

The Ukrainian Week

International edition

#4 (134) April 2019

Second round: politics as show
business, Donbas and war

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and to make the hryvnia stronger

Russia vs Ukraine –
decolonization or assimilation?

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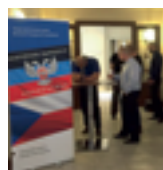
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ТИЖДЕНЬ

What will remain

Dmytro Krapyvenko

Only experienced liars will now speak confidently about what awaits Ukraine after the presidential election. The unknown is scary, but such is the price of democracy. Attempts to build a tsardom of stability and predictability a-la Belarus in Ukraine have failed bitterly. Anyone dreaming of restoring the might of the Power of Regions or a return of Azarov and Yanukovych is wrong: such a scenario can only repeat in a farcical form. A judge can be found who will come up with a justification of such return, but this scenario is highly unlikely to happen in practice.

PHOTO: UNIAN



Any of these political emigrants would get a bad welcome at any of Ukraine's airports. Politicians can establish whatever coalitions they want and accept any compromises: Ukraine's civil society will remain the key safeguard against their miscalculations.

It is imperfect, fragmented and squabbling, but it is here. It's something like Makhno's army – dispersed in quiet times, it quickly mobilizes in the face of the first threat. Civil society was not stronger under Yanukovich than it is today, yet it proved itself in the best way possible during the Maidan. Unfortunately, Ukraine has failed to build strong institutions in the past five years that could check and balance the ill-thought through activity of the president elected “as a joke”. Because of this, the street remains the most effective factor. The next (or re-elected) president will have to consider this and refrain from putting things like the geopolitical vector, humanitarian policy or concessions to the enemy at risk. Regardless of what their supporters are saying on social media. Five years of Ukraine's fight give no reason to question the purpose of the sacrifices, and there will be plenty of people ready to remind anyone of this.

The street factor is not a simple one. Enemies will try to use it wherever possible, but for a different reason: to destabilize Ukraine to the point where the “Pu-

THE NEXT (OR RE-ELECTED) PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER THIS AND REFRAIN FROM PUTTING THINGS LIKE THE GEOPOLITICAL VECTOR, HUMANITARIAN POLICY OR CONCESSIONS TO THE ENEMY AT RISK. REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEIR SUPPORTERS ARE SAYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA FIVE YEARS OF UKRAINE'S FIGHT GIVE NO REASON TO QUESTION THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRIFICES

tin, bring in your army” slogan will sound as convincing as possible. It is quite possible that the elections, or more precisely the pretence fight against falsifications, can become a prologue to such a scenario. In reality, pro-Russian forces were never good at street protests. Examples include the anti-Maidan with the people corralled into it, and the failed “Russian spring” where no “tourists” from Russian cities were brought in or Russian soldiers badly disguised as local self-defense forces. So, such “exports of revolutions” are only possible with holes in Ukraine-Russia border. In this sense, Ukraine's hope lies with the border guard, the Security Bureau of Ukraine, the National Guard, territorial defense and the Armed Forces. While the chiefs of law enforcement agencies plunge into the political struggle and ride the wave of opportunism, units on the ground have enough patriotic soldiers and officers who remember about their duty and their allegiance to the state.

The media will remain. We carry the huge burden of responsibility. We can point to the flaws in the work of the state, or the Ministry of Information to be more precise. But people read, listen and watch specific mass media, not ministerial reports. In 2014, Ukraine's information space was filled with stories of our soldiers, volunteers and IDPs. Today, the media mostly broadcast brief reports from the military headquarters in their daily news. This is especially true of television where comedians, psychics, models and dancers have

replaced people in uniforms in prime time. It is easy to understand rhetoric about how the introduction of martial law could damage Ukraine's economic situation, already difficult enough. But it would definitely sober up the media community. It's not about censorship bringing some positive fruit in the country (although we could endure it for some time in order to clear up the media space from the mouthpieces of the fifth column, including outlets like Vesti, 112 or News-One).

It's about shifting accents to the understanding that war is the top theme in the country from discussions about whether it's acceptable to combine concerts in Russia and representation of Ukraine in Eurovision. The media have seriously contributed to the fact that people who have not heard the artillery but “have grown tired of war” by making news from the front-line something not much more important than weather forecast. For the audience whose main source of information is TV (which is true for most Ukrainians, sociological surveys say), the war is something that's not really about us, so why not vote as a joke? Still, there are other media who put values first and prices second. Even if their audience is small, they have gone through serious challenges and have developed good resilience.

Ukraine's western partners will welcome any candidate who wins the election fairly. They will not voice the slightest concern if Ukraine's new leader is not determined in the policy of European integration. If he hints at the possibility of returning to the orbit of Russian influence, many will meet that intention with relief, naively believing that Vladimir Putin can be appeased. Populists are actively fanning up the myth of involving London and Washington to the Minsk format. The task is to make people believe that Donald Trump and Theresa May will rush to Ukraine to sign a peace agreement, bringing Putin along, as soon as they head the name of the new president of Ukraine. Part of Ukrainian voters have no doubts about this. In reality, Ukraine can count on countries like Lithuania as allies – the countries that fully feel the nature of Russia's threat.

A lot of homework on decolonization remains unfinished. The return of the seemingly toothless *Svaty* (In-Laws) series to Ukrainian television can be followed by the rehabilitation of a series of good old soviet films. Then a discussion will emerge about the purpose of renaming streets. Then, “the language you speak does not matter”. It's very easy to lose position in the humanitarian space when immunity against imperial influences in the country is not strong enough. If the president has no antibodies to attack this virus, it will affect the entire government apparatus while the enemy will get an upper hand in doing whatever it deems necessary to restore “historical justice” and geopolitical balance. In order to prevent the relapse of the colonial disease, Ukraine needs to preserve those who are currently implementing decolonization and desovietization policies. If the president tries to undermine those, civil society will have to block such efforts.

The end of the election cycle will not bring forth calm and wealthy time. We have done too little for that. Whatever the outcome of the presidential race is, every committed citizen will have loads of work to do. But Ukrainians were always known for being hard-working, especially when they work for themselves. ■

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Chance for reconciliation

Is there any hope to overcome the aftermath of genocide in Rwanda?

Michael Binyon, London

No country in modern times has been convulsed by murderous atrocities as frenzied and terrifying as the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda. For 100 days, beginning in April, soldiers and armed gangs roamed the country, shooting, stabbing, drowning and hacking to death around 800,000 men, women and children — denounced by extremist Hutus as enemies of the country and cockroaches who had to be exterminated.

FOR YEARS, THOSE WHO SURVIVED AND THOSE WHO CARRIED OUT THE KILLINGS FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET. THEIR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HAVE ALSO BEEN SCARRED. SHAME AND DENIAL ONE ON SIDE, RAGE AND RESENTMENT ON THE OTHER, FORCED THEM TO SHUN EACH OTHER

Now, 25 years later, Rwanda is commemorating a genocide that left the small central African country ruined and bloodstained. In every village there will be speeches and ceremonies. School groups will be taken to the 200 memorials across the country where the worst massacres appeared. Church leaders will offer prayers, and Roman Catholics will beg forgiveness for their own church's savage complicity in some of the crimes.

