Miscellaneous Causes and Political Implications of Ukraine's Maidan Revolution: Theoretical Perspectives from the Literature

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Abstract

This article presents a review of the literature on the causes and political implications of the 2014 Maidan Revolution in Ukraine. The academic literature on the Maidan Revolution is extensive and multidisciplinary. Even six years after the revolution, Ukraine remains in the world media and academic spotlight, due to its ongoing conflict with Russia and lingering internal instability. However, despite the availability of a rapidly growing body of literature, there is currently no systematic review that problematizes concepts and assesses the explanatory variables used by the students of the Ukrainian politics. By focusing on the existing literature that has strong empirical foundations, and applying iterative research design this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the literature conceptualize the Maidan Revolution?

2. To what extent does the literature consider the Maidan Revolution to be successful in terms of its implications for Ukraine's political transformation and resilience-building?

3. What factors are identified in the literature that explain the anatomy of post-Maidan state-building and identity construction?

The review does not pretend to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ukrainian leadership in achieving the general goals of democracy, prosperity and security. Instead, it focuses on the main factors outlined by the existing literature that aim to explain the bigger picture of post-Maidan state-building trajectory, with its challenges, opportunities, setbacks and accomplishments.

Keywords: Ukraine, Maidan Revolution, Nation-Building, Identity.

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Jiees

Ukrayna'daki Maidan Devriminin Çeşitli Nedenleri ve Siyasi Sonuçları: Edebiyattan Kuramsal Perspektifler

Özet

Bu makale, Ukrayna'daki 2014 Maidan Devrimi'nin nedenleri ve politik sonuçları hakkındaki literatürü gözden geçirmektedir. Maidan Devrimi hakkındaki akademik literatür kapsamlı ve çok disiplinlidir. Devrimden altı yıl sonra bile Ukrayna, Rusya ile devam eden çatışması ve devam eden iç istikrarsızlık nedeniyle dünya medyasında ve akademik bakış açısına devam ediyor. Bununla birlikte, hızla büyüyen bir literatürün varlığına rağmen, şu anda Ukrayna siyasetinin öğrencileri tarafından kullanılan kavramları problemleştiren ve açıklayıcı değişkenleri değerlendiren sistematik bir inceleme bulunmamaktadır. Güçlü ampirik temelleri olan mevcut literatüre odaklanarak ve yinelemeli araştırma tasarımı uygulayarak bu çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını ele almaktadır:

 1. Literatür Maidan Devrimi'ni nasıl kavramsallaştırıyor?

 2. Literatür, Maidan Devrimi'nin Ukrayna'nın siyasi dönüşümü ve dayanıklılık inşası üzerindeki etkileri açısından ne ölçüde başarılı olduğunu düşünüyor?

 3. Literatürde Maidan sonrası devlet inşası ve kimlik inşasının anatomisini açıklayan hangi faktörler tanımlanmıştır?

İnceleme, Ukrayna liderliğinin demokrasi, refah ve güvenliğin genel hedeflerine ulaşmasındaki etkinliğini değerlendirebildiğini iddia etmiyor. Bunun yerine, Maidan sonrası devlet kurma yörüngesinin daha büyük resmini, zorlukları, fırsatları, aksilikleri ve başarıları ile açıklamayı amaçlayan, mevcut literatürün ana hatlarıyla ortaya koyduğu ana faktörlere odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ukrayna, Maidan Devrimi, Ulus İnşası, Kimlik.

Conceptualizing the Maidan Revolution

According to widely held beliefs, the protest phenomenon and subsequent people's revolt, known as the EuroMaidan— the word, which began as a Twitter hashtag, is the most radical attempt at de-institutionalizing post-Soviet politics and order since 1991.[1] Zhuk and

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[1] Viktor Stepanenko, "Ukraine's Revolution as De-Institutionalization of the Post-Soviet Order." *Ukraine After the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (2015):30.

Gerasimov treat the Ukrainian Maidan as the last anti-Soviet[2] or even first "postcolonial revolution," as "it is all about the people acquiring their own voice, and … forging a new Ukrainian nation."[3] Similarly, some observers claim that "a new Ukraine was born on the Maidan," by means of protests that not only changed the political landscape of the country, but also people and their outlook.[4]

A great many observers have put the Ukrainian revolution in the framework of intensifying geopolitical confrontation between the West and Russia, and even contend that Maidan put post-Cold War system of international relations to a serious test.[5] This is where the "clash of civilizations" narrative comes in, with a tendency to frame the conflict with Russia as an "ideological confrontation" and even a demonstration of an antagonism between democracy and autocracy.[6] Diuk analyzes the harrowing challenges facing the post– Cold War order in Europe, and posits that the chances of democratization across a vast swath of Eurasia seem slimmer now, than ever before in the face of Russian President Vladimir Putin's crackdown on liberal-democratic forces at home and abroad.[7] Such claims are not novel. Conventional logic posits that the Kremlin has a strong interest in ensuring that regional and global democratic trends do not affect grip on the Russian political system and that the legitimacy of democracy promotion and regime change are subverted.[8] This line of thinking presumes that Russia poses

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[2] Sergei I. Zhuk, "Ukrainian Maidan as the Last Anti-Soviet Revolution, or the Methodological Dangers of Soviet Nostalgia (Notes of an American Ukrainian Historian from Inside the Field of Russian Studies in the United States)." *Ab Imperio* no. 3 (2014): 195.

