

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE END OF POST-SOVIET UKRAINE: MEANINGS AND OUTCOMES OF THE REVOLUTION OF 2013–14¹

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Preface

Was the crisis in Ukraine in 2013–14 a new geopolitical battle between “East” and “West”? Or was it the end of post-Soviet Ukraine? The main assumption of the present study is that the recent events in Ukraine were the result of the unfinished transformations and modernisations of this post-Soviet state.

There are two dimensions of possible discussion: first, from geopolitical perspective, Ukraine as a battleground between Russia and the Western world. Much of the coverage portrayed the 2013–14 Ukrainian revolution as a resurgence of the Cold War—a battle between East and West in which the European-leaning Ukrainians sought to turn away from Russia and build a new alliance with the EU. The second is the Ukrainian “Euromaidan,” which constitutes the end of post-Soviet transformations and is the natural protest of Ukrainians against the authoritarian rule of President Victor Yanukovich.

Why did Ukrainians take to the streets? How can we understand the seemingly extreme behaviour among the normally calm and peaceful Ukrainian citizens? What are the main differences between the “Euromaidan” in 2013–14 and previous protests, such as the Orange Revolution in 2004?

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This study also focuses on the differences between Ukrainian transformations and Central European countries. Why have some post-Communist countries experienced a successful consolidation of political democracy while others have not?

The narrative of two Ukraines—the existence of two separate cultural-political communities within one Ukrainian state—has become popular in recent years. Can this “Myth of two Ukraines” explain the complicated Ukrainian situation?

Unfinished Transformations: From Independence towards a “Grey Zone”

The collapse of the Soviet Union was widely perceived as an ideological triumph of democracy over authoritarianism. As the third wave of democratisations spread to Eastern Europe, democracy promoters extended this model as a universal paradigm for understanding democratisation.² But reality is no longer conforming to this model. Many regimes in the post-Soviet area have either remained hybrid or moved in an authoritarian direction. As mentioned by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “the collapse of one kind of authoritarianism yielded not democracy but a new form of nondemocratic rule.”³ Today, the “transition paradigm” cannot sufficiently explain the specifics of political and economic developments in Eastern Europe.⁴ We need to develop another analytic framework to conceptualise and respond to the ongoing political events in post-Soviet states.

Ukrainian regimes, especially under the rules of Presidents Leonid Kuchma and Victor Yanukovych, occupy a sort of “intermediate zone” between democracy and dictatorship with some shifts from one edge to another in different periods of the country’s history.

Ukraine shifted from a regime in transition in the early 1990s to a hybrid regime with a growing concentration of power in the hands of president Leonid Kuchma in the late 1990s, and then made a renewed shift towards a potentially democratic regime in 2004 during the so-called “Orange Revolution,” which initially remained unconsolidated and

² S. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

³ S. Levitsky, L. A. Way, “Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2) (2002): 63.

⁴ T. Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (1) (2002): 5.

demonstrated the growing authoritarian tendency under the presidency of Victor Yanukovych.

From the very beginning, the Ukrainian transition from Communism entailed a mixture of old and new elements of the system rather than a simple replacement of the old by the new. As a result, like many other post-Soviet countries, rather than move closer to democracy Ukraine went from dictatorship to a “gray area” that is quite comfortable for authoritarian rulers.⁵

Challenging aspects for analysing transition as well as state-building in the post-Communist region are the speed and degree of change. In contrast to previous democratisation examples, where the transition constitutes a passage to democracy and indeed a change of political regime without fundamentally calling the economic system into question, in the former socialist states change of both the political and the economic systems has to be accomplished simultaneously.