The massacres were almost a generation ago, but only now is Rwanda coming to terms with the trauma. The killers fled, the dead were buried, the main perpetrators arrested and sent for trial at a specially established international court. Thousands of killers and their surviving victims were brought face to face at improvised village courts, established a decade ago to persuade the Hutu thugs who turned on their neighbors to admit their guilt. Many were imprisoned. But now, as they are released from jail and have completed compulsory community reparations, Rwanda is agonising over how the perpetrators can be reintegrated. Can killers and victims ever live side by side again?

Rwanda is now peaceful, thriving and prosperous, with 70 per cent of the population too young to remember the genocide. But there has been little real reconciliation. For years, those who survived and those who carried out the killings found it impossible to meet. Their children and families have also been scarred. Shame and denial one on side, rage and resentment on the other, forced them to shun each other. Suspicion blocked all official attempts to eradicate the ideology of hate, spewed out from radios in 1994 in the months before the killings began.

So this sombre anniversary will focus especially on the young, and on overcoming the guilt felt by the perpetrators' children and the fear still marking the children of survivors. Across the country, reconciliation clubs, some of them sponsored and supported by a Brit-

ish peace-building organisation organisation International Alert, are working to prevent the virus of hatred being passed down to the next generation. Rwanda is determined not to let the example of Yugoslavia shape its future, or the tribalism that still racks neighboring Burundi and Kenya scar those seeking to move forward.

Reconciliation clubs have been started even in the smallest villages. "My name is Primitive. I lost 20 members of my family. I was alone and traumatised," the Tutsi survivor told the 30 men and woman sitting in a circle in a village community centre in Ngororero, one of Rwanda's poorest provinces.

"I thought I would be killed at any time. I got a job as a tax collector, but couldn't collect money from people who tried to kill me. This man here," he said, pointing to a wizened Hutu villager sitting beside him, "killed my children. He admitted his role and went to jail for seven years. After that we never spoke to each other. I turned my face away if I saw him in the street. Then we joined this club. Now we share everything."

Pascal, looking older than his 60 years, took up the story. "I grew up with Primitive. We were neighbors. I was like his big brother. But because of this country's history, we were divided. I was among those convinced that Tutsis were bad and should be killed. I played a key role in the killings. I threw two of his children in the river."

"When the fighting ended, I ran away and stayed two years in the Congo. When I came back, he denounced me to the police and I went to prison. When I saw Primitive for the first time after that, the tension was very high. But last year he convinced me to come to this club. He has forgiven me. Now we share everything. I wish others like me would also seek forgiveness."

The two men publicly embraced. Others, perpetrators and victims, recalled the terrible April in 1994. The club, Duhuze — "Connecting" — now helps villagers live together by sharing community projects, lending money to the poorest and giving them a forum to meet and cooperate.

In another village, the focus is especially on the young — lively, enthusiastic, wearing their yellow club sweat-shirts. They meet every Saturday under the trees in the village centre. This week they were acting out an improvised play, showing the pain of restitution and the inherited guilt of the children of perpetrators.

Clutching a stick and playing the role of a victim, one man was ranting to his family. "We're poor, we have no shoes. My house was looted and my cows were taken. The court ordered that family to give me back my property. But they won't. Don't talk to them. They are still our enemies."

Another young man plays the perpetrator, gloating over his gains. "We're doing well — let's celebrate. We



PHOTO: REUTERS

Placing faith in youth. Reconciliation programs in Rwanda are focused on gaining mutual understanding among descendants of former murderers and their victims

won't give anything back. They just want our money," he tells his wife and children. In the next scene the children of both families meet in a bar. The perpetrator's are drinking beer and mock the poor Tutsi children, who respond with lines that could come from Shakespeare: "We eat the same bread. If we're cut, we bleed like you."

Guilt seizes the perpetrator's children. They urge their father to make amends. Bringing beer, food and gifts they call at the house of the Tutsi victim, who shrieks in terror. "They're coming again! They're coming to kill us!" "No," the humbled perpetrator says. "I am here to seek forgiveness." Little by little, the victim is won over. Finally, he offers his forgiveness. Everyone claps.

The scene is familiar. Young Rwandans see it still all around them. They are too young to remember the start of the genocide. It was sparked by the shooting down of the plane of President Habyarimana, leader of the Hutu-dominated extremist government that since independence in 1962 had been persecuting the Tutsi, then about 15 per cent of the population. The next day, the killings began, long planned by extremist ideologues. Soldiers, police and youths were mobilised into gangs. The killings went on for 100 days until Paul Kagame — now the president, and then leader of the exiled Rwandan Patriotic Front — brought his army in from Uganda, overthrew the extremists and drove the "genocidaires" and

more than two million Hutus into Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

One of the most horrifying massacres took place in a church in Begesera, close to the capital Kigali, where more than 5,000 Tutsi had sought sanctuary. On April 15 the killers arrived in buses. Cowering in the church, the refugees were knifed, shot and clawed to death with home-made clubs studded with nails. The rough bricks of the Sunday school building are still stained by the blood of the babies' skulls smashed against the walls. One wall of the kitchen building is missing: it was pushed on top of the victims who were burnt alive with mattresses soaked in oil.

Inside the church, rows of skulls are neatly ranged — kept as proof of the atrocity for the genocide deniers. Their torn money, bibles, school books and old government documents identifying them as Tutsi (forbidden in Rwanda today) are kept in cases. Reminiscent of Auschwitz, the ragged and bloodstained clothing, once worn by the children, is piled up in heaps.

Outside, a long black marble wall lists more than 1,500 names. In underground vaults, coffins hold thousands of bones. Sheets hung on walls underneath the large new roof erected over the memorial site record the visitors' horror and prayers in both English and Rwandan. The words "Never again" are everywhere. It is a lesson Rwanda hopes that other countries will learn. ■

A tale of two Kashmirs: peace delayed or denied?

Is there any chance for a peaceful settlement of the crisis?

Mridula Ghosh, Board Chair, East European Development Institute

A Kashmiri shawl merchant in my native city Kolkata proudly shows the best goods he has whenever I visit the shop. And after a while, I sometimes ask about his home in Kashmir. With tears in his eyes, he speaks about the beauty of the land and his nostalgia. Anyone born in India until the late 70's of the past century, was told in childhood, Kashmir is a heaven on earth, for its amazing natural beauty and moderate-tempered equally hospitable people, citing what Mughal Emperor Jahangir wrote about it in 1620 in Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (Memoirs of Jahangir), or four centuries later, what Jawaharlal Nehru said about Srinagar to be a "fairy-city of dreamlike beauty". But, for the past several decades, this piece of paradise is a bone of contention between two South Asian nuclear powers. It is split into two, part belonging to India and part under the occupation of Pakistan. Constant threat of terrorists from the Pakistan occupied side and pressure of the Indian army from the other is what made this shawl trader fear and move out. For this reason he, a Muslim by faith, is fine in my city and goes back once or twice a year to order the merchandise.

Tensions reached its peak following a suicide attack on an Indian paramilitary convoy on 14 February, which killed 42 soldiers in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The suicide attack was performed by a 20-year old young Kashmiri man, whose video recorded statement, confirming that he is the one who committed the act, went viral. It was the deadliest in 30 years of Kashmir conflict and claimed by Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed

(JeM), escalated into a massive standoff between the two South Asian neighbors. India demanded Pakistan take action on these militants, operating from its territory. Pakistan demanded clear evidence. On February 28, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi told in an exclusive interview to the CNN that the founder of armed group Jaish-e-Mohammed, Masood Azhar, is in Pakistan and is "very unwell". The very location of this terrorist leader, not very far away from Abbottabad, the place where Osama Bin Laden was hiding is a clear indication of how Pakistan's territory is used by terrorist networks.