[3] Ilya Gerasimov, "Ukraine 2014: The First Postcolonial Revolution. Introduction to the Forum." *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2014): 22.

[4] Nadia Diuk, "The Maidan and Beyond: Finding Ukraine." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 83.

[5] Sergiy Fedunyak, "The Ukrainian Revolution in International Context." *Ukraine After the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (2015):103.

[6] Paul d'Anieri, "Democracy and Geopolitics: Understanding Ukraine's Threat to Russia." *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives* (2015): 233-242; Laure Delcour and Kataryna Wolczuk, "Spoiler or Facilitator of Democratization? Russia's Role in Georgia and Ukraine." *Democratization* 22, no. 3 (2015): 459-478.

[7] Diuk, ibid, 83.

[8] Sean Roberts and Ulrike Ziemer,"Explaining the Pattern of Russian Authoritarian Diffusion in Armenia." *East European Politics* 34, no. 2 (2018): 152-172.

threats to liberal democracies by rolling back democracy around the world and bringing down democratic governments in its neighborhood and beyond. [9] Shevtsova notes that the pro-EU, democratic movement in Ukraine heightened Putin regime's fears about its possible spillover into Russia, amid lingering concerns about recurrence of large-scale post-election protests that erupted in 2011. In response, Putin resorted to reinforcing personalistic leadership, sparing no effort to undermine Western influence over its "near neighborhood."[10] Thus, Shevtsova concludes that the crisis in Ukraine stems from Russia's struggle to control Ukraine and keep it in the orbit of its authoritarian influence, as opposed to the Ukrainians' "choice for Europe."[11] Such an antagonism comes down to the evolution of the Kremlin's foreign policy thinking during Vladimir Putin's presidency, that led to the establishment of an opposing ideology to the Western/European one based on Russian ethnic nationalism, conservative values and the Russian Orthodox church. This new ideology and the increasingly anti-western rhetoric contributes significantly to substantial othering of Russia and its portrayal as Europe's "Other" in European political thinking.[12] As a result, Russia is increasingly defining itself as a rival to the EU with the creation of the Eurasian Union and thus strives construct a Eurasian identity.[13] In this regard the Maidan Revolution can be viewed as a manifestation of "clash of civilizations" between European and Eurasian projects that confirmed Ukraine's "choice for Europe." It came as a response to Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's abrupt policy shift from pro-European to pro-Russian, that prompted thousands of

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[9] Thomas Ambrosio, "Insulating Russia from a Colour Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends." *Democratisation* 14, no. 2 (2007): 232-252.

[10] Lilia Shevtsova, "The Maidan and Beyond: The Russia Factor." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 74.

[11] Shevtsova, ibid, 74

[12] Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*. Taylor & Francis (2016).

[13] Viktor Stefánsson, *Is Russia Europe's Other? How the Ukraine Crisis Reinforces European Identity Formation* (Doctoral dissertation), (2015), Accessed on April 28, 2020. https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/22766/3/Is%20Russia%20Europe%27s%20Other%20Skemman-PDF.pdf .

demonstrators to take the streets and stand up for their European choice. [14]

Overall, the Ukrainian revolution is deemed to herald the end of the post-Cold war settlement that vanished the hopes of Euro-Russian integration.[15] That said, instead of joining the Western civilization, Russia positioned itself as its "Other" and resorted to what Delcour and Wolczuk refer to as alternative region building or region-spoiling measures aimed at securing its regional hegemony.[16] As a result, Ukraine found itself in the midst of confrontation between "a constrained EU" and "assertive Russia"[17] as a "bone of contention between them".[18]

By contrast some Russian analysts tend to regard the Maidan as a "Western conspiracy."[19] This line of thinking tends to claim that Cold War thinking never went away from Western perceptions of international relations, and even sees that as part of the crisis outbreak in Ukraine.[20] Some analysts claim that the main cause of the crisis was post-Soviet "Western triumphalism" that resulted in the rapid and unstoppable growth of NATO and the EU.[21] Igor Ivanov, Putin's first foreign minister, even suggested that the crisis in Ukraine is more dangerous than the Cold War, "during which international relations were confined at least to a 'certain order' by the United Nations and international law and kept that way by a mutual fear of nuclear

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[14] Yuriy Shveda and Joung Ho Park, "Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity: The Dynamics of Euromaidan." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 85-91.

[15] Shevtsova, ibid, 74.

[16] Laure Delcour and Kataryna Wolczuk, "Between the Eastern Partnership and the Eurasian Economic Union: Competing Region-Building Projects in the 'Common Neighbourhood'." *Theorizing the European Neighbourhood Policy* (2017): 187-206.

[17] Taras Kuzio, "Ukraine Between a Constrained EU and Assertive Russia." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, no. 1 (2017): 103-120.

[18] Vsevolod Samokhvalov, "Ukraine Between Russia and the European Union: Triangle Revisited." *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 9 (2015): 1371-1393.

[19], И. А. Крылова, "Запад против России: геополитические и военные аспекты." *Пути к миру и безопасности* 2 (2015): 89-96; Сергей Марков, *«Гибридная война» против России*. Litres, 2017.

[20] Joseph Black Laurence and Michael Johns, (eds.), *The Return of the Cold War: Ukraine, the West and Russia*. Routledge (2016).