Taras Kuzio mentioned the quadruple nature of transition in the former USSR. This quadruple transition included democratisation, marketisation, state institution, and civic nation building. Ukraine gained its independence with the unenviable task of simultaneously undertaking an unprecedented array of essential tasks, such as the political transformation of the state, socio-economic restructuring, and the redefinition of national identity within the context of the overarching project of state formation.⁶

Its Soviet past also strongly influences the nature of the political and social changes in Ukraine. According to the Polish scholars Walenty Baluk and Ryszard Herbut, the post-Soviet countries are still in the “shadow” of the Communist past. There are a few manifestations of this heritage that allow us to consider that the political life in this area is still managed by authoritarian methods. First is the weakness of the rule of law is visible. The ruling party uses state institutions to maintain its position and reduce the possibilities for opposition. Second is a poorly developed market economy with a concentration of resources in the hands of the state and oligarchs who are close to the ruling party. Big businesses, linked with the state institutions (and politicians), are not interested in the introduction of real market reforms. Third is a form of self-organisation of society that

⁵ M. Riabchuk, *Ukrainskaya postkomunisticheskaya transformaciya*, <http://polit.ua/lectures/2010/06/02/rjabchuk.html> (accessed March 2, 2011).

⁶ T. Kuzio, “The National Factor in Ukraine’s Quadruple Transition,” *Contemporary Politics* 6 (2) (2000): 146.

practically does not exist, and political parties strongly depend on sponsors.⁷

The Ukrainian scholar Mykola Riabchuk, following the concept of Keith Darden,⁸ described the Ukrainian situation under the rule of Kuchma as a transition from a “dysfunctional” state to a “blackmail” state. Of course, the Orange Revolution changed this to some extent, but the main features of this “blackmail” state became more and more visible again, especially after 2010 under the presidency of Victor Yanukovych.

Riabchuk supposes that blackmail as an instrument of state control consists of three fundamental elements. First, “vice and corruption are tolerated by the authorities, and even encouraged.” The authorities suppose that people who are corrupt are easy to control. Second is the extensive state surveillance, “where corruption is tolerated, but at the same time it is very strictly supervised.” Ukraine inherited very strong institutions of surveillance from the Soviet Union, for “these institutions are stronger than the KGB was,” and when compliance with state directives is required, the information of illegal activities is used to blackmail the elite. The third element of the blackmail state is the selective application of the law. “Laws are not applied to regime loyalists, or are applied very mildly. But against opponents, they are applied in the harshest way possible.”⁹

The dynamics of post-Communist political change in Ukraine have been shaped by several major variables. Here, we will evaluate the four main factors that are, in our opinion, the most influential on the Ukrainian path from Communism and create the specifics of the current political system in Ukraine. These four factors are:

- The problem of institutional weakness
- The role of national elites
- The role of international factors
- The crisis of values and the “problematic” building of Ukrainian national identities

⁷ R. Herbut, W. Baluk (eds.), *Transformacja systemów politycznych państw obszaru byłego Związku Radzieckiego* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2010), 11.

⁸ K. Darden, “The Integrity of Corrupt States: Graft as an Informal State Institution,” *Politics Society* 36 (35) (2008): 35–60.

⁹ M. Riabchuk, “‘Dysfunctional’ State to ‘Blackmail’ State: Paradoxes of the Post-Soviet Transition in Ukraine, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=11630> (accessed May 15, 2013).

The Problem of Institutional Weakness

The key factor that has become increasingly apparent in the success or failure of democratisation is the legacy of the previous regime type and its effect on society and political systems. As stressed by Dryzek and Holmes, “post-Communist societies often lack not only the civil society ... but also the institutions, civic traditions, and culture of compromise that can make liberal democracy work, and can avoid a slide into political chaos and/or dictatorship.”¹⁰ Post-Soviet transition countries usually suffer from a very low level of functionality of state institutions that did not provide solutions for the problems disturbing the society.

The need for the development of strong and stable political institutions and an effective state is a prerequisite for economic reform. The problem in many transitional countries is that state institution building is left to “spontaneous” processes, after which an informal institutionalisation fills the systemic vacuum. Initial state-building in many former Soviet Union republics coincided with economic crisis, the deep disorientation of society, and needs to establish a new legitimate government. The simultaneity of such challenges deepened and extended the crisis.