Twelve long days in India was spent in mourning, and the media wanting a reply from the authorities, as well as demanding answers to questions about security lapses and how could such a massive terrorist act happen. After these 12 days India launched "non-military, pre-emptive" air strikes on the terrorist camps inside Pakistan's territory, and one Indian Air Force pilot Abhinandan Varthaman was captured. Response by Pakistan followed and there was shelling across the border. War was knocking at door. Later, on March 1, Pakistan returned IAF pilot to India and called it "a gesture of peace". Tensions, for the time being, came down. However, today, in the same way as during the past several decades, the violence-torn beautiful land and people of Kashmir, across the Line of control still seek an answer to question — will peace ever come? If it comes, how and at what cost for the lives of its people?



Conflict of interests. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi is facing some problems with resolution of crisis in Kashmir due to election campaign that is underway in country

This very old problem of Kashmir, inherited since the emergence of the two independent states, India and Pakistan, from the remains of the colonial British India, has been the primary geopolitical marker of trouble and stability, of diplomacy and warfare, of arms race and peace talks for the post-colonial era of the sub-continent. New vignettes of this old problem have seen multiple armed conflicts, wars, numerous cross border terrorist attacks, insurgency, series of human rights violations and militarization. Peaceful and good neighborly coexistence of India and Pakistan, like US and Canada, France and Germany is a dream and the biggest post-colonial challenge of the century. And Kashmir is at the heart of the problem.

Establishing peace in the region would require both India and Pakistan to reconcile the multiple — and sometimes conflicting — aspirations of the diverse peoples of this region. Only the Muslim population in Indian administered Kashmir might be interested in seceding from India, after decades of fear, and intimidation, resulting from the militarization of the valley. But this is not true for the Buddhists in Ladakh or the population of Jammu, and the Hindu Kashmiris (Pandits), who suffered in the hands of Muslim militants and had to flee from Kashmir valley to live in shelters in Jammu and other parts of India. Only when local aspirations are recognized, addressed and debated alongside India and Pakistan's nationalist and strategic goals will a durable solution emerge to one of the world's longest-running conflicts.

Experts are of the opinion, many historic chances were lost. Some say, the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah was in favor of Kashmir's accession to India, it is pertinent to point out here that they did not want outright annexation but only through empowerment of the people of Kashmir. Considerable discussions were held and there are elaborate memories captured in available literature. Issue of such an ideal accession did not materialize due to the death of Nehru in 1964. Luck was again knocking at the door, when, in 1971, after the end of the Indo-Pakistan war and independence of Bangladesh, a plebiscite in Kashmir would have been in favor of India, say others. Time passed, while both India and Pakistan had to consider Kashmir in the cobweb of geopolitics of the cold war era, weapons proliferation and other issues.

Suffice it to say that the only state having special status as per the Indian Constitution is Jammu and Kashmir. To have accession based on popular consent, India created sufficient legal and constitutional framework for ensuring autonomy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. But this special status and autonomy has contributed to the internal problems of social integration in the state today.

According to Section 370 of the Indian Constitution: No law enacted by the Parliament of India, except for those in the field of defense, communication and foreign policy, will be extendable in Jammu and Kashmir unless it is ratified by the state legislature of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, constitutional protections for minorities available in mainland India were not applicable to minorities in Kashmir as per Article 370, so, as a result, the minority community of Kashmiri Hindus were eliminated from the economic organization of the State, its government and administration. An archaic and highly discriminatory rule known as the State Subject law, was instituted in 1890, by the then Maharajah, and later the spirit of the same law was reflected in Article 35A of the Indian Constitution. It empowered the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent resident" of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents, disallowing outsiders from owning land and property in the state. According to this law, women who marry men (including those who are Kashmiri Hindus) domiciled outside the state, automatically lose their right as a 'State Subject'. Even if their children are born in the state, those children have no rights and are destined to live elsewhere in India. As a result, generation after generation of Kash-

miri Hindus started losing rights to their ancestral homeland. Rise of the mujahedeen in Afghanistan and later after the withdrawal of the Soviets at the end of intervention by USSR, the militancy and arms started spreading to the neighboring areas. Thus, when militancy erupted in the Kashmir valley in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was already dominated by Muslims, and the first casualty was a tiny community of ethnic Kashmiris belonging to the Hindu faith, comprising roughly eight percent of the population. Known to swear their allegiance to the Indian state, this community became the first target of Islamist militants who engaged in targeted killings of the community's prominent members. Threats were issued to either convert to Islam or leave the valley — and most of them, numbering around 300,000 — fled Kashmir to the safer havens of the nearby Hindu-dominated region of Jammu. Decades later, with repatriation to Kashmir still only a dream, the community has created its own political party — the Jammu Kashmir National United Front (JKNUF). Militancy in Kashmir has also simultaneously produced an ethnically cleansed landscape, dotted with abandoned Pandit homes and lands, destroyed Hindu temples, and a large community of internally displaced people. Meanwhile, Kashmiri society slowly, but ominously, turned into a polarized one and now constitutes patchwork of culturally and religiously homogenous areas spread across the state, emptied of its earlier syncretism.

INDIAN AND PAKISTANI DIASPORA AROUND THE WORLD WERE ALSO UNITED AGAINST ANY WAR DURING THIS CRISIS. ANTI-WAR BLURBS, WRITE-UPS AND CAMPAIGNS FLOODED THE SOCIAL MEDIA. THIS WAS A STARK CONTRAST TO MANY MAINSTREAM MEDIA IN INDIA

Life for Muslims has not been easy either. Militarization has added a bitter experience with Human Rights protection. Military's relationship with the civilian population has been problematic. After every militant attack or some small insurgency, the Indian army searches the cities for probable terrorists and many persons are arrested and labelled as terrorists. This continuous tussle between Indian Army and local citizens, has increased stereotyping the average Muslim living in the valley to have suspected links with terrorists, followed by mistrust and culminating into hatred towards the Indian Army. Calls for secession from India are often heard. In this situation, a debate on abrogating of amending the Section 370 or Article 35A has always caused uproar among the ruling parties in Kashmir, which, if undertaken, will remove the exclusivity of the Muslims in the valley. Strangely, in case of joining Pakistan, the ruling elite of Kashmir do also realize that this exclusivity and privileged position will immediately disappear, and so their calls for independence are not translated beyond declarations.

Thus, the issue of any plebiscite or "asking what the people think" is easy to propose but difficult to implement. It might yield results, which will be destabilizing for both India and Pakistan as well as send signals for the Tibetan region of China. Pakistan's earlier precept that religion be used as a division for partitioning British India and princely states was long overruled when Bangladesh became independent in 1971, comprising of a Muslim-majority population. Muslim religion in the Indian subcontinent is not a monolith and it is archaic today to use the historical argument. Today, India is home to more Muslims than the whole population of Pakistan. India has the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. In this context, invitation of the Indian Foreign Minister Mrs. Sushma Swaraj to the United Arab Emirates for a meeting of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is at the height of the current crisis is indeed symbolic, ■

although the OIC issued a strong worded statement condemning both the terrorist act as well as the Indian air strikes.

Recent tensions after the 14 February terrorist attack once again revealed several simple truths that were clear for many years to the population of both India and Pakistan but not clear to leaders and politicians of both countries, who are always tempted to use the issue of Kashmir in their pre-election campaigns.