[21] Black and Johns, ibid, xvii.

holocaust."[22] Meanwhile, nowadays, the norms of international relations are outweighed by political interests on all sides, and the risk of uncontrolled escalation is even greater, as there still is no mutually acceptable mechanism to prevent military clashes.[23]

In contrast to geopolitical interpretations, some observers specifically focus on the socio-economic factors behind the revolution. Examining the social media framing of the Ukrainian Euromaidan protest movement Surzhko-Harned and Zahuranec suggest that unlike foreign media sources' portrayal of the Ukrainian crisis as a geopolitical struggle, participants of the protest would conceptualize their movement in terms of domestic issues and an anti-system revolt rather than a geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the EU.[24]

Shveda focuses on social and economic discontent of the Ukrainian society as a driving force behind the revolution. This came as no surprise, given that among 26 European nations, Ukrainians appeared to be most dissatisfied with their life (4.82 points on a 10-point scale), with tremendous discontent with government activities (2.25 points) and the state of economy (2.25 points).[25] A closer look at the majority of Facebook comments, shows that many Ukrainians viewed deferral of the Association Agreement with the European Union as a "stab in the back" that put an end to much-awaited reforms. Thus, Mustafa's call to action swiftly resonated with outraged and disillusioned Ukrainians. [26]

Some observers give great weight to the mobilizing power social media in Ukraine's Euromaidan uprising.[27] Clearly, it is increasingly challenging to maintain autocratic rule in a country, where youth-driven, social media-powered society refuses to abide by "post-Soviet

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[22] Black and Johns, ibid, 227.

[23] Black and Johns, ibid, 227.

[24] Lena Surzhko-Harned and Andrew J. Zahuranec, "Framing the Revolution: The Role of Social Media in Ukraine's Euromaidan Movement." *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (2017): 758.

[25] Yuriy Shveda, "The Revolution of Dignity in the Context of Theory of Social Revolutions." *Ukraine After the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (2015): 92.

[26] Tetyana Bohdanova,"Unexpected Revolution: The Role of Social Media in Ukraine's Euromaidan Uprising." *European View* 13, no. 1 (2014): 135.

[27] Grażyna Piechota and Robert Rajczyk, "The Role of Social Media During Protests on Maidan." *Communication Today*, no. 2 (2015): 86-96.

rules" and craves for democracy. Bohdanova relies on the mobilizational power of social media to explain how a large-scale popular uprising, like Maidan, came to fruition in the absence of strong political opposition or a coalition of political and civic organizations behind it.[28] She singles out Twitter as a powerful tool for helping protesters identify and connect with one another, as well as for shedding light on ongoing events for the wider audience and international community. As a result of effective online consolidation, Twitter accounts—@euromaidan, @EuroMaydan, and @EuroMaydan_eng—that rapidly appealed to tens of thousands of followers.[29]

In sum, the analyses of the Maidan Revolution range from its treatment as a manifestation of the intensifying geopolitical confrontation between the West and Russia, to its reductionism to economic discontent, fueled by the mobilizational power of the social media. Yet, there seems to be a broad consensus on Maidan being a testament to the crisis of the post-Soviet political model resting on repressive rule, as well as a manifestation of the growing antagonism between the European and Russian visions of the shared neighborhood.

Theoretical Reflections on the Anatomy of Post-Maidan State-Building and Political Transformation

The question as to what extent the 2014 Maidan Revolution was successful, goes into determining its implications for Ukraine's political transformation, including country's departure from post-Soviet authoritarian legacy and advances in democratization.

Some observers have pointed a series of hindrances to post-Maidan political transformation, ranging from the constraining effects of authoritarian legacy to the residual influence of oligarchy.[30] It is argued

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[28] Bohdanova, ibid, 133.
[29] Bohdanova, ibid, 136.
[30] Heiko Pleines, "Oligarchs and Politics in Ukraine." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 24, no. 1 (2016): 105-127; Agha Bayramov and Yaroslava Marusyk, "Ukraine's Unfinished Natural Gas and Electricity Reforms: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 60, no. 1 (2019): 73-96.

that a myriad of domestic factors (the weakness of institutions and civic organizations) and external elements (the conflict with Russia) have been considerably impeding post-revolution state building in Ukraine, thus leaving the key problems that hinder national development unsolved.[31]

Bayramov and Marusyk specifically focus on the necessity of overcoming the residual influence of oligarchs, given that they tend to selectively support new laws and reform that seem conducive to maintaining and increasing their wealth and fiercely oppose to those that may somehow jeopardize their positions.[32] They note that that what describes the Ukrainian oligarchs is their tendency to apply the "rule by law" rather than "rule of law." Meanwhile, in conditions of systemic and, in particular, judicial corruption, the law becomes a purchasable commodity.[33]

Lough and Dubrovsky suggest that since the Maidan Revolution, the sharing out of monopolies among leading business groups would continue, along with slow progress on de-monopolization.[34] Therefore, even though the oligarchs have lost considerable ground since 2014, they keep retaining significant residual influence in Ukrainian economy and politics.[35] Some observers note that the oligarchy is entrenched to the point, where the vacuum created by the diminishing influence of certain oligarchic groups, such as ones of Renat Akhmetov or Dmitry Firtash, gets instantly filled by other oligarchs, such as Ihor Kolomoyskyi.[36]

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[31] Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik and Janusz Kowalczyk, "Nation-Building in Post-Maidan Ukraine." *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* no. 3 (2016): 91.

[32] Bayramov and Marusyk, ibid, 80-81.

[33] Bayramov and Marusyk, ibid, 80.