The Role of National Elites

For the development of democracy the behaviour of the actors involved in the transition is increasingly important. In the Soviet Union, it was the ruling elites who initiated and sustained the changes and managed the transition process. The transformation of the Soviet economy into a market capitalist system in the former USSR was a reaction by the Soviet elite to emerging threats to their accumulated privileges and power in the late 1980s. Independent Ukraine emerged in 1991, largely as a result of political compromise and cooperation between the reformists, the pro-independence part of the local Communist nomenclatures, and the national opposition movement, which gained some strength during *perestroika* but was never comparable with the strong oppositional movements in CEE.¹¹

¹⁰ J. S. Dryzek, L. T. Holmes, *Post-Communist Democratization: Political Discourses Across Thirteen Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

¹¹ M. Riabchuk, “The European Neighbourhood Policy and Beyond: Facilitating the Free Movement of People within the Framework of EU–Ukraine ‘Post-revolutionary’ Relations” (Centre for European Policy Studies, 2006), http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002874/01/Facilitating_the_Free_Movement_of_Peopl

When the opposition gained influence during this period of independence it remained a minority, while parts of the old *nomenklatura* class transformed themselves into the new ruling class of independent Ukraine.¹²

During the transition play, the nomenclature was well-prepared for the takeover of democratic power. It became clear that the post-Soviet nomenclature-turned-oligarchy had no vested interest in democratisation and Westernisation, as this was likely to undermine its dominance over the country's politics and economy.

The oligarchic system in Ukraine began to form immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but was finally established in the second half of the 1990s during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma.¹³ In the oligarchic system, political power is first of all a means of generating and maximising economical influence and benefits. According to Pawel Wolowski, the deep-rooted “symbiosis” of political authority and business is an important feature of the Ukrainian political system and one of the main causes of its weakness. A vast majority of business representatives and large parts of the political elite have a vested interest in preserving the existing rules of the game.¹⁴ As Riabchuk mentioned: “At home, the oligarchic regime employed the ‘transition’ rhetoric and imitated all sorts of reforms and democratic procedures, while on the international level the regime had talked up Ukraine’s ‘European choice’ and ‘Euro-Atlantic integration’.”¹⁵

Influence of International Factors

One of the most important factors that influenced the transformation process was the international environment, including geopolitical, institutional, and economic elements. The prospects for EU integration could be seen as one of the most-important factors for furthering

e_within_the_Framework_of_EU__8211_Ukraine.pdf (accessed October 22, 2010).

¹² V. Fritz, *State-Building: A Comparative Study of Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), 111.

¹³ S. Matuszak, *The Oligarchic Democracy: The Influence of Business Groups on Ukrainian Politics* (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, no. 42, September 2012).

¹⁴ P. Wolowski, “Ukrainian Politics after the Orange Revolution—How Far from Democratic Consolidation?” in S. Fischer (ed.), *Ukraine: Quo Vadis? Chaillot Paper* 108 (EU Institute for Security Studies, 2008), 50.

¹⁵ M. Riabchuk, *The European Neighbourhood Policy and Beyond*, 9.

democratisation in the post-Communist region. Vachudova argues that the relationship between the EU and future members from CEE countries helped change the domestic balance of power in illiberal states against rent-seeking elites, undermining the strength of their domestic power bases.¹⁶

Therefore, another important feature of transformation in post-Soviet Ukraine, compared with CEE countries, is the fundamentally different role of international factors. The European Union had a huge positive impact on the development of CEE countries by supporting their movement toward democracy and free markets. The strong desire to “return to Europe” urged the newly democratically elected governments in the CEE countries to continue reformation and take immediate actions for closer cooperation with the EU with the aim of future membership.

The core of Western policy towards Russia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet states was an effort to prevent the restoration of Communism in any form in those countries. Such phenomena as oligarchy, corruption, favouritism, and “family” privatisation were accepted as a price for the destruction of the Communist system. Thus, the international factor had a different impact in relation to Russia, Ukraine, and other nations in the 1990s. Such a “closed eyes” reaction supported the strengthening of the leading position of “new” national elites that were not interested in real transformation and democratisation.

Values Change

The last feature that played an important role in the post-Soviet transformations in Ukraine, especially in the 1990s, was that a “revolution of values” in Central European countries occurred much earlier than changes in the political system.