First, it showed that there can never be any military solution to the problem. The rationale for the standoff with huge military from both sides is largely preventive. However, any provocation or terrorist act is enough to kindle a major war and the consequences are unpredictable. Therefore preventing all terrorist acts is in the best interests of Pakistan.

Second, leadership is crucial for facing and mitigating crisis as well as delivering tangibles, which can act as tools of good neighborhood foreign policy. Leadership in India by Narendra Modi has been adequate in its immediate reaction to the crisis, but has faced challenges of managing the crisis further in the height of its election campaign and is also entangled into an arms deal scandal centering the delivery of Rafale planes from France. Coming into power of Imran Khan as the Prime Minister of Pakistan gave some hope. Pakistan did contribute to de-escalation by return of the captured Indian Air Force pilot. It also arrested the brother

Keeping these lost lives in mind, enumerating more than **70000** for the past seven decades, the ideal situation would be for the leaders of India and Pakistan to carve a new conceptual framework for resolving the Kashmir imbroglio

of the leader and several other members of the “Jaish-e-Mohammad” network that took responsibility for the terrorist act, as per the list of names and proof provided by India. In another move, a provincial minister of Pakistan was forced to resign after his anti-Hindu statements. Similar resignations did not happen in the case of Islamophobic statements of some India’s ruling BJP personnel. But, it will be unfair to say de-escalation was possible solely due to the political will of Prime Minister Imran Khan, who, earlier a cricket player and a charismatic personality enjoys high popularity among the Indian public, or Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister.

Here comes the third truth. The subcontinent is home to the largest democracy in the world. Information revolution has also changed the subcontinent, which applies to the political fabric of Pakistan, which is dominated by the military. Pressure from the civil society, eminent people, youth were crucial. Writer Fatima Bhutto, niece of ex-Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and granddaughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto openly condemned any retaliation and requested Imran Khan to return the captured Indian pilot back. Anti-war statements, hundreds of flash-mobs, mass demonstrations were held both in India and Pakistan. Undoubtedly, the young generation’s yearning for peace in the subcontinent was a decisive factor. They are tired of the war mongering jargon of their politicians, huge defense budgets at the cost of social and economic development.

Fourth, usually aloof with their own lives, Indian and Pakistani diaspora around the world were also united against any war during this crisis. Anti-war blurbs, write-ups and campaigns flooded the social media. This was a stark contrast to many mainstream media in India, who were seen warmongering and were criticized for not adhering to the required ethics.

Five, side by side with this positive development, the problem of widely circulated fake news from social media added to some

tension through postings of several false videos, pictures and messages. The video of an injured pilot from a recent Indian air show and images from a 2005 earthquake were taken out of context to attempt to mislead tens of millions on platforms like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. In India, Pratik Sinha, co-founder of a fact-checking website, Alt News, received requests to verify news from journalists and people on social media. In Pakistan, a purported video of a second captured Indian pilot was being widely circulated. Fact-checking website Boom noted the clip was from an air show in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru, where two planes crashed on February 19. Here again active youth, constituting majority of the population and responsible behavior of fact checkers and social media users helped in reducing the tension.

Sixth, for the first time in India, there was a visible shift from the tradition of all-party consensus on issues of foreign policy and defense of the country. India’s opposition parties, even though they hailed the airstrikes by India, but called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to politicize and use the crisis for his on-going political campaign prior to the parliamentary elections in May 2019. This slight deviation from full consensus is based on reaction of politicians to some government policies and decisions. Most opposition parties voiced against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party’s Hindutva policies (promoting everything related to Hinduism or Hindu supremacy) for the past years, because that has fanned Islamophobia across India, leading to dangerous polarization along religious lines. Having the second largest Muslim population in the world, this is equal to playing with fire. Omar Abdullah, head of the National Conference party in Kashmir did not approve Modi government’s ban on Jamaat-i-Islam days after the terrorist attack. Aggressive rhetoric has never helped in resolution of conflicts.

In the seventh place, Indian Government’s silence in publicizing the details of the result of the airstrikes and the number of terrorists killed was also criticized, reminding us that India has a vibrant civic and political control over its military, while the same is not true for Pakistan, which was under military dictatorship. Therefore, time will show how long Imran Khan will be able to hold onto his peaceful intentions.

Meanwhile, casualties continued to rise from both sides. Indian and Pakistani soldiers targeted each other’s posts and villages along their volatile frontier, killing at least five civilians and wounding several others. Two siblings and their mother were killed by Pakistani shelling into Indian-administered Kashmir, while a boy and man were killed by Indian shelling on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control. Pakistan stated about the death of two of its soldiers in Nakiyal near the Line of Control. This brings the toll to seven since the release of the Indian pilot on March 1. In addition, four members of India’s security forces, two rebels and one civilian have been killed during gunfights in Kupwara district, India-administered Kashmir.

Keeping these lost lives in mind, enumerating more than 70000 for the past seven decades, the ideal situation would be for the leaders of India and Pakistan to carve a new conceptual framework for resolving the Kashmir imbroglio. However unrealistic it may sound, in order to permanently and justly settle the issue of Kashmir, abrogation or amendment of Article 370 could be followed by re-organization of the state into four distinct entities, Jammu, Ladakh, Panun Kashmir and Kashmir. The territory would also be converted into an economic zone attracting the best of Indian industrial talent, especially high technology. Kashmiri language, culture and traditions would be preserved within this territory, which would integrate with the rest of secular India at a much faster pace. Benefits of an open multicultural society would be the only effective means for India to regain the confidence of people it lost decades ago in the valley. At least, the shawl merchant I meet in Kolkata will be happy to return to his ancestral home. ■



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Jerry Skinner:

“Russia has done everything to block the investigation of the MH17”

Interviewed by Yuriy Lapayev

PHOTO: REUTERS

The Ukrainian Week talked with an attorney representing the families of those killed in the disaster of the Malaysian MH17 flight in a lawsuit against the Russian Federation in the European Court of Human Rights, on the evidence in this case, and on the possible consequences of the verdict for Russia.

Which evidences or witness were presented by Ukrainian side, from which sources and which of them were accepted by court?

— The people of the Ukraine have provided some of the best evidence on the merits in this case and in the DSB and JIT investigations. The probative evidence that shows that Russia attacked MH17 with a Buk M1, came from Luhansk, Donetsk, Makiivka, Zugres and Snizne. It was in the form of pictures, videos, intercepted telecommunications and live witnesses that saw the flatbed and TELAR, the smoke trail and the crash. This put the criminals at the scene of the crime. It identified the murder weapon as coming from the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade at Kursk. The Ukrainian people identified the numbers, carriage markings and road damage of the TELAR launch unit. They confirmed that the TELAR returned to Russia on 18 July, missing one missile. The Ukrainian government confirmed all of this for the JIT investigation. All of this and much more has been filed and accepted into the families ECHR case.

In your opinion — what more need to be done from Ukrainian side? From Ukrainian government? From Ukrainian civil organisations and activists?

