004, and of the Euro-maidan are the same. They are of the same origin, related not only to the assertion of Ukraine's national sovereignty but also putting an end to the Soviet epoch, freeing our mentality from the remnants of totalitarianism. European integration is merely a designator of these changes.*”⁴

Revolutions are complex enough events made even more complicated when authoritarian parties from outside try to destabilize them with “little green men” and other acts of Putin's altruism. The meddling of the Kremlin in Ukrainian affairs has proven to be the main subversive factor of EuroMaidan. Lilia Shevtsova of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace argues convincingly that Ukraine is Putin's “personal project” and that he has been craving vengeance since the Orange Revolution: “*Ukraine now represents an opportunity for the Kremlin to exact revenge for both past and present Maidans, to teach the rebellious Ukrainians a lesson, and to warn Russians about the price of insubordination or attempts to escape the Russian matrix.*”⁵

Significant support for Putin's *Weltanschauung* comes from some very unlikely sources in Europe: 1) misguided left-wing parties, such as the so-called *Putin-Versteher*, the Social Democrats in Germany and their apologist Gerhard Schröder and

Education Ethnicity Age	Does Ukraine need		Does Ukraine need		Does Ukraine need		Do you lament the demise of the Soviet Union?	
	more democracy a 'strong hand'?		more freedom of speech	more censorship?	to develop market relations	return to the planned economy?	% yes	% no
	%		%		%		%	%
Basic school	9	75	31	27	23	46	62	20
Higher school	32	55	47	25	58	25	31	57
Russian	14	66	21	40	32	44	55	31
Ukrainian	28	58	47	24	54	28	38	47
60+ years	19	67	36	31	35	43	61	27
18–29 years	32	52	49	22	61	19	20	60

2) duped far-right parties, such as the BNP in Britain, Marine le Pen's Front National in France, ATAKA in Bulgaria, the SNS in Slovakia, Jobbik in Hungary, and other Euro-disgruntled anti-American far-right parties.

Ukraine on the World Value Map

As an economist, Halchynsky praises Maidan's non-mercantile character, which, in his view, is fully in line with global trends away from economic determinism toward moral and spiritual values. Importantly, he contends, it is not a Bolshevik-style revolution of marginals, lumpens or social outcasts but the contrary; it has been carried out primarily by educated people – the middle class, students, professionals, and businessmen (nearly two thirds of the Maidan protesters, according to sociological surveys, were people with higher education).⁶ It resembles, in a number of ways, the 1968 democratic revolutions that spread in Europe and over the globe introducing a radically new, non-materialist agenda.

If these observations are true and a gradual shift from materialist to post-materialist values is a reality in Ukraine, any attempt to install a fully-fledged authoritarian regime in Ukraine is doomed from the very beginning.⁷

One may refer here to Ronald Inglehart's and Christian Welzel's analysis of cultural links between modernization and democracy and, in particular, to their two-dimensional map of cross-cultural variations.

The World Value Surveys Cultural Map positions each country according to its people's values. In one dimension it reflects the predominance of Secular-Rational values versus Traditional values; in the other dimension it represents different countries' drive from Survival values to Self-Expression. The former shift coincides primarily with the process of modernization and industrialization; the latter is characteristic primarily of the post-industrial development. This is also reflected, as Welzel and Inglehart demonstrate, in a substantial difference in both dimensions between less educated and university-educated members of the same society.⁸

Ukraine was the object of these surveys in 1995, 2000, and 2006. Yaroslav Hrytsak, a prominent Ukrainian historian, argues that Ukraine rather disproves Inglehart's pessimistic conclusion that the peculiar set of values entrenched in the mentality of the post-Soviet people makes all these countries very unlikely to achieve a trajectory of sustainable development in the foreseeable future.⁹ He refers to a noticeable shift in values in the Survival/Self-Expression dimension in Ukraine in the past

decade – a sharp contrast to the virtual stagnation of the 1990s.

Indeed, even though the last WVS data are from 2006, all the recent Ukrainian surveys confirm that the shift in values in the country, however slow and sometimes incoherent, is rather persistent and probably irreversible. First of all, it is most noticeable in the attitudes of different age groups to various value-charged issues. Last year's national survey¹⁰ reveals a strong correlation between the age of respondents and their attitude toward some fundamental issues such as "democracy versus a 'strong hand'", "freedom of speech vs. censorship", "a planned economy vs. the free market", and, the most general, "lamenting/not lamenting the demise of the Soviet Union". But one may also discern a significant correlation between all those issues and people's ethnicity as well as education.

This clearly shows that Ukraine is divided but, more significantly, barely split. The conspicuous differences between the proverbial West and East are mitigated by (a) the vast intermediate regions of Central Ukraine,

and (b) the heterogeneity of any sociologically significant group that makes intra-group differences and cross-group similarities nearly as important as inter-group differences and dissimilarities. For example, as we see from the data above, ethnic Russians are much more prone to long for the Soviet Union than ethnic Ukrainians. But this means only a statistically significant correlation and not an iron-clad dependence and determinism. Whereas 47% of Ukrainians express no longing for the Soviet Union, 38% express it to various degrees. Whereas 55% of Russians (in Ukraine) lament the demise of the Soviet Union, 31% do not. The same intra-group divisions can be discerned in people's attitudes toward other political options.

Ethnic Russians and/or Russian speakers are more likely to support a 'strong hand' vs. democracy, censorship vs. freedom of speech, or a planned economy vs. the free market. The reason is simple: for Russians and Russophones it was much easier to internalize Soviet ideology as "ours" than for Ukrainophones who strove to preserve their cultural identity.

The Complexity of Ukrainian Divides

There are many other important differences that run across regional, ethnic, or ethno-cultural divides. Nicu Popescu, a senior analyst at the EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris, aptly recognized the complexity of Ukrainian divides when he contended at the very beginning of the Maidan uprising that "the fault line runs not just between east and west, but also within the Yanukovich support groups. Some of them will continue supporting him, and some of them are disappointed by the way he misgoverned Ukraine over the last, almost four years".¹¹ Indeed, even though Ukrainians are still divided about geopolitical orientations, there is something close to a national consensus about the ousting of Yanukovich (in a recent poll, it was supported by 94% in the West and 70% in the South East; by the same token, 91% of Westerners and 70% of Easterners condemned the Russian invasion in Crimea).¹²

It might be a good time to get rid of propagandistic stereotypes and to re-conceptualize Ukrainian cleavages as primarily ideological rather than ethnic or regional. "There are two political nations, with different values and development vectors, that cohabit in Ukraine", Vitaly Portnikov, a renowned Jewish-Ukrainian publicist, argues.¹³ These two overlapping nations – Eurasian and European, the nation of paternalistic subjects and of emancipated citizens – bear the same name but are fundamentally divided by the very idea of what Ukraine is and should be. All



Foto: Wikimedia Commons

The toppling of statues of Lenin (here in Kyiv on 10 December 2013) symbolises Ukraine's attempt to finally break with post-Soviet authoritarian structures.

this makes reconciliation of 'two Ukraines' highly problematic. For two decades, as another Ukrainian author, Yevhen Zolotariv, comments, two social realities, Soviet and non-Soviet, had coexisted in one country in parallel worlds, encountering each other only during elections. The problem, however, is that Soviet Ukraine has neither the *raison d'être* nor the resources to exist beyond the USSR or a kind of substitute for it.¹⁴

Vitaly Nakhmanovych, a Ukrainian historian and Jewish-Ukrainian activist, argues that reconciliation between these 'two nations' is barely possible in the foreseeable future because the shift in values occurs very slowly if at all. Instead, he contends, Ukrainian politicians should think about accommodation. It might be possible if one group manages to guarantee some autonomy for the other group, with due respect to its values. It is very unlikely that an authoritarian Ukraine can provide such autonomy for democratically minded, Europe-oriented citizens. But it is quite possible that a democratic Ukraine would find a way to accommodate its paternalistic, Sovietophile, and Russia-oriented fellow countrymen.¹⁵ This is actually what both Latvia and Estonia have rather successfully done for their Sovietophile/Pan-Slavonic co-citizens.

In a value-based context, all the arguments that the Maidan and the post-Maidan government do not represent the whole of Ukrainian society but rather deepen Ukraine's ideological divide and political polarization¹⁶ make little sense. There are some fundamental issues such as human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law that cannot be solved by a simple majority vote. To put it bluntly, no majority can legitimize slavery, and no society split can justify the preservation of totalitarian values.

"The real political divide in the country is not that which supposedly separates Ukraine's western and eastern regions", contends the Russian political analyst Igor Torbakov. *"It is a fault line, where on one side stands a host of emerging and assertive identities (including liberals, the champions of a Ukrainian civic nation, radical and less radical nationalists, and others); on the other side are found those clinging to a post-Soviet identity, one characterized by political passivity and a reliance on state paternalism. This post-Soviet identity is spread unevenly across Ukraine, being concentrated predominantly, but by no means exclusively, in the east and south".*¹⁷

He believes that the best framework for analyzing Ukrainian developments is not to conceive of it as a West vs. East, or Ukrainophones vs. Russophones paradigm but as a withering away of the post-Soviet foundation upon which a peculiar system of authoritarian political practices and crony capitalism rests. He defines it

as "Putinism" – probably because it was Putin who perfected the system and made it not just exemplary but also mandatory for all the post-Soviet authoritarians. Ukrainians' break with the system poses an existential threat for the Kremlin and Putin himself, hence the hysterical reaction of the Russian media and the brutal invasion of Ukrainian territory by the Russian military.

Russian acts of aggression may seriously frustrate Ukraine's latest attempt at de-Sovietization and profound reforms, but the very persistence with which Ukrainians are trying once again to complete the unfinished business of the 1989 East European revolutions implies that Ukraine's westward drift is rather irreversible, as the best thing Russian can do is to follow the move rather than try to obstruct it. Conceivably, the national symbol of Ukraine, the trident, is a good omen that the third attempt will be successful.

Notes

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Mykola Riabchuk, Ukrainian writer, journalist and co-founder of the Kyiv monthly magazine *Krytyka*. *Andrej N. Lushnycky*, researcher at the Interfaculty Institute of Central and Eastern Europe and director of the American College Program at the University of Fribourg.