As Baluk states, during the collapse of the Communist ideology, the Ukrainian society was not prepared for an adoption of new values. On the contrary, the independent Ukraine insufficiently created a new system of values. Moreover, they were not coherent and equally accepted by the east and west of the country.¹⁷

¹⁶ M. A. Vachudova, “When Europeanization Meets Transformation,” in V. Bunce, M. McFaul, K. Stoner-Weiss (eds.), *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Post-communist World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 94.

¹⁷ W. Baluk, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej Ukrainy* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002), 130.

The existence of these commonly shared values, which should sustain the overarching societal culture and identity of a political community, is absent in post-Communist countries such as Ukraine. Democracy as an appropriate political system was chosen by the majority of people in the former Soviet republics primarily as a tool to improve their own welfare. For a majority of the population in the former Soviet Union, delegitimisation of the Soviet system was based not only upon values but, first of all, upon its ineffectiveness and inability to solve the everyday problems of ordinary citizens.

Taking into account the conditions of the Ukrainian transition, it is hardly surprising that Ukraine lags far behind in the post-Communist transition, especially in light of the following factors: the much longer and much more brutal process of “Sovietization,” the very limited positive impact of international factors, and the very negative impact of local elites (mostly inherited from the Communist party).

Little or no prior democratic experience and traditions, the lack of effective mechanisms for transparency, and the absence of market institutions and free media were some of the key issues that the countries of the former Soviet Union had to deal with at the outset of reforms. The most common remaining problems in post-Communist countries can be summarised as: weak public and state institutions, an inefficient judicial system, a large informal sector, corruption, and a weak civil society.¹⁸

Can the “Myth of Two Ukraines” Explain the Complicated Ukrainian Situation?

The process of creating a national identity in Ukraine seems to be far more difficult than in many other post-Communist states. Because of different patterns of historical development, the various Ukrainian regions entered independent Ukraine with different views on its future development and orientation.

The legacies of stateless existence and Russian domination have strongly influenced the post-Soviet Ukrainian nation and identity building. The problem in such countries as Ukraine is that during its existence the Soviet regime suppressed the expression of Ukrainian identity and imposed a generalised “Soviet identity.”¹⁹

¹⁸ C. Walker (ed.), *Undermining Democracy: Strategies and Methods of 21st Century Authoritarians* (Washington DC: Freedom House, June 2009), 9.

¹⁹ See T. Kuzio, *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000): 7.

It is already a common view that there are two main geopolitical and cultural orientations in Ukraine: the European or pro-Western one, and the pro-Russian, which can also be perceived as pro-Soviet.

The idea of “two Ukraines” was introduced in public discussion by Ukrainian intellectuals such as Mykola Riabchuk.²⁰ Twenty years ago it looked interesting and reasonable, but this idea has now become a favourite theme used to explain the complications of the Ukrainian national project. Riabchuk’s main arguments were based on a dichotomy between Ukrainian and Russian speaking Ukrainians. Drawing on the base of postcolonial studies, Riabchuk created an image of “two Ukraines”: “Ukrainian Ukraine,” which roughly corresponded to a Ukrainian-speaking community with a clear-cut national identity, and “Creole Ukraine,” a strange hybrid of imperial (Russian and Soviet) and Ukrainian cultures. One of these Ukraines is pro-European, shares democratic values, wants to join the European Union (or even “return to Europe,” as some people claim); the other is nostalgic about the Soviet Union, has close historical relations with Russia, and is hostile towards the West because it does not share the “Western” values.

It symbolises the two poles of Ukrainian existence and offers us a possibility to distinguish different discourses in Ukraine concerning European integration and relations with Russia. However, such dividing definitely simplifies a much more complex reality. The main paradox is that nobody can say where one half ends and the other begins.

As Tatiana Zhurzhenko argues, “this uncertainty has been interpreted ideologically as a conflict of two cultural orientations and two mutually exclusive identities: the European culture embodied by western Ukraine and the pan-Slavic or Eurasian culture embodied by eastern Ukraine. The conflict of the political and economic interests of the regional elites has increasingly turned into a ‘war of identities’.”²¹ During the Presidential elections campaign in 2004, the team of candidate Victor Yanukovych widely introduced a manipulative discourse of three Ukraines.