— I have been in Kyiv recently. Obviously MH17 is a small part of the Russian problem in the Eastern Ukraine. But, the Ukraine could and should do more in terms of legal remedies. There are few Courts that will allow you to try to punish a nation state for this type of atrocity. There are diplomatic challenges, economic

sanctions and of course military options. I do not advocate further military action. The Ukraine has done what was necessary to defend their people and their freedom. But the legal remedies are tools which should all be used to the greatest extent possible. Ukraine pursued Russia in the ICJ. An academic option as Russia has blocked other UN efforts with their security council veto. But in the ECHR where our case is filed, Ukraine should attack Russia as strongly as possible. Ukraine has filed 4 actions in the ECHR. One was preliminarily dismissed. 3 are limited in scope to unique issues related small groups. I have offered to file an all encompassing application for a crippling amount of damages for taking land, violating sovereignty, taking industries, moving the population, creating 2 million refugees, destroying infrastructure, and killing more than 20,000 Ukrainian civilians. I have contacted the Foreign Ministry Legal Team to make this offer, so far they are not interested in talking. I still want to talk. Against a foe that takes what they want, you use all that you have.

Which Russian military personnel, connected to attack on MH17, identified according to materials?

— What is known about named Russian players in the Donbas conflict and specifically the MH17 plot and shoot down, is that the Russian involved are numerous, but many more are known to the JIT investigators than have been publicly discussed. The frequent communicators both with each other and Moscow are the Russian military men with call signs. There is Orion, Delfin and Khmury. They are Oleg Ivannikov, Nicholai Fedorovich Tkachev and Sergei Nicolaevich Dubinsky. There is much discussion in intercepted telecommunications about the Buk and the general plan for the take over in the Donbas. Of course there are many news stories about the local separatist leaders, who were actually Russians. They all discuss the role of Igor “Strelkov”-Gir-

kin and Vladislav Surkov. Russia refused to acknowledge the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine at the time of the MH17 attack. But in hindsight officers were plentiful. What the JIT knows about the TELAR crew is not known. However, the names of the crew are pivotal to identifying other interests who may have contributed to the attack plan.

Regarding Russian side — do they had any proposals (open or covert) to make any “deal” to stop the investigation?

— The Russian Federation, by the Ministry of Defense, the Russian Army, the Foreign Ministry, private concerns such as Almaz Antey, obstructed, delayed, failed to cooperate, created evidence and “lost” evidence for both the DSB Aircrash Investigation and the JIT Criminal Investigation. Russia has not contributed the ECHR case. It depends on your point of view. Russia has done everything to block the investigation. Or, Russia has done nothing. No proposed deals. Just nothing.

Do some of the Russian authorities tried to contact you to have some kind of deal? Or try to reach the families via your help?

— I have invited contact with the Russian government. If there are interested authorities that read this, I still invite contact and discussion. However, I have not heard anything by direct or indirect means. I am unaware of families receiving any inquiries. But it would not surprise me.

Were there any reviewing or checking for all (often conspiracy-like) versions of events, presented by Russian side? (Like Ukrainian jet, Ukrainian anti-aircraft complex, Spanish aircontroller, CIA plot)?

— Yes, Russia has created a lot of evidence. But none of it is credible or even well done. The photo of the Ukrainian Sukhoi, that was not Ukrainian, the Malaysian passenger jet which had the wrong livery or paint job, the launch complex in the Ukraine that photo filter analysis showed was two merged pictures, two photos the “two Buks and the Cloud photo both with many added elements, the bogus Almaz Antey launch site study with a location that makes no difference and finally the lost and found raw primary and secondary radar data that was produced in a format that no one could read. The Russians have promoted evidence that has been grossly manipulated. They ignore and discount clear simple evidence which demonstrates their culpability

What is current position of Russian side in this case? On which evidences it is based on?

— Russia has taken no position on the ECHR case. We know of no evidence they have filed with the ECHR. For now, The Russian Federation is the Defendant. Individual Russians may be witnesses in the JIT Criminal case or in our claim in the ECHR. We will not know until the cases are actually in Court.

What is current position of MH17 families side in this case? On which evidences it is based on?

— 291 family members have filed applications with the ECHR. I would like to see all of the families follow up. We started with 33. The others finally recognized that Russia was too strong to attempt to hold accountable without large numbers. The families remaining in Australia and Malaysia need to join in. Nothing prevents them from doing so, though not all will agree with what we are doing. However, there are many tolls in this battle for truth. Continue to push on your local political leaders. Call for diplomatic action. Do not let action for accountability die.

What are current perspectives for families? What are next steps for them in that case?

— The families still weep for the 80 lost children, every night. The fathers who lost precious daughters and sons still long

Jerome L. Skinner. Studied at Ohio Northern University Pettit College of Law. He graduated in 1979. After passing the bar exam, he was admitted to legal practice in 1979. Jerome L. Skinner is an attorney providing legal services covering Aviation and Aerospace and Personal Injury. He has successfully advocated for families victimized by almost every major U.S. airline disaster since 1989, including the negotiations that resulted in the State of Libya paying a \$2.7 billion dollar settlement to the survivors of those killed by the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. Founder and President of Romanian Handicapped Ministries. Since 2016 – represents relatives of MH17 victims in the European Court of Human Rights.

for grandchildren they will never hold. Husbands and wives who lost mates, face more days alone. None of this is justified by the dreams of a state to recover past glory. Novorossiia is a lost dream paid for by innocents. MH17 was a nightmare at 30,000 feet paid for by the same victims who never heard about “Novorossiia”. Here is perspective, one of the families at the last anniversary of the attack stated, “you just cannot do this to people.” That is right isn't it Mr. Putin? The families, as many as can be, need to be very active. Hold frequent demonstrations in front of Russian embassies and consulates. Contact their own governments about being aggressive with Russia. The Dutch are doing this. I wish the Malaysians would. You really need the Australian to be active. Keep it in the news. Write to Mr. Putin. What has happened in the Ukraine is a tragedy of the greatest power. Russia denies it with dis-information. If I were leading the family groups I would form NGO's, fund raise and publish, promote, post on billboards and by any means possible tell the truth. Everyday the truth. Russia should not be able to look beyond it's borders with a reminder of what happened. For every one of the 80 children on the plane, for everyone of the children in the Donbas which is homeless or orphaned, for every family that is in pieces, tell the Russians truth every day.

When we can expect final verdict?

— I am hopeful for resolution to begin in the last half of 2019 or the first part of 2020.

In your opinion — are there any chances, that Russia will agree to execute the verdict? Which kind of punishment there would be?

— Yes. Mr. Putin and Russia may never say, “we did it”. But, they may have to deal with the problems which the families pursuit has caused them. An appropriate response, with large compensation for the families will give those families more closure than the apartment bomb victims, the Moscow theater families or the “Mothers of Beslan” ever got. As a great champion of fighting overwhelming odds once said “never, never, never give up. For right now exemplary damages to punish Russia for atrocities compensation is not needed. Punishment is needed. The JIT will go forward with the investigation and the criminal trial. Hopefully, Russia will produce the individuals involved for criminal trials in the Netherlands. The Dutch are tough they will pursue it. But it is an unavoidable, sad fact, what the families all want is to have their loved ones back. That is never happening. So my final suggestion is, take all the damages you can get, put the actual actors from Russia in jail. But do not forget the paragraph above. If a group can organize and keep the spirit of their loved ones alive by telling the true story, by promoting it, by publicizing it, do it. Keep it in Russia's face, it will stay with them as long as Mr. Putin fails to accept responsibility. ■■

Grimaces of show politics

Why the development of political marketing can make democracy in Ukraine a threat to national security

Maksym Vikhrov

Complaints about Ukrainian politics resembling a show started at the dawn of independence. Now, this statement is reality. Not just because athletes and celebrities easily get to parliament in party lists or individual constituencies. Even political leaders are now borrowing tricks from performers, parties promote themselves as commercial brands while election campaigning increasingly resembles advertising of yet another Bollywood movie. This has reached an absurd point this year as one of the key competitors for the presidential seat combines his campaigning in the regions with his concert tour. His election campaign builds around a TV series where the candidate plays the role of the president.