Yaroslav Pylynskyi

Revolution in Ukraine 2014: New Challenges for the World

The former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich pursued a seesaw policy with regard to the EU and Russia in order to gain as much political capital for himself and his followers. The Maidan was the response to his kleptocratic regime. The Russian annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine have deepened the crisis in Ukraine and demand a resolute approach to Russia. – S. K.

The West has yet another opportunity to learn more about Ukraine. Although it is not under the best circumstances, we hope that someday the opportunities will change in their quality, not just increase in quantity, and the word “Ukraine” will evoke in the minds of EU citizens something specific and positive rather than something vague and negative.

Parallels between Switzerland and Ukraine

When I recently read *The History of Switzerland* by Volker Reinhardt,¹ I was surprised to receive further confirmation of my old thought that nations develop asynchronously. For instance, the problems that troubled the Swiss two hundred years ago are current for Ukrainians today. All in all, I have found much in common in the histories of our two countries. For centuries Ukraine, like Switzerland, felt the influence of two prominent European countries. For Ukraine, these countries were Poland and Russia, in the case of Switzerland – France and Austria. Ukraine was always multi-confessional and multi-ethnic, which made it weaker and stronger at the same time. Ukrainian men took part in almost all large European wars and sometimes, like the Swiss, played a crucial role in them.

Taking advantage of the current interest in Ukraine, I would like to offer some history as an introduction. Without knowing the history, it is hard to understand why the Ukrainian people once again surprised both the Western world and national policymakers with their determined support for European integration. Democracy has always been an integral part of life of Ukrainian communities since the Middle Ages. We should remember that village residents elected not only a *Viyt* (from the German, *Vogt*), but also a priest for the local church, as well as a teacher who taught all the children in the community. It is also interesting that this word of German origin referring to the mayor elected by a city or village is directly connected to the prevalence of Magdeburg Law in Ukraine from the fourteenth century onwards – a system of local self-government that at that time was widespread throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The easternmost city in Ukraine to follow this democratic legal system since 1664 was Glukhiv, 300 kilometers northeast of Kyiv. Thus, the traditions of local self-government and living according to the law rather than the will of a master were inherent to the majority of the Ukrainian population for centuries.

Ukrainians have long considered themselves a part of the cultural and legal landscape that is currently called the European Union. That is why the manifestations in support of European integration that took place in the winter of 2013/14

in almost all large cities in Ukraine from East to West were entirely natural and logical.

Yanukovich and his “family”

The European-oriented part of Ukrainian society (according to sociological surveys, over 60% of the population) have generally accepted the growing deterioration of life in Ukraine over the last three years, in the hope that the Association Agreement would oblige the President and the Government to reform the state in line with European standards. Instead, the Ukrainian authorities headed by President Yanukovich played their own rather simple game based on the principle “who will give more”, while trying to cheat everyone.

In order to better understand the power dynamic in Ukraine in late 2013, it is worth recalling the tale that was widespread during the presidential elections of 2010, especially among business circles: in essence, the contest between Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yanukovich for the presidency was the contest between a dairymaid and a butcher, in which the first was willing to acquire a cow (the country) to milk it for a long time, while the second – to kill it and sell the meat. Such a collision was beautifully depicted at the end of the 1990s by the famous American economist and Wilson Center fellow, Mancur Olson, in his book *Power and Prosperity: Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships*,² where he compared the authorities in post-communist countries with stationary and roving bandits.

One of the main problems of Ukraine has always been weak economic policy. Over the last three years, President Yanukovich sequentially refused any attempts to restrain the deterioration of the economic situation. The Ukrainian government kept an artificially overstated exchange rate of the national currency, which led to a significant deficit. Ukraine’s economy also suffered from the decline of exchange reserves, excessive exchange control, and high interest rates, which made both foreign and domestic investment almost impossible. Additionally, Ukraine had almost no access to international financial markets. The general budget deficit made up 8% of the GDP, which is predicted to decrease by 1.5% this year, while the industrial production already decreased by 5.4%.

Most likely, the main goal of economic policy of the previous regime was to transfer financial resources and companies to the possession of the so-called “Yanukovich family” – a group of young businessmen that quickly bought up private and state companies for next to nothing. They were the only “sanctioned” buyers in the key industries, and the worse the economic situation was, the cheaper these companies were.

If we accept this assertion as the most probable motive for the president's behavior, his tactics in late 2013 become clear. Indeed, he was not really planning to sign the Association Agreement with the EU, but was essentially playing poker with both the EU and Russia, trying to bargain for the highest possible stakes for himself.

Yanukovich's political style

Bargaining with Russia was not so much about entering the Customs Union, as about refusing to sign the Association with Europe. It is critical to understand that for most Russian leaders and citizens, the loss of Ukraine is not considered from a pragmatic and economic viewpoint, but from an irrational, emotional one. This attitude is hardly understandable for either Europeans and Americans, who mostly think in the categories of community, region (state), and nation in contrast to Russians, who think in the categories of empire. For Russians, symbolic trophies like others bowing to their imperial might are much more important than any economic advantages or losses.

However, at a certain stage Yanukovich probably felt that bluffing with Russia might fail and thus decided to stop the Euro-integration seemingly on his terms. It is not clear whether, or if so, why, Yanukovich believed Russia this time, given that, to paraphrase the first President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, Russia has never fulfilled its obligations or stuck to agreements.

Another widespread theory is that until late November 2013 Yanukovich blackmailed the Europeans in an attempt to bargain for guarantees for his post-presidency retirement. However, if this was the goal of negotiations with the EU, it could only be realized if the agreement was signed and considered a payment for compliancy, flexibility and the introduction in Ukraine of a legal field favorable for European business. Thus, judging by the course of events, this goal remained unfulfilled, since Yanukovich apparently cheated many honorable European officials that are hardly likely to deal with him again.

Those who were negotiating with Yanukovich talked and wrote a lot about him. However, the results of negotiations, mostly negative, lead us to the conclusion that these people, overall, had an inaccurate idea of their counterpart. Although the truth, as is often the case, is quite obvious, the distortion of a "close-up", or their own stereotypes and preconceptions, precluded them from clearly seeing it.

First, they failed to see that Viktor Fedorovich is a victor. Recently a reporter of a renowned American newspaper remarked correctly that every American child, even if born in the inner city, is aware that he or she can become a president tomorrow, referring to the example of President Obama. Now what about Yanukovich? Was he worse than Obama, Merkel or Hollande? Indeed, in his own eyes and those of his minions, he was even better. In fact, he climbed up from the very bottom to the highest office in the country. He was a winner, and, therefore, he was the best.

This perception defined his political behavior, his attitude towards his comrades in arms, his environment, his party members and the common people – whom he had repeatedly called "the rabble." So, the first and defining feature of his "ego" was arrogance. He was the master of his life, most probably the richest man in Ukraine. He had made it! That is why it was only the important status of the EU officers that made it possible for him to stoop to communicate with politicians that he considered losers, and under different circumstances he would never have agreed to meet them. The way he

made promises and deceived them shows his complete lack of respect towards these people. His life strategy, molded under tough conditions of rackets in a small mining town, proved the most efficient in the post-Soviet chaos, with a lack of self-organization of the public and the prevalence of legal nihilism. It ensured his long-term and successful balancing acts and small, tactical victories in his communications with Russia and Western countries. For hundreds of thousands and millions of his champions, he was the Leader, the embodiment of their dream, and their hero. His opponents were just the losers and unfortunate buggers deserving to be duped and used.

The Ukrainian oligarchs, President Yanukovich among them, dealt with the West predominantly through business-people, as well as the lawyers and managers working for them. Due to a variety of reasons, they are not exactly the paragons of morality and decency. Short of adequate experience in communication, Ukrainian leaders simply treated the Western opponents either as their peers or as simpletons and losers.

We strongly believe that it was a lack of understanding of the Ukrainian president's behavior that brought Ukraine's European integration to an impasse. It is worth noting that Yanukovich did not really cheat Ukrainians and Europe, but rather bargained with Putin, whom he had always feared, and, probably, respected. Finally, Yanukovich wrested out of Putin guarantees for immunity, and, in a most banal way, the funds needed to secure his and his state officials' survival in Ukraine through to the end of the year. The only thing Yanukovich overlooked in his calculations was "Maidan" as a phenomenon, as the expression of civil society's wish for change, to establish the rule of law and above all to combat corruption.

Those who believed that the crisis in Ukraine would soon end as a temporary phenomenon, or that everything would just "dissolve" if Ukrainian rulers received a 15-billion grant or if "Maidan got mugged" were deeply wrong, for the better or for the worst.

The selling out of the Ukrainian state

Over the recent few months, the systemic crisis in Ukraine has been mentioned by all and sundry; nevertheless, we believe that despite numerous comments and interesting remarks, researchers are yet to identify the fundamental sources of the crisis. The available studies are mostly of an academic nature and, therefore, of only marginal interest to the public at large, including politicians, journalists or Ukrainian society.

In our opinion, the main problem of Ukraine, as a certain community inhabiting a certain territory, is that we have become dangerous to ourselves. The danger emanates from our streets, squares, fields and roads. Soon, staying in one's home will feel dangerous too. It is this enhanced sense of danger that brought large masses of Ukrainians to the streets and to the Maidan. That is why no one could detect there either linguistic, confessional or any other phobia – the danger is so real that it basically levels all other contradictions between people and unites them not for money and even for the sake of an idea, but for common survival.

For decades, Ukraine has been a safe haven for its citizens; at least the overwhelming majority of its residents born after the Second World War saw it as such. After Stalin's death, totalitarian reprisals belonged in the past. Arbitrary actions of repressive bodies were limited by the government's monopoly on violence; therefore, criminals were penalized under the law, while dissidents were proclaimed either insane or criminal, leading the majority of the population to believe that if they didn't violate a set of certain rules proudly called "socialist justice", they would be completely safe. The Communist Party

would not share its right to institutionalized violence with anyone – that is why it kept all the official repressive bodies under its rigid control.