[34] John Lough and Vladimir Dubrovskiy, "Are Ukraine's Anti-corruption Reforms Working?" *Chatham House* (2018): 22, Accessed on April 30, 2020. https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/are-ukraines-anti-corruption-reforms-working/2018-11-19-ukraine-anti-corruption-reforms-lough-dubrovskiy.pdf .

[35] Lough and Dubrovskiy, ibid, 22-23.

[36] Aram Terzyan, "Ukrainian Lessons, Armenian Hopes." *New Eastern Europe* (2019), Accessed on April 30, 2020. https://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/09/19/ukrainan-lessons-armenian-hopes/ .

Alternatively, Aslund notes that while it is common to blame the oligarchs for Ukraine's corruption there are misconceptions about the very term of "oligarch." In practice, the people who are considered oligarchs are those who are strong enough to defend their property against state predators, most of all law enforcement agencies indulging in corporate raiding.[37]

Overall, there is a broad consensus that the success of economic and political reforms considerably depends on the Ukrainian government's ability to defeat the oligarchy, making sure that it would no longer obstruct country's democratic transformation. Meanwhile the effective fight against oligarchy is deemed contingent upon broader economic, political reforms that will shrink the spaces of oligarchic influences. [38]

Clearly, the fight against systemic corruption has been one of the major themes in post-Maidan state-building discussions, given that it had long condemned Ukraine to a vicious circle of underdevelopment, poor governance and inability to implement reforms. Many observers agree that Poroshenko's steady decline as a political powerhouse significantly owed to his failure to eradicate corruption.[39] As a result, Zelensky scored high amid popular disillusionment with Petro Poroshenko's inability to defeat rampant corruption. Gressel aptly notes that corruption (especially judicial corruption) and weak rule of law would considerably undermine the overall progress Ukraine had made with other reforms.[40] Some observers note that Zelensky's anti-corruption efforts have so far focused on punishing former

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37 Anders Åslund, "Ukraine's Underrated Economy is Poised for a Strong 2020." (2020), Accessed on April 30, 2020. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraines-underrated-economy-is-poised-for-a-strong-2020/.

38 Kuczyńska-Zonik and Kowalczyk, ibid, 91-105.

39 Aram Terzyan, "Fighting corruption in Ukraine and Armenia." *Emerging Europe* (2020), Accessed on April 20, 2020. https://emerging-europe.com/voices/fighting-corruption-in-ukraine-and-armenia/ .

40 Gustav Gressel, "Guarding the Guardians: Ukraine's Security and Judicial Reforms Under Zelensky," *ECFR Policy Brief*, (2019), Accessed on April 30, 2020. https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/guarding_the_guardians_ukraine_security_and_judicial_reforms_under_zelensky.pdf .

governments' members or associates.[41] Meanwhile, a question arises as to if the selective targeting of former incumbents will evolve into unequivocal application of "zero tolerance for corruption" principle.

While considering anti-corruption measures and agencies (the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, High Anti-Corruption Court) crucial, some observers stress the necessity of eradicating the "culture of corruption." By analysing public attitudes towards corruption, Lough and Dubrovsky suggest that Ukrainian citizens tend to "condemn" high-level corruption" yet "regard petty corruption as a justifiable evil."[42] Similarly, other studies confirm that while citizens regard political corruption of the highest echelons to be the most serious problem, everyday corruption that respondents themselves come across in their daily lives is perceived as a less serious problem.[43] Clearly, while passing laws and implementing reforms may be straightforward, erasing historical mentalities and behavioral practices, such as tolerance towards corruption, informal governance, the use of informal connections and networks in exchanges of favors.[44] This is where some observers emphasize the importance of a vibrant civil society with its critical mission of engaging more with their constituencies and thus contributing to their democratic socialization.[45]

While civic activism has been pivotal to the 2014 Maidan Revolution a question remains as to if the civil society has evolved into an agent of democracy in Ukraine. Way notes that the demonstrations leading the

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[41] Mykhailo Minakov and Matthew Rojansky,"The First Six Months: An Assessment of Zelenskyy's Achievements." *Wilson Center* (2019), Accessed on April 21, 2020. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/the-first-six-months-assessment-zelenskyys-achievements .

[42] Lough and Dubrovsky, ibid, 2.

[43] Democratic Initiatives Foundation, "Corruption in Ukraine: Perception, Experience, Attitudes," December 5, 2018, Accessed on April 17, 2020. https://dif.org.ua/en/article/one-out-of-three-ukrainians-ready-to-join-organized-counteraction-to-corruption .

[44] Kornely Kakachia, Bidzina Lebanidze, and Volodymyr Dubovyk, "Defying Marginality: Explaining Ukraine's and Georgia's Drive Towards Europe." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 27, no. 4 (2019): 459-460.

[45] Dieter Segert, (ed.), *Civic Education and Democratization in the Eastern Partnership Countries*. BPB, Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (2016): 89-133.

revolution "showed the Orange Revolution was not a one-time fairy tale, but a feature of Ukraine. Civil society exists." [46]   Nevertheless, he suggests that it would be misleading to treat the successful actions by protesters or even civil society representatives per se as s shift in a robust or "emerging" civil society.[47] Thus the question remains as to if protests are organized by well-established and institutionalized organizations, or do groups emerge spontaneously out of the protests themselves?