Other candidates, too, play their own shows. Traditional meetings with the crowds, verbal duels in front of cameras and squabbles in the parliament have become trivial. Time has come for some more serious directing. Motorcades stopping for the president to speak to a crying child, crazy monologues in wheelchairs, public eating of earth — Ukrainian politics requires more and more dedication and creativity. This is nothing new to authori-

ticians and businessmen use a wide arsenal of identical marketing tools, from billboards and ads in the media to public support of athletes and actors. In this sense, marketing is a driver of both trade and political life. This may sound like an exaggeration because the common thinking is that voters are still driven by their values and interests, while the constellation of political forces is just a reflection of the balance in social forces. Indeed, how can a politician possibly sell socialism to an entrepreneur or friendship with Russia to a nationalist? It's true that political marketing is not omnipotent. But in reality citizens are not always fully aware of their interests or make a rational choice. Therefore, by responding to one proposal or another, a voter often satisfies the needs created by the party teams. In its extreme form, this delivers the triumphs of charismatic leaders who sell visions and populist narratives charged with emotions, not even obscure platforms to their electorate. Gustave Le Bon wrote about this back in the day. Many political leaders of the 20th century later used his observations.

Edward Bernays, a pioneer of American PR industry in the 1920s, can be named as Le Bon of marketing. He described in theory and proved in practice that producers can both meet demand and successfully create it by appealing to certain motivations of the target audience, including the irrational ones. The economic impact of using this simple but revolutionary statement is hard to overstate. The approach to advertising has changed: attention is now drawn to creating attractive images linked to owning a product, not to describing the details of the product. In this way, producers of smartphones, clothing or cars can satisfy more than material demands of their consumers. The most successful brands create prestigious subcultures around them. Consumers are willing to pay generously to be part of them. Similar trends fully apply to art as show business, with all of its specifics is, too, driven by the marketing logic. In this sense, a company that urges people to buy the goods they don't need at inflated prices is not too different from the populists urging people to make a political choice. Similarities don't end here. The revolution launched by Bernays has exhausted itself in the 100 years. So companies have armed themselves with politics in their search for ways to mobilize potential buyers. While business used to stay away from politics in the past, afraid to scare away potential buyers, today's global brands are becoming promoters of certain ideological norms. Gillette no longer offers comfortable shaving in its ad released in January 2019, but calls on the consumers to resist "toxic masculinity" instead. Colin Kaepernick, an activist against racial discrimination, becomes the face of Nike while Reebok launches a campaign to support feminism. This is not just about declaring general principles. In Febru-

HANDING POWER TO DANGEROUS ADVENTURERS
IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL OF RISK.

SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACIES HAVE INSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS THAT CAN
OFFSET NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF ELECTORAL MISTAKES TO SOME EXTENT.
UKRAINE BARELY HAS ANY SUCH SAFEGUARDS

tarian regimes: dictators fly with cranes and dive into the sea to fill the vacuum left by the non-existing political life. In a democracy, however, political shows are a factor that define much more than just electoral success of individual political forces. Emotions of the public are an unstable substance, and show politics injects an element of chaos into life which is more difficult to control than it seems. As a result, democratic regimes become increasingly vulnerable and unstable. This is very difficult to deal with.

To begin with, it is only possible to draw a clear line between show business and public politics in a democratic country in theory. In practice, they are always widely intertwined — if only because both show business and public politics have similar goals today, and are therefore forced to use the same methods. The goal of any business is to sell its goods as effectively as possible to a mass audience, converting this into profits. Politicians face a similar task: to increase their electoral capital and convert it into power. The essence of political activity is not all about this, but it can't do without this component. A successful promotion strategy developed by a company or an election team is critical in both cases. Therefore, poli-



Form winning over content. The images created in show business are now shaping the image of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as politician

ary 2017, Apple, Google, Facebook and Microsoft publicly spoke against restrictions on migrants from Islamic countries introduced by Donald Trump. The effect of the latest presidential election on the Hollywood community has been obvious: celebrities have rushed into political activism while cinema is growing more ideological.

All this can seem ironic: even sellers of sneakers are now trying to educate people, one may say. But this hides pragmatic calculation, not corporate arrogance: the demand for politically conscious brands is extremely high amongst American millennials, and they will become their main audience in several dozen years. For now, they are paying extra for the right ideological positioning to the consumers. In Ukraine, we are mostly witnessing the opposite cases where political factors influence business or try to do so: examples include campaigns to boycott Russian goods. It is beyond doubt, however, that Ukraine will join the global trend in the future. Meanwhile, Ukrainian politics is almost mirroring that trend as it goes through its phase of “plummeting sales”. The political market was very diverse in the 20th century, represented by a wide range of ideas — from fascism to anarchism. As it got rid of the most radical concepts by the 21st century, the Euro-Atlantic world has gained relative calm, but the political field has become very homogenous. Add to this the crisis of the core ideologies, and we are in a situation where it is increasingly difficult to accumulate political capital. Here is when political marketing experts refer to good old populism where catchy gestures replace a discussion, fiery slogans replace the basics of political platforms, and showoff is valued more than integrity. Trump’s victory, the latest forecasts on European

Parliament elections and domestic political processes in the EU countries show that this marketing strategy does make sense. As they play the role of showmen and act as Hollywood celebrities, some politicians can perfectly fight for the electorate with respectable statesmen and functionaries of established parties. Ukraine is ahead of the West in this as its political field is shaping from scratch in a post-totalitarian context. As a result, show business and politics intertwine in such grotesque absurd shapes.

Thus, politics and business use the entire accessible range of marketing tools in the fight for being liked by society. The problem is that the use in the political field can have serious negative implications. Not only because communication technologies are increasingly efficient and can hide the lack of content. But because the voters, heated up by the high-tech campaigning, can direct their countries into a wrong vector. Paying five times more for a phone or going to a concert of a talentless but well-promoted performer is one thing. Handing power to dangerous adventurers is a completely different level of risk. Sustainable democracies have institutional safeguards that can offset negative implications of electoral mistakes to some extent. Ukraine barely has any such safeguards so it finds itself facing two threats: a threat to democracy from authoritarianism on the one hand, and a threat to statehood linked to some electoral trends on the other hand. Ukrainian society has used the Maidan as emergency brake twice already. What should it do when the future of the country is under threat from the electoral consequences of show politics? It is extremely difficult to find answers to these questions. ■

Hiding new faces

Why Ukraine's parties are not social lifts and will never be, so unless they change fundamentally

Roman Malko

Political activity is probably one of the most promising and successful types of business there is in Ukraine. Nothing matches it for short-term opportunities and dividends. The current campaign fever confirms this beautifully. Although pessimists keep saying that this business is slowly declining, that the old parties are running dry, that leader-based parties are a thing of the past, that new approaches and management models are the trend — primaries, social lifts and so on — all of this is just empty words.

Even if the existing system is going through a mid-life crisis, it's quite capable of living on for many years, having chewed to bits in its powerful jaws anything that constitutes a threat. No primaries, a feature that is very popular among the innovative parties, no transfusion of new blood, directly or otherwise, will make any difference. They are all illusory and are having no impact whatsoever. If someone is not comfortable with the new faces that have supposedly appeared in the last few years, the new political brands and new young teams that have sprung up like mushrooms after the rain — relax!