After the USSR collapsed, all the government institutions of the new independent states, inherited from the Soviet era, underwent gradual degradation. In some places, it was a quicker process, in others slower, but it was unstoppable and inevitable, as the socialist slogans of equality under the law and the socialist umbrella were replaced by the slogans of freedom and enrichment, long banned in the USSR.

After a short break in the early nineties, an overarching commercialization of everything started in Ukraine. Under Kuchma's presidency, when the first oligarchs appeared in Ukraine, it became evident that everything in the state was for sale, including high offices, even those in law-enforcement bodies. Everything had to bring profit; this was the main goal of the leaders during that period, as it remains today.

But nothing is free; Ukraine paid with the loss of citizens' sense of safety, and the Ukrainian state lost, or, rather, sold its monopoly on violence. Ukrainian rulers ceded or sold some share of the prerogative to the lower echelons of power – district courts, militia departments, district prosecutors' offices, customs, tax inspections etc. As a result, a rather thick and hermetic social stratum that considered itself above the law rapidly came into being. This process can be compared to the formation of different estates in Europe in the early Middle Ages, when a knight had to pay only a small fine for killing a peasant or might avoid a penalty altogether. If and when an official position of any significance becomes first and foremost a source of enrichment, the notion of law-abidance becomes nonsense. In practice, a dispute can be won by anyone who can pay more than the opposing side.

So, with the police, the prosecutor's offices, and the courts all becoming commercial structures, and with public offices turning into a source of considerable profit, the state ceased performing its functions of protecting security, property, freedom and life. This means that anyone with enough money can endanger freedom, private property, and even the lives of Ukrainian citizens without any punishment. Meanwhile, the process of decomposition affecting the law-enforcement system continued to gain momentum and led to the imprisonment of Tymoshenko and Lutsenko, the rejection of the 2004 Constitution, and the "tax Maidan," which, although it scared the authorities, still failed to stop the assault on the rights, freedom, and safety of the public at large.

Eventually, it became clear that more and more citizens found themselves helpless in the face of the arbitrary nature of those in power, specifically those in repressive bodies. Federal workers' feeling of helplessness and dependence only increased with the impunity of the officials, who incessantly and openly embezzled state money. Ukrainian citizens are especially unprotected when a motor accident involving an official occurs. For example, a driver fatally hitting a pedestrian (especially a woman or a child) on a crosswalk is charged with "neglect" and gets a suspended sentence if, for example, he happens to be the prosecutor's son. The death of two physicians in an ambulance hit by a police vehicle at an intersection goes unpunished, to say nothing of the handling of the rape and attempted murder committed by policemen in Vradiivka (Mykolaiv oblast). All of these incidents demonstrate the virtual impasse in which Ukrainian society finds itself.

Violence against demonstrators

A frivolous promise made by Yanukovich, on the one hand, and the no less frivolous attitude of EU leaders, on the other,

plunged Ukrainian society into turmoil. For many years, Ukrainians have cherished a dream or a myth that one day they would live as people do in Europe. And for many people, Europe was not an abstract and unknown, though positive entity, but rather a specific territory where supremacy of law reigns, and where one can be safe unless one violates the law. To make this dream come true, Ukrainians kept a low profile, expecting that if Ukrainian authorities signed the Association Agreement with the EU, they would be forced to harmonize Ukrainian law with European legislation and Ukrainians' lives would improve incrementally and become safer, without any outbursts or revolutions.

That is why when in late November 2013 Ukrainians were deprived of their dream of gradual improvement, they took to the streets for the first peaceful protest. The regime, however, concerned for its own safety, and, specifically, about the legitimacy of the 2015 elections, decided to preempt further developments by brutally stifling the protests. It aimed to prove to itself that it still controlled the country and had no fear of its own people and to show Ukrainians that it would go to any lengths for its own survival, even violence if necessary. In this, however, it overestimated its influence in society, and failed to take into consideration the potential for a violent civilian backlash.

That is how Maidan, as the center of opposition and the symbol of some Ukrainians' fearlessness, came into being. Further violence included: the beatings of Maidan activists, T. Chornovol; the kidnapping and torturing of I. Lutsenko, Yu. Verbitsky (resulting in his death) and D. Bulatov; the disappearance of dozens of people (even taking into account that some may have fled of their own accord); the murder of demonstrators by shooting; the beatings of medical workers and journalists, mass kidnappings from hospitals, performed by the police with subsequent incarceration of the kidnapped in isolation detention centers. These all drove the developments into an impasse, making not only Maidan activists throughout Ukraine but also the authorities hostages of a dangerous situation with no simple solution.

After it became known that the protests were being videotaped by the security service, all of the more active participants of the various Maidans became aware that as soon as they dispersed, they might share Verbitsky's fate. That is why they had to persevere until the very end; they could not end their protest until they were guaranteed real safety.

Besides, the law-enforcers, especially those who actively participated in the assaults on medical workers and journalists, were also photographed and are well known. They could hardly expect a pardon if the opposition, and especially its radical wing, won this battle. After Yanukovich's flight from Ukraine, inflicting their own cruelty on their opponents and thus not anticipating amnesty from the new Kyiv authorities, these policemen went to Crimea and Donbas and joined criminals, the Russian military and mercenaries to form the backbone of anti-Ukrainian riots.

The situation in Crimea and Donbas

Following the annexation of Crimea, Ukrainian-Russian relations have become a serious factor of instability, not only in the region, but also globally. The phrase "Russian Crimea" is actually no better than "Russian Finland", the "Russian Baltic" or even "Russian Poland". In fact, in the twenty-first century this sounds as absurd as, for instance, British India or French Africa.

Before the Second World War, the Crimea was exclusively multiethnic. Russians always constituted the minority there.

Most Crimean toponyms of that time were Tatar, Greek, Ukrainian or German. All the big cities on the peninsula – Feodosiya, Kerch, Yalta, Simferopol, Sebastopol, Inkerman – had been founded long before it was conquered by the Russian Empire, as is evident from their names.

Before World War II, the Ukraine was also a multiethnic state. On the territory of modern Ukraine there were half a million Germans, half a million Poles, 2.5 million Jews and 200 thousand Greeks. In the early 1930s, these large masses of people began to disappear: first, Poles and Germans, then Greeks, Jews and Ukrainians. When in 1929–1931 Bolshevik troops, mostly Russians, entered Ukraine, Germans and Poles were deported to Siberia or physically liquidated as enemies and spies. Ukrainians were also accused of espionage and declared “kulaks” – social enemies of the Soviet socialist rule. Since there were too many Ukrainians to deport to Siberia or Kazakhstan, over four million were killed by artificial famine.

A mass propaganda campaign conducted in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s became the ideological foundation of the class and ethnic hatred against the proclaimed enemies of Russia and its “hard-working people” that, in its turn, was taken as an excuse for the killing of large masses of people that after World War II was recognized as genocide.

Today, the grandchildren of those who widely annihilated the multiethnic civil population of Ukraine have occupied the Crimean peninsula and are preparing to cross the Ukrainian borders onto the mainland.

In the 1930s, only diplomats and high-ranking officials of major Western countries knew about the tragedy of the peoples of Ukraine (as documented in the book *Letters from Kharkiv*, compiled by Italian Consul Sergio Gradenigo³). Now the whole world can watch online how Russian soldiers and criminal paramilitary groups, duped by Putin’s propaganda, are preparing to repeat their aggression against Ukrainians. From the Russian point of view, the guilt of Ukrainians is irrefutable: they want to live in a lawful state as in the West, they want to create a fair system of distribution of the national wealth like in the West, and they do not want to be a human or raw material resource of the Russian Empire. For the Russian state machine, this is really a worthy motive for annihilating people physically, as long as they cannot be persuaded with the help of Kalashnikov rifles.

Today, the situation in the annexed Crimea and destabilized Donbas is very troubling. Russia has widely supplied criminals with arms and begun a wave of kidnappings, robberies, and murders. Besides, the Russian population of Crimea, as immigrants of the first and second generations, used to feel uncertain on this inherently alien conquered land and fear that someday they would have to answer for the crimes of others against the local population committed by Russian rule many years ago. People often project their irrational fears onto others and, because of these fears, do to others what they imagine those others might do to them. Such fear was the main force behind genocide in Rwanda, as well as in Bosnia, and the danger of it now exists in Crimea.

In Chechnya, tens of thousands of Russians and Chechens were killed by the fire, bombing and other violent actions of the Russian military. Hopefully, a similar tragedy is not going to happen in Crimea with Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians not loyal to local authorities and a population befuddled by Russian propaganda. The potential killing of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians for wanting to live in a lawful European state is a threat on the global scale. Having endured the First and the Second World Wars, the Holocaust and several severe mass genocides, mankind in the twentieth century does not deserve

the rise of a new regime that practices mass killing of people on the basis of ethnicity or ideology.

A resolute approach to Russia is required

Undoubtedly, there are no quick and easy solutions here, but the problem is not as hopeless as it seems. First, it is necessary to discard illusions and stop considering evil to be good. In his recent book *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power*,⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski clearly and explicitly wrote: “Given the urgency of Russia’s internal problems and depending on what choice Russia makes, the next decade – as already noted – could be decisive for Russia’s future and, indirectly, for the prospects of a more vital and larger democratic West. Unfortunately, Putin’s vision of that future is a backward-looking combination of assertive nationalism, thinly veiled hostility toward America for its victory in the Cold War, and nostalgia for both modernity and superpower status (financed, he hopes, by Europe). The state he wishes to shape bears a striking resemblance to Italy’s experiment with Fascism: a highly authoritarian (but not totalitarian) state involving a symbiotic relationship between its power elite and its business oligarchy, with its ideology based on thinly disguised and bombastic chauvinism.” Thus, it is time for the West to reconsider the possibility of building a common security system with a country whose leadership and population considers the US and the EU enemies, envies and hates them.

Before World War II, every other machine bought by the USSR was made in the USA, and the rest were made somewhere in Europe. The Soviet regime managed to survive and kill tens of millions of people not least because of the indifference and unscrupulousness of the leaders of major Western countries.