In this regard Smagily and Diuk note that civil society organizations and activists need to move beyond the victory in the street and pursue victory in town halls and elections,[48] with the growing realization that "the Maidan" now needs to be in people's minds and behavior rather than in downtown Kyiv .[49]

Alternatively, some observers posit that civil society is not always good for democracy, especially in the context of fragile national institutions that might be adversely affected by associational activity with ensuing societal fragmentation.[50] In Ukraine, non-state actors have tended to divide along regional lines. Meanwhile at a time when the country is faced with tremendous threats, such divisions may be immensely harmful. Therefore, strong national institutions are deemed instrumental in mitigating the adverse effects of fragmentation, especially when facing huge associational activities.[51]

In terms of the weakness of civil society organizations, Minakov notes that it has not been uncommon for them to get misused by the oligarchy. Well acknowledging the capacity of civil society organizations, the oligarchic groups would strive to use them in order

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[46] Lucan Way, "The Maidan and Beyond: Civil Society and Democratization." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014):35.

[47] Way, ibid, 41.

[48] Kateryna Smagily, "A Wake Up Call for Ukraine's Civil Society." *Kennan Cable*, no. 25 (2017), Accessed on April 28. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no25-wake-call-for-ukraines-civil-society .

[49] Diuk, ibid, 89.

[50] Way, ibid, 41.

[51] Way, ibid, 42.

to maintain their wealth and political power.[52] Meanwhile, certain NGOs in Ukraine were tempted to cooperate closely with major oligarchs, such as Ihor Kolomoisky and Viktor Pinchuk and to satisfy their cravings for influence and protection. [53] It follows that while robust civil society organizations have a crucial role in Ukraine's democratization, the activities of "pocket" organizations may negatively impact country's transformation, while serving oligarchic interests.

Shapovalova and Burlyuk emphasize the two dimensions of turning the civil society into a powerful agent of democracy. The first dimension comes down to the changes in the nature of civil society relations with the state and society and its potential and ability to induce reform, or what is referred to as "change on the outside."[54] The second dimension has much to do with the nature of civil society *per se* i.e. with the way it is organized and operates, or what is referred to as "change on the inside."[55] These changes are deemed critical to boosting the actorness of civil society organizations, and thus equipping them to fulfil their duties of representing citizens' interests and influencing policy making, while contributing significantly to civic education and democratic socialization of the Ukrainian society.[56]

Another major issue that has merited attention is the institutional foundation of democratization. Studies show that despite the progress on democratization following the Maidan Revolution, the Ukrainian party system has not undergone significant changes. As a result, the institutional bases of the Ukrainian party-political landscape and parliamentary politics have not been solidified.[57] The factors hindering institutionalization of political parties, include their organizational

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[52] Mykhailo Minakov, "Changing Civil Society After Maidan." In Danyliw Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine. University of Ottawa. October 30, 2014, Accessed on April 27, 2020. http://www.danyliwseminar.com/#!mikhailo-minakov/c3q1 .

[53] Minakov, ibid.

[54] Natalia Shapovalova and Olga Burlyuk, "Civil Society and Change in Ukraine Post-Euromaidan: An Introduction." In *Civil Society in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: from Revolution to Consolidation*, 193 (2018): 11-38.

[55] Shapovalova and Burlyuk, ibid.

[56] Terzyan, 2020, ibid.

[57] Kostyantyn Fedorenko, Olena Rybiy and Andreas Umland, "The Ukrainian Party System Before and After the 2013–2014 Euromaidan." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 609-630.

weakness, characterized by uncertain ideological platforms, frequent name changes, financing, lack of accountability and poor communication with their voters. Not surprisingly, there has been low trust in and identification with political parties across the Ukrainian society.[58] The lack of ideologically-oriented political parties has led to a situation, where the political and ideological preferences of Ukrainians are ambiguous and most people have difficulty identifying themselves either with left or right parties.[59]

Sedelius notes that like many other post-Soviet countries, Ukraine is faced with "party presidentialization" syndrome – remarkable indicator of an insufficient institutionalization of party politics. The inherent unsustainability and instability of the Ukrainian regime has been vividly manifested in mass mobilizations against Leonid Kuchma regime in the 2004 Orange Revolution, and similarly by the mass protests that led to the collapse of Viktor Yanukovych regime in 2014.[60] While, it is undeniable that Ukraine is undergoing reforms during Zelensky's presidency, some critics note that the centralization of power remains a significant problem and may be subject to abuses and misuses by Zelensky's successors.[61] There is a broad consensus among students of democratic consolidation that the success of democratic reforms in Ukraine significantly depends on its shift from a charismatic leadership to functional democratic institutions. This comes down to "transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms and contingent solutions . . . into relationships that are reliably known, regularly practiced and normatively accepted."[62]

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[58] Olena Rybiy, "Party System Institutionalization in Ukraine." *Demokratizatsiya* 21, no. 3 (2013): 402.

[59] Svitlana Balyuk (ed.), "The Attitude of Ukrainians Toward Social Democracy Public Opinion Poll Results" (2018), Accessed on April 28, 2020. http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/14762.pdf .

[60] Thomas Sedelius, "Party Presidentialization in Ukraine." In *The Presidentialization of Political Parties* (2015):124.

[61] Emil Filtenborg and Stefan Weichert, "Could Volodymyr Zelensky's Proposed Reforms Lead to Centralized Power in Ukraine?" Euronews, February 27, 2020, Accessed on April 17, 2020. https://www.euronews.com/2020/02/27/could-volodymyr-zelensky-s-proposed-reforms-lead-to-centralised-power-in-ukraine .

[62] Ali Resul Usul, *Democracy in Turkey: The Impact of EU Political Conditionality*. Routledge (2010): 4.