The principal mistake of this myth is that it equates the language, political orientation, and national and regional identity of all Ukrainian citizens. Of course, there are some correlations between the preferred language, region of residence, electoral behaviour, and views on foreign

²⁰ M. Ryabchuk, *Dvi Ukraini* (Kiev: Krytyka, no. 10, 2001).

²¹ T. Zhurzhenko, “The Myth of Two Ukraines,” *Eurozine* (September 17, 2002), <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-09-17-zhurzhenko-en.html> (accessed May 23, 2014).

policy. However, this does not mean that the dividing lines are as definite and unequivocal as the discourse of two Ukraines would suggest.

I would claim that the dividing lines of Ukraine are not geographical but rather social or determined by age (generational). For instance, as reported by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation, young people of Donbass and Crimea, where a generally negative attitude towards EU membership prevails, do not differ from their peers from other regions of Ukraine. Within the age group 18–29 in those regions, we can observe that support for EU membership is 51%, while the percentage of non-supporters is 22%.²²

Although the political attitudes of the populations of different regions differ, there are also differences not only between the East and West, but also between many other Ukrainian regions. This does not mean that the preferred language determines ethnic, national identity, or geopolitical choices.

I prefer to stand alongside the later works of Riabchuk, who stressed that “Ukraine’s main domestic controversy is not about ethnicity, language, or regional issues, as Western reporters and, sometimes, scholars tend to believe. The controversy is primarily about values and about national identity as a value-based attitude toward the past and the future, toward ‘us’ and ‘them,’ toward an entire way of life and thought, symbolic representation and mundane behaviour.”²³

This means that dividing Ukraine into “pro-Russian” (which means anti-Ukrainian or anti-European) and “pro-Ukrainian” (which means anti-Russian but pro-European) is a strong simplification. We could rather argue that there are competitions between a “Soviet” mentality and orientations, which translate all typical Soviet (and nowadays Russian) narratives into history, identity, and foreign policy, and “Ukrainian,” with all its differences and contradictions.

The Euromaidan Protest in 2013–14

²² Public opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the Ukrainian Sociology Service in December 2011, http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/ukr_es_1336477715.htm (accessed June 10, 2014).

²³ M. Riabchuk, “Cultural Fault Lines and Political Divisions,” in L. Zaleska-Onyshkevych, M. Rewakowicz (eds.), *Contemporary Ukraine on the cultural map of Europe* (New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 2009), 27.

Ukraine has a long history of political protests: 1990 saw the student “Revolution on Granite”; in 2001 mass protests called for “the Ukraine without Kuchma”; 2004 was the year of the Orange Revolution; and 2013 saw the Euromaidan. They all have the same genetics, associated not only with the approval of Ukraine as a sovereign state but, above all, with the completion of the Soviet era and elimination of the remnants of totalitarianism.

The Euromaidan protests started on November 21, 2013 as a demand for European integration and against the refusal of Viktor Yanukovych and his government to sign the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement. Although the Association Agreement offered Ukraine no prospect of full membership with the EU, many Ukrainians perceived it as a chance for political change, internal reforms, and the rule of law rather than overwhelming corruption. As Alexander Motyl outlines, the European choice for many Ukrainians was not “about only the dreams of European standards of life or real European integration of Ukraine, it is mainly about their hopes to change the situation in the country, about basic civil rights—security, freedom of speech and the possibility to make their own choice.”²⁴

Euromaidan was initiated and organised by the younger generation and representatives of civil society as a manifestation of the pro-European aspirations of the protesters, but quickly became a protest for the majority of Ukrainians against the authoritarian rule of President Victor Yanukovych and the entire corrupt oligarchic system.

On November 30, Yanukovych’s government sent riot police in to disperse the protesters on Independence Square (Maidan) in Kiev by force. The next day, the number of protesters occupying the central streets in Kiev exploded to an estimated eight-hundred thousand to one million. From December 1 a new wave of massive protests rose up against the violence and autocratic behaviour of the Ukrainian authorities. Since Yanukovych and his team did not take any steps to respond to the claims of the Ukrainian society, new demands emerged. At this stage of the struggle, the protesters called for the dismissal of the government and presidential elections.