Now Russian capital has found unprecedented shelter in the West. Thus, voluntarily and improvidently, the West has created the mode of ultimate favor to the country that has confronted it many times and finally undermined the security system that had been created in the world over the last decades. It is doubtful that anybody can be convincingly guaranteed security now that the Budapest Memorandum has been violated. Therefore, if the reaction of the civilized world is not unanimously firm, if Russia is not stopped by economic and other sanctions, the world awaits much severer trials than the loss of the Crimea or Donbas by Ukraine.

What happened in winter 2014 certifies that the whole system of monitoring threats and risks and their prevention requires significant improvement. Otherwise, we will only be able to react to the consequences of catastrophes rather than avert them.

Notes

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Sergiy Fedunyak

The Ukrainian Revolution in International Context

The political revolt in Ukraine and Russian aggression have had a great impact on international politics. Russia has responded to Ukraine's policy of independence with new forms of neo-imperial policy. Russia's great power policy also represents a challenge for the western states and the USA, since they are forced to consider a new regional and global architecture of security. – S. K.

For half a year Ukraine has been at the centre of a storm of events some call a revolution. The causes are rooted primarily in the incomplete post-communist transformations and formation of the state. But the influence of external factors and the international context to internal developments within Ukraine should not be ignored. It is important to recognise that it is not a question of one-sided external influencing of the Ukrainian Revolution, but one of complex interaction with the system of international relations.

The post-bipolar international system

One of the difficulties of describing the international system is that a universal term has yet to be found. The oft-mentioned "post-bipolarity" is more of a contrast with former conditions than a description of the present situation. Nevertheless, in the two decades since the end of the Cold War the system of international relations has undergone certain developments and it is possible to identify tangible outcomes. On the global level there has been a transition from bipolarity to a multipolar stability, mainly due to the dominance of the United States and the consensus of countries with great influence in the international organisations (UN, G8, G20) concerning the foundations of the world order. This was the result of a certain configuration of hierarchy and power, or in other words a balance of power and its recognition by the international actors. In the early 1990s the world's leading countries recognised the dominance of the United States and placed on the USA the demanding and expensive responsibility of playing global policeman.

However, due to constant change this new world order proved unstable, and so at the beginning of the twenty-first century there were active attempts to revise it. Some of the initiatives emanated from Russia: after winning his third presidential election Vladimir Putin announced Russia's return to an active great power policy in order to at least compete with the USA on a regional basis if not on a global one.¹ Clearly, the region implied is the territory of the former USSR. Russia's attempts to reintegrate the post-Soviet space were perceived by the West not only in a geopolitical context, that is, in a context of a return to global competition, but as an attempt to retard or completely block democratic tendencies in Eurasia.

One of the West's reactions to the role of Russia was the creation of institutional networks along the lines of the "Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development" and support for "colour revolutions" aimed at intensifying post-Soviet transformations. These revolutions also had an anti-imperial (and hence anti-Russian) impetus however. The "Orange Revolution" of 2004 and the Euromaidan of 2014 can be considered examples of such movements, since their aim was to bring the Ukrainian



The western countries discuss a common solution to the Ukraine crisis: Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission (left) and Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council (right), welcome US President Barack Obama to the G7 summit in Brussels on 4 June 2014.

state and Ukrainian society closer to Europe and to depose the corrupt, criminal regime of Viktor Yanukovich. However, the significance of the events of November 2013 to February 2014 is not limited to Ukraine and its post-Soviet neighbours, but is of great relevance for the general development of the international system itself.

Regional impact

Let us examine the impact of the events in Ukraine on the international system and on the sub-regional level: first of all, one stage of post-imperial transformation has now definitely been completed. Despite the prevailing view, the Soviet empire did not collapse in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR, rather this is an ongoing process that continues to this day. First the Baltic countries and then Georgia left the Soviet empire. Now it is the turn of the Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan. But it can certainly be said that it is Ukraine's departure that has finally destroyed the foundation of an empire in decline, an empire that is now taking on forms qualitatively different to those of the last two decades.

For the development of the international system, the decline of empires means a significant change in the balance of power that must be compensated for on the regional and sub-regional level. A notable feature of the decline of the Russian empire was the rapid transformation of the potential for power of the former metropolises and their immediate impact on regional balances. In economic and military terms, the Russian Federation lost 50 to 70% of its former Soviet potential. Despite intensive disarmament by the West, it still overwhelmed Russian military capacity by 4:1.²

One of the consequences of the Ukrainian Revolution is the accelerated collapse of the institutional constructions of transition on the territory of the former USSR. Ukraine's departure from the sphere of Russian influence clearly heralds the end of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which has increasingly become an instrument of Russian neo-imperial policy as a multilateral transition mechanism. We can assume – and the facts support this – that the interests of the Russian leadership focus on other structures, above all the Eurasian Economic Community and its transformation into the Eurasian Union. Russia has thus ceased to expand its political and economic influence over a large group of countries as in the case of the CIS and has transitioned instead to gradual but continual control over weaker post-Soviet countries such as Armenia, Kirgizstan and Tajikistan. The Customs Union and the “Collective Security Treaty Organisation” are among the most important instruments of this policy.

At first glance Ukraine's departure from the post-Soviet structures might seem to make it easier for Russia to realise its neo-imperial strategy as the balance of power shifts towards Russia with the disappearance of what was at least nominally a counterweight to Moscow. However, we must also consider the “soft power” effects: the Ukrainian Revolution sets a precedent for leaving the Russian sphere of influence and thus bolsters the political elites set on independence in other post-Soviet countries. This effect is particularly noticeable in the Republic of Moldova and above all in Georgia, which achieved independence earlier and is thus exposed to strong external pressure.

In this context it is important to mention a third consequence of the Ukrainian Maidan: the decrease in Russia's ability to use “soft power”: the occupation and annexation of the Crimean peninsula, like that of Abkhazia and South Ossetia before it, have undermined the great efforts of Russian propagandists and security services to create a network of institutional influence in the neighbouring states. Now very few of these states are still inclined to pursue a policy of rapprochement with Russia. Even Russia's closest allies, including Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus and Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan openly favour suspending integration and a more detailed drafting of the steps towards the Eurasian Economic Union,³ strongly rejecting the creation of supranational political structures. Crimea will always serve as a warning to the political elites of the former Soviet Union and curb Russia's realisation of its neo-imperial reintegration projects.

The consequences for the architecture of international security

A further consequence of the events in Ukraine is the crisis and destruction of the security system that developed after 1991 and was based on the consensus of the influential global actors. The leading states created common resolutions concerning problems of universal significance (or at least tried to), placing control of the situation on the regional level in the hands of the hegemonial state in question. The states took control in their own “spheres of interest” and showed little interest in developments outside these spheres. There were certain restrictions upon the activities of hegemonial states: firstly they were not permitted to independently alter the territorial borders of other states. Secondly, before it could intervene in its sphere of influence through force, a hegemonial state had to gain the consent of other large partners or at least formal agreement on the level of international institutions, especially the UN. Although this state of affairs



Members of the Anti-Maidan in Kyiv demand “No to European double standards”.

was not ideal (since it was never subject to a binding treaty under international law), it guaranteed international stability on the basis of an unstable balance of power. The Kyiv Maidan and above all Russian aggression towards Ukraine have accelerated the collapse of a system that was based on power relations in the post-bipolar age. In the view of Dmitri Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Centre, Moscow's intervention in Ukraine has brought about a new version of the Cold War and returned Russia to the position of global player it occupied 1989.⁴

What has the world gained, then, as a result of the intensification of the situation in Ukraine? First, the inviolability of post-Cold War borders has been called into question, with the effect that the process of revising borders could become more commonplace, and by no means will it always be peaceful. This is a threat in particular to the countries of the former Soviet Union, not to mention other, less stable regions in Asia and Africa. Second, it gives hope to separatist movements now that the Pandora's box of simply leaving one state to join another has been opened. It is quite possible that this could also happen in continental Europe. Thirdly, the regime of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons has suffered a heavy blow, since no one can guarantee the security of countries who have given up such weapons of mass destruction voluntarily or following international pressure. This particularly applies to Iran. Hence the role of tactical nuclear weapons as an instrument of mutual deterrence will take on increased significance. The danger is that the psychological threshold for the perception of a potential tactical nuclear strike becomes lower than that of strategic strike. Fourthly, the development of the existing institutions of regional security bipolarity in Europe and Eurasia has been intensified; NATO has received a “second wind” and the Cold War between the West and Russia has indeed been reborn.

The challenge facing the USA

As mentioned in the introduction, the USA plays a particularly crucial role in the development of the post-bipolar international system. In this respect its reduced leadership role and its reduced ability to direct global processes is one of the most important effects of the Ukraine crisis. That is extremely dangerous, since virtually the only power preventing the spread of anarchy in the system of international relations is disappearing and cannot be replaced by anyone. This scenario is forcing the American political establishment to revise the strategic interests of the USA as well as its tactical plans for the protection of these interests in order to re-establish the country's authority and influence.



Revolutionary graffiti in Kyiv.

system of regional security and stability based on a combination of “soft” and “hard” power is developing, involving putting oligarchs under pressure and introducing economic sanctions along with traditional methods (arms, advisors, troops). Moreover, the creation of new institutional sub-regional security structures within the existing Euro-Atlantic security system should not be ruled out, as demonstrated by intensive negotiations between Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania concerning the formation of multilateral military units (brigades) and the potential establishment of a sub-regional security structure. Similar processes can also be observed in the South Caucasus, where discussion are taking place on intensifying military and security collaboration between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.⁸

It must be remembered that the USA's strategic interest is to maintain enduring global dominance. Hence the question must be posed whether Russia's actions are a threat to America's long-term strategic interests. At first glance, the occupation and annexation of a part of Ukraine do not impact on or pose a threat to American interests, since the region is one in which the West, following an unspoken agreement, has not increased its activity, to put it mildly. However, the violation of the security guarantees of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 undermines the authority and the international position of the USA and its allies. It is not so much a case of endangering transatlantic relations as an issue relating to the Middle East and Asia, where signs of a weakening of the American position are apparent. Barack Obama's political weakness during the Syrian crisis has made it clear to many countries that American guarantees are far from reliable. The declining authority of the USA in strategically important regions will necessarily hamper the realisation of American global interests. For this reason, the territorial integrity of Ukraine is also a litmus test of US capabilities.