This, in turn, depends on Zelensky's government's political will to further institutionalize state-building by subjecting it to institutional performance and strength. While power centralization remains of concern, some students have focused on the challenges and opportunities of decentralization as a critical measure to establish a proper balance between central and subnational governance. This includes decentralization of certain powers from the national government and the amalgamation of small communities into larger, more easily administered entities. [63] Malynovskyi focuses on the necessity of reforms in the following areas that are critical to facilitating decentralization:

– political, related to establishing institutional foundations of democratization, including but not limited to adopting a new electoral legislation, as well setting up new platforms of citizens' political participation through local advisory councils, public hearings, etc. Yet, it is the introduction of regional self-government that is viewed as a building block of decentralization;

– institutional, aimed to rebuild structural elements, and more specifically, the organizational relations between different levels of local government, thus leading to the national territorial organization reform;

– functional, aimed to rebalance functional relationships between national, regional and local authorities consistent with the principles of decentralization and subsidiarity.[64]

Essentially, effective decentralization, leading to a balance between national, regional and local powers through constitutional reforms is viewed essential for reinforcing regional and local self-governance, as well as for addressing country's security challenges, especially when dealing with separatist regions.

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[63] Maryna Rabinovych, Anthony Levitas and Andreas Umland, "Revisiting Decentralization After Maidan: Achievements and Challenges of Ukraine's Local Governance Reform." *Kennan Cable* 34 (2018). Accessed on May 3, 2020. http://legacy.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ki_180703_cable34_v3.pdf .
[64] Valentyn Malynovskyi, "The "Endless Story" of Local Self-Government Reform: Before the Post-Maidan." *Ukraine After the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (2015): 155-156

Some students have paid considerable attention to the issues of breaking with post-Soviet authoritarian legacy, including de-politicizing and reforming inherently flawed law enforcement authorities. While the Ukrainian leadership has taken considerable strides in overcoming the post-communist policing legacy, and thus opened a space for democratic policing[65], the successful transformation of the Security Service of Ukraine (SUB) (the KGB successor) remains a critical part of broader law enforcement reforms. Gressel finds SUB's transformation critical to preventing it from further getting misused by incumbent authorities as a tool for coercing opposition.[66] Overall, the promotion of reform-minded law enforcement officials along with consistent fight against systemic corruption is deemed instrumental in achieving a breakthrough in law enforcement and broader democratic reforms.

Understanding Post-Maidan Identity Construction

According to widely held beliefs, Maidan helped Ukraine become more Ukrainian.[67] Studies show that Maidan has reinforced the national identification of the Ukrainian population, manifested in a dramatic increase in the number people thinking of Ukraine as their "homeland."[68] Kulyk regards the changes in ethnonational identification and language practice as a popular shift away from 'Russianness'.[69] Similarly, Nedozhogina focuses on the discursive strategies of border-construction between the concepts of 'Ukrainianness' and 'Russianness' in Ukrainian political discourse that would redraw the symbolic boundaries between Us and Them.[70] Essentially, the very meaning of belonging to the Ukrainian nation has changed, as

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[65] Cornelius Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage." *Problems of Post-Communism* 66, no. 2 (2019): 109-121.

[66] Gressel, ibid, 11-15.

[67] Dominique Arel, "How Ukraine Has Become More Ukrainian." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 2-3 (2018): 186-189.

[68] Olga Onuch, Henry E. Hale and Gwendolyn Sasse, "Studying Identity in Ukraine." *Post-Soviet Affairs*. no 2-3 (2018): 79-83.

[69] Onuch et al., ibid, 79-81.

[70] Olena Nedozhogina, "Redrawing Symbolic Boundaries After Maidan: Identity Strategies Among Russian-Speaking Ukrainians." *National Identities* (2019): 1-19.

manifested in increased alienation from Russia and the greater embrace of Ukrainian nationalism.

Most observers have paid considerable attention to elite narratives on self and other. This line of thinking is based on the treatment of elites as the key agents in constructing new identities, leading to the demarcation between the self and other.[71] Clunan would argue that political elites compete with one another to have their preferred national self-image become the national identity and define the state's interests.[72] In doing so, they seek to enhance national self-esteem, which entails using value rationality to uphold or create a legitimate social order that institutionalizes values, norms, beliefs, and procedures that give them a positive self-image of their country.[73] It follows that foreign policy discourse is not only an expression of collective identity; It is also a process of constructing and reconstructing the self and the other, as well as identifying respective levels of difference and danger from others.[74] The othering strategies of former President Poroshenko have attracted a lot of attention, as he tended to treat Russia as European Ukraine's clearly identifiable "Other" and the biggest threat to the European system of values. The civilizational othering of Russia is manifested in the following narratives that Poroshenko used to emphasize Ukraine's departure from Russian the sphere of Russian political and cultural influence: "Farewell, unwashed Russia," "Farewell to you, our tender Misha, go back home to your wood of fairy tales," "Russian comrade, don't mess with Ukraine," "Away from Moscow! Europe now!"[75] Stefanson even suggests that the Ukraine crisis has

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[71] Bo Stråth, "Belonging and European Identity." *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, Oxford University Press, (2008): 21.

[72] Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests*. JHU Press, (2009): 14.

[73] Clunan, ibid, 14.