After weeks of tolerating beatings, torture, and disappearances, some of the protesters took the fight to the police.²⁵ The regime of Viktor

²⁴ A. Motyl, “Watching Yanukovych’s Mafia Regime Squirm,” *World Affairs*, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/watching-yanukovychs-mafia-regime-squirm> (accessed January 03, 2014).

²⁵ T. Snyder, “What the West owes Ukraine,” CNN (February 25, 2014),

Yanukovych and the Party of Regions completely ruined the Ukrainian legal system and precluded a legal solution to Ukraine's problems. On January 16, the parliamentary majority, controlled by President Yanukovych, took another step towards dictatorship. Laws restricting civil rights and freedoms were violated in all procedures. There was neither a debate in the parliament nor actual voting, just a show of hands and a three-second calculation of their number. These procedures criminalised almost any form of protest, outlawed the independent internet media, and critically narrowed the freedoms of speech, expression, and assembly.²⁶

The events of February 20–22, 2014, when more than a hundred people were killed in Kiev, came as a shock to millions of Ukrainians. Before that day it was hard to believe that the shooting of dozens of people could be possible in a European country in the twenty-first century. Violence changed the mode of the protest, and after the massacre in the centre of Kiev any compromise with the regime was impossible.²⁷

As Serhiy Kvit claims, it is important to note that the Euromaidan movement emerged not as a result of conflicts between different regions of Ukraine, as touted by government propaganda, but due to the confrontation between the government and the governed. On the Maidan were varieties of civic organisations and initiatives, activists identifying themselves as nationalists or “the new left,” as well as representatives of hundreds of different associations and informal groups.²⁸

The main difference between Euromaidan and the Orange Revolution is that the latter was organised and led by the oppositional political parties—a typical elite's split.

At the early stage, Euromaidan was initiated and organised by the young people and representatives of civil society as a demonstration of the pro-European aspirations. They tried to limit the participation of political parties in their protest. The political opposition only joined the protest

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/24/opinion/snyder-what-west-owes-ukraine/> (accessed March 1, 2014).

²⁶ O. Polegkyi, “When Choosing between Europe and Russia, Does Yanukovych Choose North Korea?” *New Eastern Europe* (January 23, 2014), <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/interviews/1056-when-choosing-between-europe-and-russia-does-yanukovych-choose-north-korea> (accessed March 1, 2014).

²⁷ O. Polegkyi, “The Death Toll of the ‘Russian Spring’,” *New Eastern Europe* (July 23, 2014), <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/interviews/1275-the-death-toll-of-the-russian-spring> (accessed March 1, 2014).

²⁸ S. Kvit, “The Ideology of the EuroMaidan Revolution,” *Kyivpost* (March 24, 2014), <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/serhiy-kvit-the-ideology-of-the-euromaidan-revolution-340665.html> (accessed May 1, 2014).

after the cruel violence demonstrated by the authority on November 30, 2013. Political opposition in Ukraine was at that moment quite weak and also suffered from a low level of trust and support, because the opposition and the authorities had the same genetics and were deeply interconnected in the eyes of many Ukrainians.

So, in contrast with the Orange Revolution, Euromaidan was a mass protest movement from the “down” and was not initiated (but was, however, supported) by the political elites. It can also to some extent explain the “resistance” of the political system to real reformation after the Euromaidan revolution.

The second point is that the Orange Revolution had a clear political goal and leadership. The Euromaidan had various goals, which changed over time, and there was not one centre of decision making.

Another important point was the struggle between generations. Many of the protesters on the Maidan were from the “generation of independence” and already had the “Soviet” mentality. Many activists called Euromaidan a “revolution of dignity.” We should also stress the role of new media and social technologies and the growing use of the internet among the population of Ukraine.

The last point is that Ukrainian civil society in 2013 was much more mature and stronger, and the main claim of active Ukrainians was for changing the entire system, not only the politicians. Because the Orange Revolution was a successful protest against cruel manipulation during the Presidential election, it did not change the political, economic, and social order.