Is the American establishment on the look-out for a new instrument with which to realise its global strategy? On the one hand, the traditional school of *Realpolitik* lives on, as demonstrated by the most recent publication of the doyen of American foreign policy, Henry Kissinger, in the *Washington Post*. In his article Kissinger calls for the maintenance of the status quo in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, although he acknowledges that the West and the USA have no leverage over the aggressor.⁵ Such helplessness shows that after more than two decades, the post-bipolar international system has no reliable instruments of security, and that the world finds itself back in 1938. The prestige and the power of the hegemon are not effective. The countries of the West are gradually emerging from this state of uncertainty however and are beginning to change their policies in the field of global and regional security. New concepts and instruments are implied by the remark of the deputy general secretary of NATO, Alexander Vershbow, that Russia is no longer considered a partner, but an adversary.⁶ The G7 nations are also developing a strategy to reduce dependence on Russian energy supplies and are prepared to support Ukraine in solving this particular problem.⁷

In this connection we can observe the West's growing interest in Ukraine and the former Soviet Union as a whole. A new

The revolutionary events in Ukraine have become a serious test of the post-Cold War system of international relations. They have many implications for regional and sub-regional processes and have brought about the collapse of the existing mechanisms of stability and security. On the one hand we can observe the lack of a conceptual approach and a suitable apparatus for re-establishing stability. On the other hand the crisis has led to intensive efforts on the part of the western states, foremost the USA, to consider new security concepts in the light of neo-imperial Russian aggression.

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The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church on the Maidan

The Churches and religious communities have played an important role in the protests on the Kyiv Maidan. From the outset, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) gave its backing to the demonstrators and voiced criticism of the violent response by the Yanukovich government.

The UGCC has also pressed for international condemnation of the regime and the Russian activities in Crimea. –R. Z.

The question concerning what role, if any, the Church(es) should play in Euromaidan has captured the attention of many intellectual and ecclesial circles. While discussing the responsibility of the Churches in the (trans)formation of civil society and the protection of fundamental human rights, some have even attempted to initiate “Maidan” theology. Others claim that participation in the Maidan movement is sinful.

The Maidan movement clearly became a turning point for Ukrainian society in general, and hence it profoundly penetrated Church life too. The revolution served as a litmus test – it revealed the moral face of people and institutions, and the Churches in particular. The Churches’ choice of the level of engagement during the revolution and the post-Maidan events made it rather clear what values and priorities particular Church leaders were pursuing.

On the Maidan

The continuous presence of priests, prayer and an unprecedented level of cooperation between various Christian denominations as well as non-Christian religious communities during the events on the Maidan shaped the protests as spiritual and moral events in addition to the prominent political element. A few days after the students gathered to demonstrate on the Maidan in Kyiv, on November 24, 2013 the UGCC’s Major Archbishop Svyatoslav Shevchuk of the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Kyiv-Halych expressed his solidarity with the participants of the uprising, who, he said, had actively demonstrated their civil position with regard to the future of their country. In Rome at the time, the head of the UGCC appealed to all citizens of Ukraine, to the political leaders and the government to pray and take every measure not to disturb a peaceful civil demonstration that revealed the true face of the Ukrainian nation.¹

From the earliest days of the demonstration, protesters were joined by the UGCC clergy, who came not only to manifest their choice for democracy, but also to pray with people and to attend to their spiritual needs. The first Divine Liturgy on the Maidan was celebrated on December 4, 2013 by two Redemptorist priests, Leonid Grygorenko and Eugen Zadorozhnyi. The Eucharist was held in a tent that became a makeshift chapel. Eventually two other “ecclesial tents” were set up, one by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (one of the country’s three (sometimes rival) Orthodox formations) and one by the Protestant Church. There, priests and pastors prayed for the deceased, took confession, spiritual and psychological consolation, as well as physical help. When the violence escalated, the UGCC Patriarchal Cathedral of the

Resurrection of Christ became a refuge for the protesters – a place for physical and spiritual nourishment and revival.

The religious presence on the main Independence Square in Kyiv was obvious. The clergy of the UGCC, the various Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant communities, as well as Jewish and Muslim clerics have come to where the people have asked them to be. As a UGCC Bishop of the Eparchy of France, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg Borys Gudziak stated, “The Church, following the basic insight expressed by Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, was trying to make sure that the pastors have the smell of the sheep.”²

The moral face of the UGCC

In the appeals and actions that followed, the UGCC repeatedly reaffirmed its place in Ukrainian society – the natural state of the Church is to be with its people.³ According to the Archbishop of the UGCC, the Church is an inseparable part of civil society and therefore takes its responsibility to be and act hand-in-hand with its people, who are standing up for their dignity and the protection of their rights. While addressing the faithful in his Christmas message, Archbishop Shevchuk made it explicitly clear that while the UGCC has no intention of supporting any political party, it nevertheless has a direct responsibility to protect its people from any physical violence and moral destruction.⁴ The revolution on the Maidan demonstrated the desire of Ukrainian society to build its future on the foundation of Christian values – justice, peace and the greater good, to build the society humankind deserves.

In early January the UGCC came under particular scrutiny from the government for its involvement in the protests. The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture sent a letter to the Major Archbishop of the UGCC, threatening to revoke the UGCC’s legal status, as its support of the Maidan movement was perceived as aiding the opposition.⁵ This was a very serious statement, especially considering that the UGCC was the largest body of resistance to Soviet rule, as a result of which from 1945 to 1989 it was declared illegal all its bishops were imprisoned. During a press conference on January 13, 2014, the Head of the UGCC restated that the Church was not a participant in the political process, but that it could not stand by when its faithful sought pastoral care: “The Church reserves the right to assess the situation in the country, if there are violations of human rights and of the principles of public morality flowing from God’s law and reflected in the social teaching of the Church.”⁶

On Friday, January 17, 2014, at the request of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine His Beatitude Svyatoslav met



Mass with priests of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church on the Kyiv Maidan.

with Ukraine's Minister of Culture Leonid Mykhaylovych Novokhatko, who clarified the letter by denying the planned "legal action" against the Church and even praised its "peace-keeping role." For his part, Archbishop Shevchuk said that he hoped the public authorities, particularly those whose task is to serve the people to ensure people's right to religious freedom in Ukraine, had the wisdom not to transfer the current socio-political crisis to the religious environment too. The parties recognized the last statements of the government on the inadmissibility of banning people from praying where they are physically located as being positive signals towards the religious community.

Addresses and Attempts to Mediate

On Sunday, January 22 weeks of peaceful protests that had gone unheard by the authorities turned into a wave of violence and bloodshed, as thousands of demonstrators clashed with riot police outside the government building in Kyiv. That day, on the Day of Unity and Freedom of Ukraine, the Head of the UGCC appealed to Ukrainians to "stop the bloodshed in the name of God", saying that "fear, aggression and anger" would be no help in determining Ukraine's future. Yet he also urged the Ukrainian authorities to "stop speak[ing] to the people the language of force and the use of repressive mechanisms," "to renounce violence and return to the path of peaceful resistance," "to take responsibility for the future" and "to listen to the people."⁷ In addition, Cardinal Lubomyr Huzar, the UGCC's retired leader, addressed the Maidan Square rally, accusing the government of violating "principles of humanity".

On the same day, the *All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations* (AUCCRO) held an emergency meeting in Kyiv, issuing an appeal to stop the violence and the bloodshed in Ukraine immediately. The representatives of churches and religious organizations strongly condemned the "murder, for which everyone involved is responsible before God. No one is allowed to transgress God's commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.'⁸ They also condemned the use of churches and religious organizations in political strategies and advocated the preservation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, strongly rejecting any idea of secession or separation from the country. The members of AUCCRO also requested an urgent meeting with the (former) President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich and the heads of the Opposition.

The meeting with Yanukovich took place on January 24, and was attended by all members of AUCCRO. Church leaders offered to act as "mediators and peacemakers," but also

made it clear where their own sympathies lay. "Our mission is spiritual, not political," stated Fr Ihor Yatsiv, spokesman for the UGCC. In particular, the Head of the UGCC restated his firm position that "we are, have been, and will be with the people." He also emphasized some of the painful aspects UGCC pastors had encountered: Long before the latest conflict, the UGCC leaders had criticised aspects of Yanukovich's rule, including his failure to hand back Church properties seized under Soviet rule: "Unfortunately, I did not hear a clear answer from the President about these concerns", added His Beatitude Svyatoslav.⁹

The Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv (UCU) accused Yanukovich's government of "sending hired thugs" to "fuel a bloody confrontation" and called for civil disobedience to bring about early elections. When in February the violence escalated, the UCU rectorate joined the student strike and issued a statement in which it affirmed that responsibility for the current escalation rested solely with the government. The UCU also announced a mode of self-management and self-discipline, claiming that "at this critical time for the state, universities have to demonstrate their ability not only to function effectively without guidance from above, but also to become a mainstay in the formation of a new framework for education and social life in general."¹⁰

Bishop Borys Gudziak, who also serves as President of the UCU, has insisted that the University's tough rhetoric has been justified. He commented on how numerous protesters were beaten and harassed and how many students of the UCU have been intimidated by calls from the police and the secret service. "One must realize that in a country where so many people were killed, so many people were sent to Siberia, so many people were spied on, a call from the secret service to the students' personal cell phone is a very invasive action that creates great trepidation and insecurity. [...] Because the system killed systematically, people are afraid of the system. This movement of the Maidan is actually a response to this fear."¹¹

Echoing Bishop Gudziak's thought, during the telethon on "Channel 5" Television on January 29, the Head of the UGCC stated that "What is happening today is no longer just Euromaidan, but the revolution of dignity in all spaces of the independent Ukraine." He claimed that the government did not understand that it was not just dissatisfaction with a small group of "radicals", or a conflict between the government and the opposition. The Maidan movement manifested the conflict between the government and the Ukrainian people. "Millions of people cannot be called extremists. [...] Millions of people are the citizen [sic] of Ukraine, who must be respected and listened to."¹²

International Outreach

On January 26, after the recitation of the Angelus in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis expressed his prayers for Ukraine and its people, especially those who had lost loved ones to violence. He also expressed the hope "that a constructive dialogue between the institutions and the civil society will develop, avoiding any recourse to violent actions; that the spirit of peace and the pursuit of the common good prevail in every heart."¹³ A few weeks later, on March 17, Pope Francis received the Major Archbishop of the UGCC in Rome, where Shevchuk thanked him for his support and solidarity during the mass demonstrations of the past few months.