[74] Salome Minesashvili, "Narrating Identity: Belongingness and Alterity in Georgia's Foreign Policy." In: Kakachia, K. and Markarov, A., ed. Values and Identity as Sources of Foreign Policy in Armenia and Georgia, Universal (2016): 11-12

[75]Petro Poroshenko, "Speech by President Poroshenko on the Results of the Unification Synod," December 21, 2018, Accessed on April 30, 2020. http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/speech-by-president-poroshenko-on-the-results-of-the-unification-synod/ .

reinforced European identity formation through substantial othering of Russia.[76]

Some observers note that even though the desire to move away from Moscow – in civilizational, political and economic terms – was historically always popular in Ukraine, the concept of the "Russian world," along with the "spiritual dependence" on the Russian Orthodox Church would long resonate with millions of Ukrainians, thus leaving Ukraine's centrality in the Russia-led socio-political order intact.[77]

Meanwhile, the Russian aggression prompted a rethink of deep-seated attitudes, while the enemy image of Russia became a crucial factor in post-Maidan identity construction. Burkovskyi and Haran note that Russian aggression destroyed support for "Russian world" in Ukraine. According to a poll, conducted in May, 2014 the number of people with positive attitudes towards Russia fell considerably in eastern (from 92 percent in February to 77 percent in May) and southern regions (from 85 percent to 65 percent).[78]

Alternatively, Molchanov claims that the othering of Russia has served as a powerful tool for war mongering on the part of the Ukrainian government, along with boosting patriotic credentials of the post-Maidan elites. Moreover, in his words, the othering of Russia and ethno-nationalist mobilization would help to complete the consolidation of power in Kiev and would justify the new elite's takeover of property from the defeated oligarchs of the East.[79]

This line of thinking presumes that the enemy images gain steady relevance in a situation where there is a growing political need to strengthen national integration and national identity formation.[80] One

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[76] Stefanson, ibid, 19-21.

[77] Kakachia et al, Ibid, 458-459.

[78] Petro Burkovskyi and Olexiy Haran, "Before and After the Euromaidan: Ukraine Between the European Choice and the Russian Factor." *Ukraine after the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (2015): 80-81.

[79]Mikhail Molchanov, "Russia as Ukraine's 'Other': Identity and Geopolitics." *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives* (2015), Accessed on April 18, 2020. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2650162 .

[80] Heikki Luostarinen, "Finnish Russophobia: The Story of an Enemy Image." *Journal of Peace Research* 26, no. 2 (1989): 123-137.

of the most frequently observed functions of the enemy images is the potential to mobilize for or against a particular idea or a specific group. Middens notes that "The threat of enemies justifies actions that might otherwise be unacceptable or illegal... Enemies serve as a focus for aggression and as a means of diverting attention from pressing internal problems."[81] The "rhetoric of insecurity" suggested by Campbell seems to accurately capture the basic functions of the enemy images. According to this rhetoric, the state policies are legitimized through the attempt to instill notions of insecurity. [82]

Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus that in Ukrainian discourse the narratives underlying the othering of Russia have been simply employed to describe the state of affairs from a normative perspective, rather than to legitimate the post-Maidan elite's rule through external threats and enemy images. The othering of Russia has been inherently linked to post-Maidan identity construction, centering around Ukraine's Europeanness and identity-driven homecoming to Europe. This is what some observers refer to as Ukraine's efforts at defying marginality and redefining its place within Europe.[83] Ukrainian society's high demand for EU membership (over 55 percent), as well as the EU's perception as a "role model," identified with the values of human rights, rule of law, peace, economic prosperity, individual freedoms, is viewed as a remarkable indicator of Ukraine's "European choice."[84]

Some students note that a major impediment to becoming mentally and institutionally European state lies with the popularity of illiberal values, including negative attitudes to minorities[85] and nationalism. The latter became a salient feature of Ukrainian society, as Maidan protests

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[81] Gerald J. Middens, "Psychological Perspectives on Enemy-Making." *Organization Development Journal* (1990): 44-48.

[82] David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. University of Minnesota Press (1992).

[83] Kakachia et al., ibid, 451.

[84] Natalia Chaban and Ben O'loughlin, "The EU's Crisis Diplomacy in Ukraine: The matrix of possibilities." (2018), Accessed on April 30, 2020. https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/eus-crisis-diplomacy-ukraine-matrix-possibilities

[85] Kakachia, et al, ibid, 458.

turned more violent in early 2014, they also became characterized by the increasingly visible participation of several far-right movements.[86]

This specifically applies to the activism of marginal far-right groups, including 'the Right Sector, Svoboda', the National Corpus, along with extremist groupings such as Brotherhood, OUN Volunteer Movement and others, that would spark concerns across the Ukrainian civil society and beyond. Likhachev notes that while their efforts at moving from margins to mainstream have not resonated with the Ukrainian population, they have consistently strived to disseminate their illiberal ideas, and thus move their radical agenda forward.[87] Motivated by the desire to "clean" the public space of everything that they find detrimental to a nation at war, these extremist groups would target religious, ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as liberal activists and human rights defenders.[88] In effect, the conflict with Russia has allowed for their rebranding as "patriots" with some legitimizing effects on their activities. Studies show, that the involvement of Ukrainian far-right organizations in Maidan protests would prompt the Russian media and politicians to portray the Maidan as a "fascist coup," with the activists and the new government being labelled as nationalistic, extremist, and xenophobic, that are on the 'wrong side of history'.[89]

Nevertheless, despite their "radicalizing effect" on some nationalistic segments of Ukrainian society, none of the far-right parties managed to overcome the passing barrier to enter the Parliament. The electoral alliance comprised of Svoboda, the Right Sector and National

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[86] Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland. "The Maidan and Beyond: Ukraine's Radical Right." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 58.