WITHOUT RADICAL CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL ELITE, MEANING REFORMING THE CURRENT POLITICAL MODEL, ANY EXPECTATIONS THAT THE COUNTRY'S POLITICS WILL RECOVER ARE DOOMED TO DISAPPOINTMENT. ANY SOCIAL LIFTS ARE LIVE-BORN AND WILL SURVIVE A LONG TIME YET. BUT UNTIL POLITICS AT LEAST CEASES TO BE BUSINESS AND OLIGARCHS, AS A CLASS, ARE REMOVED FROM GOVERNMENT

First of all, there is always a portion of coincidences that happen under the influence of specific events and can be mistaken for a sign of recovery and change. A revolution is one of those. But they are more like misunderstandings that are very quickly resolved. Harvard grads and expats in the civil service can confirm this very easily. Ditto for combat commanders in the legislature. The oligarchic genius is capable of a lot more to make sure that the system he set up is not reorganized in any way.

Secondly, there are clear markers that indicate the real or fake nature of innovations and even of existing structures: the presence and person of a sponsor or sponsors — politics is not a cheap toy — situative alliances — against the current powers-that-be for now and let's see how it goes — ideologies and values — for everything good, against everything bad won't quite do — how the leaders and membership espouse these ideologies and values, the functioning of the organization and its network of supporters — not just on paper — and long-term goals — winning the next election doesn't qualify — and so on, and so forth.

Thirdly, a maturing democratic society cannot function without a rotation among its elites. Horizontally, this means parties replace each other in competitive political environment, first coming to power and then in the opposition, and vertically, it means party organizations renewing themselves internally by bringing in new faces and promoting their younger members.

This approach, alas, doesn't work in Ukraine. The chessboard is filled with the same oligarchic political projects who replace each other and undergo rebranding from time to time. No horizontal rotation or internal renewal goes on at all, in effect. In short, social lifts, the one possible mechanism that can ensure healthy growth and evolution, don't work.

Indeed, sometimes certain phenomena can be observed in politics that give the impression, mistakenly, that they are working as social lifts. Tymoshenko brings a renewed young team to the Verkhovna Rada because the old one has abandoned her, Liashko surrounds himself with pretty girls with whom he gets photographed a lot, Narodniy Front adds a slew of Maidaners and vets to its party list, and Samopomich collects all the most active people from across the country who appear to espouse its ideals. But all these moves are little more than responses to specific challenges. They have little in common with social lifts and are more like filling gaps in the ranks and an employment opportunity.

Social lifts are a system of mechanisms that help people from the bottom advance up the social ladder to the top of the pyramid based on their own abilities, skills and achievements. It could be within a party or within a government bureaucracy, but this system has to be accessible to all. Its operating principle is personal growth and competition without financial factors involved. Only in this way can a country's political elite ensure that really talented and professional individuals will join them, and not someone's protégé or relative, or the "nice and necessary."

Despite prominent declarations and endless chatter, and even the occasional attempt, no social lifts have been launched since Ukraine became independent, whether in the bureaucracy or in politics. There weren't any then and there aren't any now, either, especially among the parties. Parties were and remain special interests clubs or someone's private property, which, unfortunately, appears to be their main qualification for existing — without any ideology or normal functioning. They simply are incapable of being otherwise, because that would be unnatural and irrational for them. Yet this is the heart of the problem. Generating slogans, inventing challenges and conning voters with obvious populism is a lot simpler than competing on the basis of platforms and ideas. It's much cheaper to buy a spin-doctor than to grow talented successors to replace you and carry on the work.

But that brings up the more important question: before you start growing anything, what work actually needs to be carried on and what bright goal needs achieving? Holding on to power? We can do that ourselves. Sharing out budget flows? What do you need young, pro-active, goal-oriented, idealistic people for? They serve no purpose!

Why should the nominal head of a party, whose name is often written into the very name of the organization, need to keep a potentially dangerous future leader near them who could eventually give them a run for their money? This is threatening and harmful. Excess activeness is annoying, initiative is always suspect: they could make the boss look like an idiot by compari-



PHOTO: UNIAN

Family lift. In order to ensure unbroken tradition, Anatoliy Matvienko handed off the political baton to his nephew Serhiy Berezhenko

son. In the end, the leader wants to be the only one. After all, the party is the result of the leader's work and that individual wants to distribute and spend any benefits earned, on their own. This goes for the partners, too, as there's no business without partners. The easiest thing is to just hire the necessary professionals who will carry out the assignments necessary for money, the ideal solution. And if anything goes wrong, some Kurchenko — Yanukovych's bagman — can always be found on whom all the ill-gotten gains can be blamed. Any further questions?

To this day, party-building is topsy-turvy in Ukraine. For starters, most parties have little in the way of democracy internally. Very few people break through from the rank-and-file to the upper echelons by moving up clearly-defined rungs on a ladder. Everything happens quite differently. The top leadership is only nominally elected, from the narrow circle of the owners or sponsors of the party. They decide who will be able to climb the career ladder, who will be on party lists in an election and in what order, and confirm the candidates in FPTP districts. Since these people look at their political party exclusively as a commercial project, when they come to office, they expect to get back return on investment with profits, and that reflects their selection of candidates. Access to the party lift is granted to those who can carry out the necessary work. Not politicians by vocation, who have a clear ideological position and enjoy the respect and support of their colleagues in the party and of voters, but those who are loyal and useful to the business corporation, which generally means the same businessmen and hirelings as those who employ them.

Theoretically, such a model could be considered a social lift, but with one caveat: the service industry. In effect, this means hiring mercenaries who will carry out specific tasks for the mon-

eybags who sponsors the political grouping and makes it possible to get in the game. This is why the phenomenon called "tushky" — not to be confused with the thugs called "titushky" — is so widespread in Ukraine: the shifting back and forth of MPs between parties, depending on where they are offered a better deal, which is why the opposition parties are very nominally "opposition." And so we don't see the rotation of elites about which everyone has been talking for a long time: with these practices, no social lift is needed, apparently. When there is natural selection, the battle for ideology and competition of ideas are replaced by a competition among interests and wallets, and no one is responsible for anything: Politicians aren't accountable to their allies, nor parties before their electorate. So why make any extra hassles for themselves? Treat politics as strictly commercial.

But when parties are not ephemeral, vague substances, a completely different picture emerges: a regulated mechanism with a clear ideology that espouses specific values. On one hand, they are themselves interested in continuing to grow and renew themselves with new, healthy members and this is why they establish the necessary conditions for this. On the other, the young citizen who has decided to enter politics will choose a party precisely on the basis of ideology and values. And that means they will be motivated by those things that serve the party's ideology. Not just for the sake of a career, in the old Komsomol or Party of the Regions, but really believing that in the company of these specific people, the young member will be able to do something meaningful, however sentimental that might sound, change the country, and achieve certain ideals. There is really no other way, other than to join a party as a young person and climb up all the rungs in its organizational ladder, demonstrating capacities and talents at every stage, and to reach a leading position in the



PHOTO: UNIAN

Beef à la Yanukovich. The “deeply ideological” ranks of the “young Regionals” were indifferent to what protests were for or what slogans were being shouted. The main thing was the money

party. Neither money nor patrons will do the trick. Even when they do, the person will not last long, because no one needs fools and idiots. Moreover, the party itself will monitor carefully to make sure everything remains above-board and high-quality. After all, a sterile reputation will be in direct proportion to the party's popularity and influence.