While in Washington in early February, Archbishop Shevchuk met with the Vice President of the United States, Joe

Biden, members of the House and Senate, and representatives of the State Department to provide first-hand details of the crisis in Ukraine. He noted that the United States had promised under a trilateral agreement signed in 1994 to provide security assurances to Ukraine after it transferred all strategic warheads on its territory to Russia for elimination. At that point, Ukraine, as part of the former Soviet Union, had the third-largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. “We gave up our nuclear weapons in order to maintain our integrity, our territory and our independence”, Shevchuk said. The UGCC Archbishop also addressed the American people, appealing to them not to “stay apart [from] the situation in Ukraine because in this globalized world we all are united – people on Maidan are standing for our and your freedom, for our and your democracy, for our and your better future.”¹⁴ In March, Bishop Borys Gudziak, head of the department of foreign affairs of the UGCC, urged the European Union to step up sanctions against Russia to show it is serious about its founding values. After a week of meetings in Brussels with, among others, Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, Bishop Gudziak reiterated that while Ukrainians were dying for European values such as justice and the rule of law, Europe itself had yet to show it was committed to defending these values. In particular, he suggested that European countries could widen the sanctions on Russian officials: *“If a few hundred of these people were blocked from their western bank accounts, their very modest London flats and had travel bans I think they would have a sense that Europe is serious about what it stands for.”*¹⁵

The Crimea crisis

After the Crimean peninsula was officially annexed from Ukraine, tensions remained high in the Eastern and Southern part of the country. While the Pope and other Catholic bishops around the world called for prayers for peace, closer to the troubled region the rhetoric of the UGCC was far less irenic. His Beatitude Shevchuk has constantly called on all countries, including Russia, to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine. He issued an appeal to religious and political leaders in Europe to protect Ukraine’s sovereignty and urged his countrymen to prepare for the worst: “It is obvious that military intervention has already begun,” he said. “Our people and our country are currently in danger. We must stand up for our country, to be ready, if necessary, to sacrifice our lives in order to protect the sovereign, free, independent and unified state.”¹⁶

Meanwhile, the UGCC has reported that armed men have threatened Greek-Catholic priests, and asked them to leave the Crimean region. However, the priests refused to leave their congregations behind. Of the five Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests who had been serving the Crimean exarchate, three were kidnapped by pro-Russian forces in mid-March.¹⁷ They were all released, and are reportedly now safe. Yet, to escape threats of arrest and property seizures, the faithful of the UGCC are fleeing Crimea, as Fr Mykhailo Milchakovskiy, a parish rector and military chaplain from Kerch, Crimea reported to the Catholic News Service.¹⁸ The UGCC’s five communities in Crimea traditionally make up around 10 percent of the peninsula’s 1.96 million inhabitants, 58 percent of whom are ethnic Russians. Ukrainians make up 24 percent and mostly Muslim Tartars a further 12 percent.

Conclusion

The Maidan movement in Ukraine gave rise to a new civil society based on basic principles of the rule of law, human dignity and the protection of human rights. And although it will still

need many years to be educated, to develop and to reinforce itself, it has already become the society of a new nation transformed. Characteristically for Ukrainian society, the role of the Churches, in particular one of the UGCC, is pivotal in a re-discovery of the value of national and religious identity. The Maidan movement reinforced the notion that the Church is a particular form of the social life of Ukraine and thus bears the responsibility for solid and healthy social formation.

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- 4) http://ipress.ua/articles/rizdviane_poslannya_blazhennishogo_svyatoslava_37493.html.
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Konstantin Sigov

Ukraine's Freedom and the Light of the Maidan

Many of Ukraine's Orthodox Christians are greatly alarmed by the Moscow Patriarchate's reserved stance concerning Russian military aggression in Ukraine. At the same time they are encouraged by the experience of solidarity on the Maidan, which they describe using the Christian term *koinonia* or the Polish *Solidarność*. In the author's perspective, the experience of the Kyiv Maidan serves as an example to Europe in standing up for one's values. – R. Z.

Discourse on an "Orthodox civilisation" has become meaningless following the display of considerable military aggression of one nominally "Orthodox country" towards another. The annexation of Crimea by Russian military units has shown the pseudo-ecclesiastical ambiguity of talk of the "Russian world" for what it is. The silence of Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev), his failure to protest against the offensive against Ukraine, has clearly demonstrated the extent to which the Russian Orthodox Church is dependent on the Kremlin.

In Ukraine, on the other hand, the "Revolution of Dignity" has seen rather different Christian characteristics come to the fore:

- the pluralism of Christian communities and the striving for independence from the state,
- a democratic attitude and the promotion of freedom of faith among all members of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations: Christians of all confessions, Jews and Muslims who are able to find a common position concerning acute problems,
- the recognition of the decisive role of civil society and solidarity on the basis of the recently updated biblical Ten Commandments.

Striving to overcome injustice, violence and deceit has unified millions of people on the Kyiv Maidan and in other cities of Ukraine. The nature of this movement is not defined along ethnic, confessional or linguistic lines, rather it is a civil, political and ethical movement.

The light of the Maidan and Bonhoeffer's question

In Ukraine the focus is not on competition between Church hierarchies but on overcoming violence in all its forms. Against this background, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reflections are of greater relevance than political scientists' discussions of "civilisations". As in the Second World War, at the deepest point of crisis it has become a matter of selecting "plain, simple, honest" people. The radical nature of the choice between truth and lies turns our attention to Bonhoeffer's words: "We have been the silent witnesses of evil deeds, we know every trick in the book, we have learnt the art of disguise and speaking equivocally, experience has taught us to be distrustful of people and not to tell the truth or speak to them plainly, unbearable conflicts have seen us become weary or perhaps even cynical – are we still of any use? It is not geniuses, cynics, misanthropists or wily tacticians that we will need, but plain, simple, honest people. Will our inner powers of resistance be strong enough to protect us from that

which is forced upon us, and will the candour with which we judge ourselves have remained rigorous enough for us to find our way back to the path of simplicity and honesty?"¹

Resistance to the Kremlin's propaganda, which has permeated all areas of culture, is a question of life and death for the independent voices of the "other Russia" opposing Putin. The outstanding Russian philosopher Olga Sedakova writes in her text "Russian Society in the Light of the Maidan": "The light of the Maidan is the light of solidarity. We have read reports of wondrous manifestations of this solidarity on the Maidan. This solidarity extends beyond all societal and national borders."²

A new empathy

Foreigners who have visited the Maidan have noted the conspicuous and decisive differences between the protesters: left and right, rich and poor, religious and non-religious, young and old found ways to work together on both the large and the small scale. This phenomenon can be only partly explained by the factor of a "common enemy" and the common experience of danger. The crisis has awoken in people a deep sense of empathy previously inconceivable for people playing different social roles to one another. The shock of the present tragedy in our city has liberated many people from their usual numbness towards each other and forced them to remove their acquired "headphones" of social alienation.

The "solidarity of the shaken" of which the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka spoke (1907–1977) has become just as tangible as the hot tea and bread and butter with which hundreds of strangers provided each other with warmth in a frosty December on Independence Square. It is not exaggerating to say that men and women helped each other overcome their fear of death; these people made a decision to risk their lives for freedom if it came down to it. The square was permeated by the mysticism of the everyday communion of students and grandmothers, doctors and construction workers, farmers from various regions of Ukraine and teachers from the capital, veterans of the Afghan war and young pacifists, Orthodox Jews, Orthodox priests and liberal journalists.

There is no hackneyed term for this experience of an empathetic community. Rather, the Christian expression borrowed from the Greek *koinonia*, Latin *communio*, seems most appropriate. It is not just loan words, but also analogies from other historical experiences that suddenly open up paths to understanding other people, as Marci Shore, Professor of History at Yale, writes: "The moment when the intellectuals and the workers, the fathers and the sons unite is necessarily ephemeral – yet it is extraordinary nonetheless. This was the miracle

of Solidarity in Poland. And it is something that most people will never experience in their lifetimes.”³

Kyiv and *koinonia*

The openness of Kyiv tradition was expressed by a Kyiv metropolitan in the nineteenth century: “The walls that divide us do not reach to heaven”. We use this bold aphorism as a “truism” with which to describe the universality of the “Kyiv topos”.

At an international symposium on “Ukrainian Orthodoxy in the World Family of the Orthodox Churches”, a conference organised by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and attended by all four Ukrainian churches with the Byzantine Rite (UOC-MP, UOC-KP, UAOC and UGCC), Protopope Andrei Dudchenko, editor of the website “Kyiv Rus”, reminded the audience of the “Kyiv idea”.⁴ In September 2009 Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) gave his speech “Remembering the New Jerusalem: the Kyiv Tradition”, in which he spoke of the “Kyiv idea”. This ecumenical vision will be taken up again in the forthcoming “Assumption Day Readings” that have been held in Kyiv with international participants for the last thirteen years. The fourteenth meeting of this theological forum will take place in September, with the theme “Community–communion–koinonia: Sources, Paths of Reflection and Realisation”, and is thus of greater relevance than ever for our people, both Ukrainian and Russian. The forum’s speeches and debates will be dedicated to overcoming various forms of alienation and division.

Liberation from “political Orthodoxy”

Kyiv is presently developing a critical analysis and indictment of “political Orthodoxy”, the slogans of which are manipulating the terrorists in the east of the country in lamentable fashion. The UOC-MP has long been trying to counter the ideologisation that exists within its ranks and clearly condemned the provocative pro-Soviet movement at its episcopal assembly in 2007: “We condemn the so-called ‘political Orthodoxy’ that seeks to smuggle political slogans into the ecclesiastical sphere, since this is at odds with Christ’s message”.⁵ This was a unique act: the Church in the post-Soviet space distanced itself from political ideology.