[87] Vyacheslav Likhachev, "Far-Right Extremism as a Threat to Ukrainian Democracy." *Nations in Transit Brief*, (2018), Accessed on April 17, 2020, https://freedomhouse.org/report/analytical-brief/2018/far-right-extremism-threat-ukrainian-democracy .

[88] Likhachev, ibid.

[89] Vyacheslav Likhachev, "The "Right Sector" and Others: The Behavior and Role of Radical Nationalists in the Ukrainian Political Crisis of late 2013—Early 2014." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48, no. 2-3 (2015): 257-271; Elizavet Gaufman, "World War II 2.0: Digital Memory of Fascism in Russia in the Aftermath of EuroMaidan in Ukraine." *Journal of Regional Security* 10, no. 1 (2015): 17.

Corps won only 2.15 percent of the vote.[90] While finding the alarmist claims of rising nationalism and extremism exaggerated, there seems to be a consensus that the advancement of robust civil society organizations with their mission of civic education and democratic socialization is essential for making the Ukrainian society more immune to such extremist groups and their illiberal ideas.

In sum, while the Maidan Revolution has played a crucial role in reinforcing the national identification of the Ukrainian population and led to substantial othering of Russia, the claims of major shifts in nationalism and extremism lack empirical evidence.

Conclusion

The academic literature on the Maidan Revolution is extensive and multidisciplinary. The analyses of the Maidan range from its treatment as a manifestation of the intensifying geopolitical confrontation between the West and Russia, to its reductionism to economic discontent, fueled by the mobilizational power of the social media. Yet, there seems to be a broad consensus on Maidan being a testament to the crisis of the post-Soviet political model resting on repressive rule, as well as a manifestation of the growing antagonism between the European and Russian visions of the shared neighborhood.

Some students reveal the gaps between media and public perceptions of the Maidan and suggest that in contrast to foreign media sources' portrayal of the uprising as a geopolitical struggle, participants of the protest would conceptualize their movement in terms of domestic issues and an anti-regime revolt rather than a geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the EU.

The literature on post-Maidan state-building is focused on the challenges of breaking with the legacies of corruption, residual influence of oligarchy, along with the opportunities of decentralization and institutionalization. Some observers specifically focus on deep-

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[90] Mykola Vorobiov, "Ukrainian Voters Upend their Parliament," August 1, 2019, Accessed on April 19, 2020. https://jamestown.org/program/ukrainian-voters-upend-their-parliament/ .

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rooted "culture of corruption," noting that while passing laws and implementing reforms may be straightforward, erasing mentalities and behavioral practices, such as tolerance towards informal governance, the use of informal connections and networks in exchanges of favors is much harder and can not change swiftly. Notably, the effectiveness of the fight against the oligarchy is deemed contingent upon broader economic, political reforms that will shrink the space of oligarchic influences. There is a broad consensus that the success of democratic reforms in Ukraine significantly depends on its shift from a charismatic leadership to functional democratic institutions, with the advancement of well-institutionalized, ideologically - oriented and competitive party politics. Besides, decentralization, leading to a balance between local, regional, and national powers is viewed essential for reinforcing regional and local self-governance, as well as for addressing country's security challenges, especially when dealing with separatist regions.

There is a rapidly increasing body of the literature concerning the role of civil society in Ukraine's democratic consolidation. However, some elements remain ambiguous. While some observers consider a vibrant civil society pivotal to democratic consolidation, others suggest that at a time when a country is faced with tremendous threats, associational activity with ensuing societal fragmentation may adversely affect its stability. Therefore, the resilience- building of national institutions is deemed instrumental in mitigating the adverse effects of fragmentation, especially when facing huge associational activities. Besides, the institutional and professional development of civil society organizations is deemed critical to boosting their actorness and thus equipping them to fulfil their duties of representing citizens' interests and influencing policy making, while contributing significantly to civic education and democratic socialization of the Ukrainian society.

The literature on post-Maidan Ukrainian identity construction suggests that Maidan helped Ukraine become more Ukrainian. It reinforced the national identification of the Ukrainian population as manifested in increased alienation from Russia and the greater embrace of Ukrainian nationalism. Some students specifically focus on elite narratives that would redraw the boundaries between 'Ukrainianness' and 'Russianness', marking a popular shift away from the "Russian

world." The othering of Russia has been inherently linked to post-Maidan identity construction, centering around Ukraine's Europeanness and identity-driven homecoming to Europe. This is what some observers refer to as Ukraine's efforts at defying marginality and redefining its place within Europe.

Alternatively, some observers have treated the othering of Russia and ethno-nationalist mobilization have served as powerful tools for war mongering on the part of the Ukrainian government, along with boosting patriotic credentials of the post-Maidan elites and consolidating their power. Moreover, the activism of far-right groups has been viewed by some students as a dangerous shift in nationalism and extremism. Nevertheless, most observers agree that in Ukrainian discourse the narratives underlying the othering of Russia have been simply employed to describe the state of affairs from a normative perspective, rather than to legitimate the post-Maidan elite's rule through external threats and enemy images. Meanwhile, the marginal electoral support for far-right parties suggests that the alarmist claims of rising extremism and nationalism are exaggerated.

Further systematic review of the literature is essential for problematizing concepts, as well as for providing a better understanding of the anatomy of post-Maidan Ukraine's nation-building.

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