According to Olga Onuch, the Euromaidan mobilisation differed from the Orange Revolution in five ways. First, the 2013 protests were more widely distributed across Ukraine than those of 2004. Second, student and activist groups were strong and prepared in 2004, but not so much in 2013. Third, in 2013 there was no clear leadership. Fourth, unlike the Kuchma regime, Yanukovich was ready to use violence against protests. Fifth, foreign governments found it hard to broker any deals between the two sides.²⁹

The Euromaidan protests and Russian aggressions from the spring of 2014 both contributed to the consolidation of the Ukrainian nation but also divided the society. The Euromaidan has proved that language is not a dividing line in Ukraine, bringing together both Ukrainian and Russian speakers to struggle with the authoritarian behaviour of Yanukovich. Politicians in Ukraine often played the “language card,” placing the

²⁹ O. Onuch, “Who Were the Protesters?” *Journal of Democracy* 25 (3) (2014): 46.

emphasis on the problems of regional confrontation and the status of the Russian language. As Tatiana Zhurzhenko argues, “it is not language differences that create tensions and conflicts, but rather various political forces articulate these differences and formulate the positions of the language groups, and unfortunately they do so very often in terms of mutual hostility, exclusion, and the incompatibility of the groups’ simultaneous free development.”³⁰

The crisis in Ukraine occurred at a time when Putin’s Russia started to restore the Russian “Empire” within the boundaries of the former USSR. “Information warfare against Ukraine, economic intimidation, the unpunished activities of Russian secret services and their Ukrainian ‘fifth column’ agents directly undermined Ukraine’s independent statehood,” stressed S. Kvit.³¹

The main claim of Kremlin propagandists is that Euromaidan was not about Ukraine’s “democratic” or even “European” future—it was about weakening Russia. The Russian perception was that all protests were a well-prepared special operation by the “West” (first at all the United States) to encourage an anti-Russian revolt in Ukraine. Russian propaganda characterises Ukrainian activists (depending on its purpose and intended audience) as fascists and terrorists, typically naming them *banderovcy*.

Conclusions

The Euromaidan was the logical end of the “post-Soviet” period in the history of Ukraine and was a result of the emancipation of the Ukrainian society from its Communist past. In 2013–14, Ukrainians made a second attempt to complete the unfinished revolutions of 1991 and 2004.

For many Ukrainians who protested on the Euromaidan, the European choice was not only about the European “dreams” or real European integration of Ukraine at this moment. The main protest was for changes in the political system and not of political leaders. It was mainly about the hopes to change the situation in the country, about basic civil and human rights of security, freedom of speech, and possibility of making their own choice. That is why Euromaidan can be explained within the context of the ongoing Ukrainian national liberation struggle.

³⁰ T. Zhurzhenko, “‘Language Politics’ in Contemporary Ukraine: Nationalism and Identity Formation,” in A. Bove (ed.), *Questionable Returns* (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, vol. 12, 2002), 13.

³¹ S. Kvit, *The Ideology of the EuroMaidan Revolution*.

Nowadays, Russia is a revisionist power with imperial ambitions. It maintains an old-fashioned imperial idea of “legitimate interests” and “spheres of influence” in which the future of neighbouring countries such as Ukraine is not a matter of their own choice. The geopolitical “battle” of Russia over Ukraine is not only about keeping its position in the world, but is a way to keep power in Russia for Putin’s regime. Also, the Ukrainian events are directly linked to the problems of the Russian search for its national identity and ideological base for current political regime in Russia. At this moment, the Russian identity is building as a “negative” identity. This identity operates primarily in the category of the “enemy.”

The Russian elites’ use of the logic of the twentieth century, and even the nineteenth century, in the twenty-first century in Europe will lead to changes in the EU itself. The Ukrainian escalations of conflict were possible not because Russia, as an international player, was so strong, but because the EU was so weak. This situation demonstrates the needs for changes of the ineffective foreign policy of the EU and the development of a new paradigm in relation to the Russian authoritarian regime.

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