The way the faithful of the UOC-MP are increasingly distancing themselves from Moscow makes them even more attentive to the judgement of Andrei Subov, Professor of Philosophy at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations: “Orthodox Christians must know who the lord of deceit is. Christ is not to be found where there are lies. He Himself said that Satan is the lord of lies. And the Lord is the King of Truth. See what is going on around you. Nothing but a lie! It is said that on 27 February some young people turned up in Crimea, armed to the teeth and without insignia, but that the Russian army was not in Crimea and that it was a kind of local act of self defence. Everyone knows that these are our special units, as the cars had Russian number plates, and it is clear from these number plates that these cars were involved in the parade in Moscow; but at the highest level of government they say that there are no Russian armies there. A lie? Yes, a lie.”⁶

Today Ukrainians attach particular importance to the words of Paul the Apostle: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty” (2 Cor 3:17). Hence we consider the comment of Subov, one of the authors of the “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church” to be particularly significant: “If we renounce freedom for an ideology or a leader, then we leave for ever the spirit



Vitalii Klichko in discussion with monks of the UOC-MP on Hrushevskii Street in Kyiv.
Foto: Konstantin Sigov

of the Lord. And that has extremely tragic consequences for a Christian.”

“Nothing about us without us”

Kyiv’s liberation fills some with fear, others with hope. The motif of hope was recently expressed by a trumpeter in the centre of St. Petersburg who suddenly, to the great surprise of passers-by, began to play the Ukrainian national anthem. His audience shouted “Bravo!” – in this case a synonym for “Glory to Ukraine!” This is why in the offices of the Kremlin there is fear of a Moscow Maidan in solidarity with that in Kyiv.

In Crimea the legal foundations of the entire system of international treaties at the very basis of post-war Europe have been ridden over roughshod.⁷ The military aggression in Eastern Europe is accompanied by a cynical campaign of disinformation in Western Europe in which the Kremlin shies away from nothing.

It would be worth revisiting the pages of George Orwell’s 1984, in which he analyses the pseudo-language of “Newspeak”. An example of this pseudo-language is the inscription on the gable of the Ministry for Truth: “War is Peace”. Another example of this language is today’s euphemism “federalisation of Ukraine”, since this in fact means the further occupation of the territory of a sovereign state in the heart of Europe. The refusal to speak this language was summed up by US secretary of state John Kerry in Paris on 31 March: “This principle is clear: No decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine”. The wording brings up to date the slogan of the Polish *Solidarność* movement “Nic o nas bez nas!” (“Nothing about us without us!”). To what extent would Germany, France, Italy and Sweden heed these words?

Kyiv is turning to every European capital with an appeal for a philosophy of community. As Martin Buber demonstrates in his book *Ich und Du* (1923), the language of a conversation between people cannot be compared to one about inanimate objects in which “I” speak “about something” that is absent. It is such impersonal speech that Putin’s lobby is demanding in many countries. This propaganda opens up the basest of instincts, the power of the “strong” over the “weak”. It ignores our and your right to a dignified life and commands us to believe that the “man is a wolf to man”. This nihilistic perspective on human life is not always obvious. It prefers to lurk behind the rhetoric of economic egoism. But the lie spreads through the air that we breath, it is an almost imperceptible drug of indifference towards inhumane actions. But this tempting illusion is like the woods through which Dante passes in the *Divine Comedy*.



A cross is held over the Kyiv Maidan.

Between fear and hope

The treacherous path Dante describes is the path trodden by today's Ukrainians on the way to democracy. In view of recent political development, Dante's depiction of the encounter with the wolf is rather apt:

[...] She with such fear
O'erwhelmed me, at the sight of her appall'd
That of the height all hope I lost. [...]
[Canto I, 48–50, trans. Henry F. Cary]

Allow me to illustrate the struggle between fear and hope through two examples: After the first deaths on Grushevskii Street on 20 February monks of the UOC-MP visited the site of their own volition. This street thus became a special place of encounter for people of faith and those who no longer believed in anything. Quite unexpectedly I met the priests Mikola Danilevych and Georgii Kovalenko there and without prior arrangement we relieved the two monks Gavriil and Efremii, who were at risk from hypothermia from standing in the cold for so long. I invited them to warm themselves in a nearby bookshop, where the icicles on their beards melted. In the meantime, we stood in their place between a wall of people with shields and people on top of burning buses. We are reminded of thoughts of radical solidarity: "When we think of people – of people who are not in our Church, who stand outside, who have taken against the Church because the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles (Rom 2:24), then we can understand how far we should go, and how great the risk of our solidarity should be. Above all we should stand in solidarity with Christ, and through Him with all people to the very end, until life and death are no more."⁸ We discussed the result of this encounter, these new possibilities, at this very site with Vitalii Klichko, who has now been elected mayor of Kyiv. Its importance can be seen in photographs, in pictures and in people's faces.

A second example: in February the whole world saw the pictures of the activist who was stripped naked and ridiculed by a *Berkut* soldier. The horror of these pictures woke many from our sleep of indifference. The captive is free again, he is called Mikhail Gavriilyuk. How has he overcome not just his fear, but also his "natural" lust for revenge? He explains: "It says in the Bible that one must forgive his enemies. I have already forgiven mine. I will not take them to court. The judgement of the Lord awaits them, and that can be worse than earthly judgement. And all of these lads have children. I do not want them to grow up as orphans."

How do we explain the logic of such behaviour to those who are being provoked into seeking revenge by the Russian mass media (for the "insult" to the USSR)? To show their resistance to this revanchist propaganda, on 15 March 5,000 people marched through the centre of Moscow to demonstrate against the Russian army's occupation of Crimea. These people were not frightened of losing their jobs for political reasons. (Which has already happened.) They overcame their fear and the unprecedented surge of lies flooding Russian television stations and the press. Resistance to the madness of war propaganda, resistance to the virus of lies and fear – that is the appeal of the best voices among the Russian intelligentsia to the citizens of Europe and its leaders. On 13 April, Palm Sunday – the day of the Lord's procession into Jerusalem – they organised their own "march of truth" in Moscow.

Like-minded people in the "other Europe" help us to liberate ourselves from the distortion of the meaning of the revolutions of 1989–1991 and 2014. Then as now the dynamic of hope and liberation was confronted with the idol of "imperial territory". On the basis of this ideal we are receiving the threat of new victims and the label of traitors to the empire. The concept of "territory" with terrorist intimidation itself points to the characteristics of the "empire of terror". In this context the French historian Alain Besançon cites the Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran: "We are dealing with a phenomenon without precedent in the whole of history. Russia has justified its expansionist policy through its size. If I am so big, why shouldn't I grow bigger? That is the implicit paradox of both its claims and its silence. By transforming endless expanses into a political category, it creates a turn in the classical conception of imperialism by awakening in the world hopes that were too great not to end in disappointment".⁹ The curious disproportion of such a claim is frightening for even the bravest of people. We should remember Dante's bewilderment faced with responsibility beyond human capability and the doubts with which he turned to Virgil:

But I, why should I there presume? or who
Permits it? not Æneas I, nor Paul.
Myself I deem not worthy, and none else
Will deem me.[...]
[Canto II, 33–6]

The Maidan generation

Dante shared such doubts with his friend: "Who can risk betting on me? Who has the magnanimity to bet on a loser such as me? That is impossible." These words speak for my country from the heart. Far too much hangs in the balance for my country. A proper answer to our questions is given by the Dante specialist Franco Nembrini: "The greatness of our friendship is the degree to which we are prepared to rely on the other's will, to tell him 'You can do it'. Our century, our generation of young people suffers from the sickness [...] of thinking 'I can't'.¹⁰"

On the Kyiv Maidan a key role was played by the generation of young people who have decided against fear and for hope: "We can do it!" Their resolve helped the older generations overcome their doubts and fears. The question of signing the EU Association Agreement and the ensuing crisis has led to an unprecedented catharsis in Ukraine, and Ukraine can thus become the catalyst for transformations in other European countries. And hence Dante is not the author of a dusty classic, but our contemporary and the witness to the possibility of relief:

Then was a little respite to the fear,
That in my heart's recesses deep had lain
All of that night, so pitifully past:
[Canto I, 18–20]



A priest on the Maidan.

I would particularly like to highlight the first peaceful stage of resistance. It is our true intellectual treasure, and it should be hidden by the impressions of dramatic events that would follow: the meetings, the open university on the Maidan, the songs and prayers, the enormous amount of voluntary work. Everyone brought to the Maidan whatever they could: food, warm clothes, medicine, money, firewood, their energy and time. People from all walks of life and age groups acted as chauffeurs. Voluntary translators translated texts about the Maidan and Ukraine from all sorts of languages for free. People looked after guests and journalists in a variety of languages. Three months of peaceful experience of the most intensive solidarity – that is our golden resource.

Ukrainians are defending the civil society and human dignity that the post-Soviet authorities are brutally persecuting. “For our and your freedom” – the sense of this old formula has come alive in greetings of Ukrainians brave citizens of Belarus and Russia. But the struggle for freedom transcends the boundaries of Eastern Europe. We are faced with the endangering of the underlying values of European culture as a whole.

The stakes

The people of Eastern Ukraine find themselves on the border of resistance to brutality. Attempts are being made to prove to them that they cannot be heard, that they are meaningless and without strength, that the Europe they are risking their lives for no longer exists and that its renaissance is not coming. But to arrest and beat up people in Ukraine is to injure the body of Europe. The witnesses to this suffering and this life are taking to the squares of large and small towns throughout Ukraine today. They are not frightened to show their solidarity with the Kyiv Maidan, they are not frightened of beatings and arrests. And they dare to believe that people in Berlin, Rome and Zurich will hear them. That their voice will not be drowned out by the loudspeakers of Putin’s propaganda.

This is the point, these are the stakes of Kyiv’s present existence. It is difficult to bet on Kyiv and win. But this is also a chance for a new solidarity in Europe. It is all about a clear rejection of deceit, violence and a game without rules. The people on the Maidan are fighting for the right to human speech and the rules of the logos. What would these European values be without them? Sceptical comments about “Brussels

bureaucrats” are not an alibi for inactivity on the part of the citizens of Europe. It is vital to reflect on the events of the Maidan. Let us remember the reflections of the best European authors who have resisted fear. We have felt their relevance so keenly, as if Blaise Pascal had written his “Provincial Letters” (1657) just last night. He addresses it to us and to you, and it is time we learned it by heart:

It is a strange and tedious war when violence attempts to vanquish truth. All the efforts of violence cannot weaken truth, and only serve to give it fresh vigour. All the lights of truth cannot arrest violence, and only serve to exasperate it. When force meets force, the weaker must succumb to the stronger; when argument is opposed to argument, the solid and the convincing triumphs over the empty and the false.¹¹

In order to convince readers of all this, it only remains for me to invite them to Kyiv that they might distinguish, on the basis of their own experience, between reality and illusion. Historians will pay particular attention to the eye witness accounts of those who visited and described Ukraine in 2014.

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Konstantin Sigov, Director of the European Research Centre and the publishing house *Duch i Litera* (Spirit and Letter) at the National University of the Mohyla Academy in Kyiv.

Regula Spalinger Speaks with Ella Polyakova and Olga Alekseyeva

Human Rights Activists Under New Pressures

The “Mothers of Soldiers of St. Petersburg” are campaigning on behalf of national service recruits in the Russian army whose human rights have been violated. In a discussion with G2W’s project leader Regula Spalinger, the director of “Mothers of Soldiers of St. Petersburg”, Ella Polyakova, reports on her latest visit to eastern Ukraine and the situation facing Russian soldiers on the Ukrainian border. Her colleague Olga Alekseyeva highlights the pressure the Kremlin’s internal policies are placing on Russian NGOs: the Mothers of Soldiers received another visit from the authorities in May – S. K.

G2W: You have recently returned from eastern Ukraine, from Donetsk. What was the situation on the ground?

Ella Polyakova: In mid-April members of a working party of the Russian President’s Human Rights Council went on a mission to Ukraine to promote peace and protect human rights. This delegation comprised Maksim Shevchenko (a journalist), Elisaveta Hlinka (a doctor specialising in palliative care) and myself. I flew to Donetsk with Elisaveta Hlinka, where we met Alexander Bukalov, the chairman of the regional human rights organisation “Donetsk Memorial”, who told us what was going on in the city. Together with him we had a meeting with the mayor of Donetsk, Alexander Lukyanchenko, and his press officer. They explained to us the difficulties they were having initiating a dialogue with the rebels who had taken over the 11-story regional government headquarters. The building has been barricaded with bricks and tyres.

Alexander Bukalov and I visited the barricades. The locals are frightened to approach the building because of the aggressive behaviour of the people there, especially as they are wearing masks and are armed with clubs and sticks. We listened to several of their spokespersons from in front of the entrance. They called for an armed revolt. We then met with Mariana Katarova, the leader of the UN observational mission to eastern Ukraine. I must add that there is a great deal of disinformation. At the time the rebels had taken over the television station and the police headquarters with its entire weapons store. I was astonished how easy it had been for them to take them over – the impression is that it must have been agreed in advance. We were able to talk to the [self-proclaimed, R. S.] “President of the People’s Republic of Donetsk”, Denis Pushilin, and his “ministers”. They explained how they wanted to develop and protect the region’s “Russian world”, and that they had everything they needed to do so. They are asking Russia for support. Their demands did not seem very convincing to me, however.

Currently Russian troops are stationed on the border with Ukraine. What is the situation like for those soldiers with regard to human rights?

The troops on the Ukrainian border have been living in tents for two months. According to Russian law, since 2009 it has been possible to send Russian recruits to areas beyond the borders of the Russian Federation [presidential decree following the war with Georgia in 2008, R. S.]. In response to my suggestion of visiting these bases, Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu responded that would not be “effective”, since these troops would be “rotated”. So far we have received only a few calls to our hotline from the troops stationed on the border. And these have been to make the usual complaints: insufficient medical assistance, or none at all. The hotline of our partner organisation “Citizens and Army” has received some calls from worried mothers to say that their sons were ill and not receiving the necessary medical attention.

This Easter, Russian human rights organisations signed an agreement with Minister of Defence Shoigu. Can you tell us more about it?

Yes, Defence Minister Shoigu and the Chairman of the President’s Human Rights Council, Mikhail Fedotov, signed an agreement to assist each other. I took part in the meeting together with my colleagues. After the official meeting we discussed the problems facing the armed forces. I spoke of the need to educate our citizens in uniform about human rights. I also gave our defence minister our publications, including the “black book” and the latest report of our organisations. Army cadre members then invited us to organise a roundtable on the health problems of recruits and servicemen. The roundtable took place on 22 May in the “House of Officers” in St. Petersburg and was attended by military doctors.

Ella Polyakova holds a seminar on human rights in the rooms of “Mothers of Soldiers of St. Petersburg”.



Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu and Mikhail Fedotov sign an agreement.



The Theatre Group Forum is a new initiative of the Mothers of Soldiers.



The independent Russian media have come under increasing pressure since the Ukraine crisis. How do you keep abreast of current developments?

The television station *Dozhd*, the radio station *Echo Moskvy* (“Moscow’s Echo”), the internet, twitter and facebook are certainly reliable sources. And of course there are the reports of individuals and what I have seen for myself on the ground.

What are the most pressing problems with which national service recruits come to your organisation?

It is almost always the same problems – there is no medical assistance, soldiers or recruits are ridiculed, kept as slaves or hired out illegally, that is, the soldiers have to do heavy work for their commanding officers without reward or have to do work that is not part of their remit. A widespread problem is fear, and the belief that nothing can be changed.

In recent months you have held a new series of seminars. How did that come about and what have been your initial experiences?

Olga Alekseyeva: Our organisation is always looking for new ways to make people more familiar with the value system of human rights. In April 2014 we began a pilot project of webinars (online seminars) on human rights in cooperation with the Moscow Helsinki Group. The pilot series on the attested rights of those liable to be enlisted and members of the army met with great public interest. This format also allows us to reach a larger audience, including participants from the provinces who approach our organisation but who are not able to take part in our courses in person because of the large distances involved. Interest is increasing more and more. Within one month we received enough money to put on the next webinar series.

Along with the webinars we have also recently begun to offer theatre evenings: solutions for difficult situations in the lives of recruits are developed through dramatic scenes. The scenes are acted out by the Forum Theatre group, and the audience plays an active part in suggesting solutions through discussion and interrupting the scenes.

Over the last year over 600 not-for-profit organisations in Russia have been audited in connection with the new NGO law. What have been the consequences of this wave of checks for the Mothers of Soldiers of St. Petersburg?

For the whole year our organisation was subjected to various investigations, from the Ministry of Justice to the “E” Centre for combating extremists. The official reason given for the investigation was an accusation levelled at us by the military commissar of St. Petersburg, Sergei Kachkovski. After the Ministry of Justice, which found no signs of a “foreign agent” in our activities, came the investigators from the Anti-Extremist Centre. Time and again the state prosecutors demanded we submit

some document or other. All these demands were connected to the accusations made by the military commissar.

We are currently undergoing a second wave of investigations: in early March we received a visit from the St. Petersburg prosecutors and from the Ministry of Justice, who began another investigation of our activities. The questioning took an entire day. We answered the questions together with the lawyer Alexandra Hudimenko and our lawyers. According to the prosecutors, a further charge had been levelled at us; this time we were accused of activities against the state and discrediting military service with the assistance of financial backing from the West. Obviously our social media presence was also under scrutiny. Following this last investigation, several citizens approached the St. Petersburg prosecutors to request that the reasons for the investigation be made public. But to this day there has been no official reply to these complaints.

The various investigations have taken up a lot of our working hours and are distracting our colleagues from our actual work. We also need extra funds for the enormous amount of documents we have had to reproduce. For example, in the course of the various investigations we have had to provide copies of all records since 2010.

Can the NGOs in Russia support each other in defending themselves through legal channels against the arbitrary decisions of the authorities?

Yes, the NGOs can support each other. For example, in St. Petersburg the “Coalition of NGOs” has been formed, which unites a whole series of NGOs. In working meetings the current situation is discussed and we exchange news concerning the investigation of individual organisations. We also support each other in court and develop common solutions. The lawyers of the various organisations are privy to the information concerning the cases of other NGOs.

I remain of the opinion that the so-called “Foreign Agent Law” cannot be reconciled with human rights, the law of associations and international standards for cooperation between NGOs and governments. Transparency allows citizens to keep a check on the state and to reduce corruption and other forms of abuse of office. The NGO “Mothers of Soldiers of St. Petersburg” shares the modern norm of the openness of the state and promotes openness and transparency with the aim of developing the values of human rights and allowing them to flourish. Our organisation always undergoes voluntary revision. We also submit all our reports to the Ministry of Justice on time and publish our financial reports on our website. We are transparent for society. But can the same be said of the Russian state?

You can support the work of the “Mothers of Soldiers of St. Petersburg” with a donation via the G2W Institute account (IBAN CH22 0900 0000 8001 51780), labelling the transaction “Soldatenmütter”.

Soldiers who had to leave their units after their lives and health were placed in danger file charges.



Ella Polyakova in discussion with the leaders of a military unit in the presence of journalists.



A delegation of the Human Rights Commission places flowers on the Second World War memorial in Abakan.



The Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN)

The **ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET (ASCN)** is a programme aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus. Those involved in the programme believe that their participation encourages constructive debate on society, which in turn contributes to the region's transformation process. The programme's different activities foster the emergence of a new generation of talented scholars in the South Caucasus. Promising junior researchers receive support through research projects, capacity-building trainings and scholarships. The programme emphasises the advancement of individuals. Emphasis is also placed on international networking, thus promoting sustained cooperation among scholars based in the South Caucasus and those based in Switzerland.

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