In countries where political systems are highly evolved, the raising of an elite is a well-established, very thorough process. Selection starts at the college level. If the person exhibits certain leadership qualities and has shown that they are able to govern at that level, they have every chance of launching a successful political career. Of course, belonging to a political dynasty often does play an important role, but more as a kind of bonus that mostly underscores the potential emergence of the necessary know-how, skills and habits. A party run like a business has little to pass on to heirs, while genes are genes. The Bush family in the US is a good example of this. In Ukraine, even dynasties are a problem. In contrast to Americans, there are no political success stories involving the children of major politicians in Ukraine. Even the case of the younger Azarov or Poroshenko, who got there by accident. Such success stories are more like fairytales about how to get into the system on your dad's back.

The classic model based on healthy competition and ongoing professional development, which nurtures and rejuvenates the country's elites in civilized countries, does not work in Ukraine. Nor could it. The function of a typical Ukrainian party is completely different. It cannot on principle be social lift. Not only does Ukraine lack a normal party system with a marketplace of ideas and projects, but there is barely such a notion as the youth wing of a party. These are where growth and selection should be taking place. Sometimes something that looks like that is set up for the sake of image, to mobilize cheap labor and so on. But

when the ideology of the mother party is incomprehensible, the public that gets involved with it has no interest in idealistic goals. At the most, they hope to make money on specific campaigns. There's no notion of healthy competition or professional development for the sake of moving up the career ladder. First of all, there's no ladder. Secondly, those at the top only need cannon fodder and the chances that they will notice someone and let them through are nearly zero.

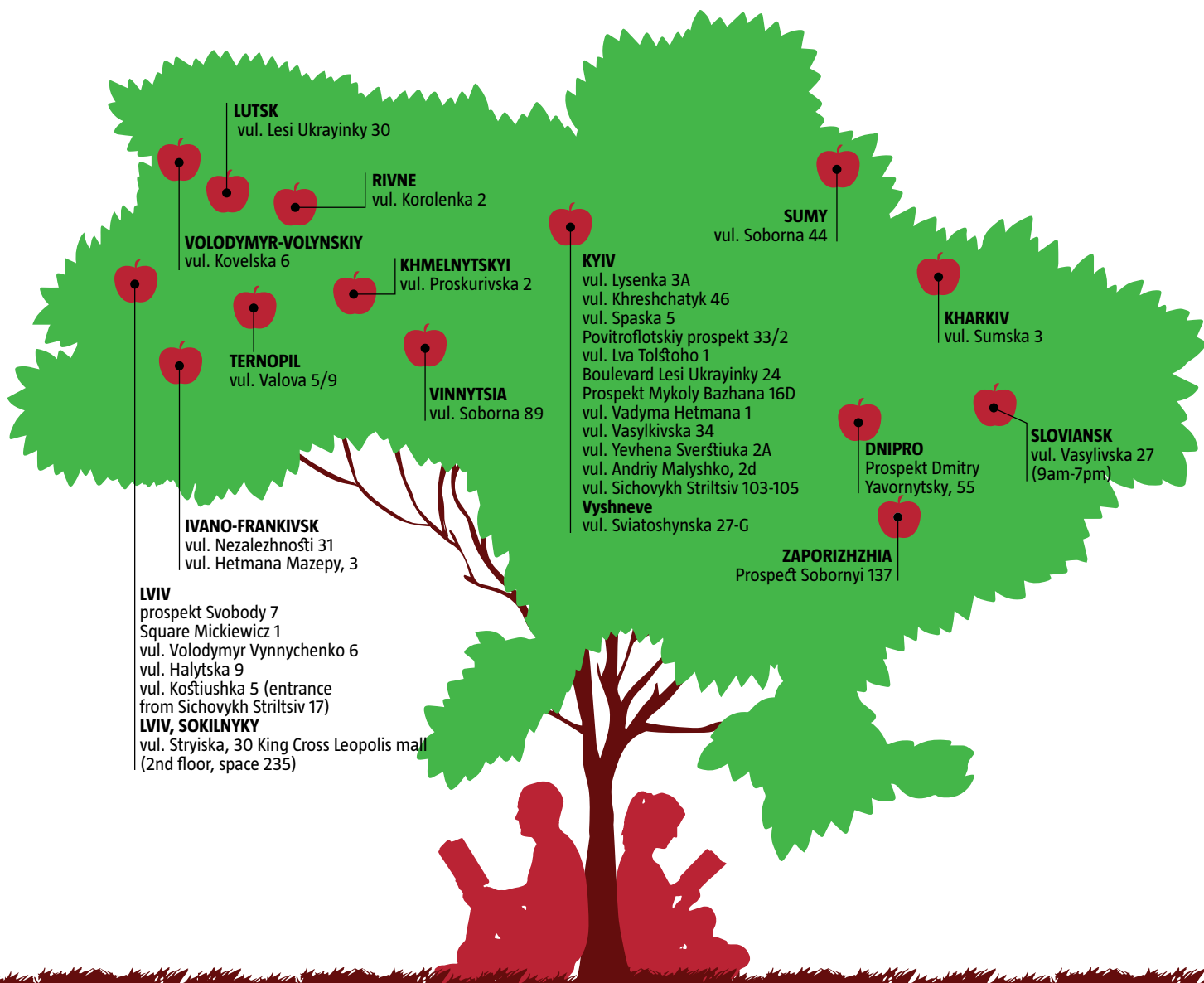
To be fair, there is actually some kind of pseudo-lifts. If you were lucky enough to be born Serhiy Berezenko, nephew of Anatoliy Matvienko, then the chance that you will become an advisor to the president and a member of the praesidium of the central council of the BPP party, Solidarnist, are many times higher. Once you have money and a willingness to investment in party-building, the lift will also be there for you. Those who have not wasted their lives but have achieved professional success as a star of the stage or, at least, famous on the internet, also have a chance. Celebrities are always useful to have around in respected political company for image purposes and are readily called to cooperate. Of course, this is all for the chosen few.

However sad it may seem, but the truth is that without radical changes in the political elite, meaning reforming the current political model, any expectations that the country's politics will recover are doomed to disappointment. Any social lifts are live-born and will survive a long time yet. But until politics at least ceases to be business and oligarchs, as a class, are removed from government, these quasi social lifts will continue to operate for a long time yet.

After the Revolution of Dignity, quite a few political projects appeared whose goal was to bring new rules and principles to the party-building game. Unfortunately, the few such cases remain unsatisfactory, incomplete attempts. ■



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The poorest country in Europe

Ukraine needs strong policy of fighting the poverty

Oleksandr Kramar

The closer it gets to the presidential elections in Ukraine, the more we talk about the poverty in the country. Many people are saying that Ukraine has become one of the most impoverished countries in the whole of Europe. This topic is frequently discussed in two dimensions. On one hand, the poverty faced by many Ukrainians is often seen in contrast with the “excess luxury and wealth of the corrupt officials and oligarchs”, who are apparently the true reason behind the everyday misery of ordinary Ukrainians. On the other hand, there is a populist comparison to the “good old days before the coup” favoured by the pro-Russian, revanchist forces, who insist that “Euro-reformers” and “Maidan’s authorities” are somehow the reason why so many Ukrainians have become destitute. In both cases we are dealing with extremely popular stereotypes aiming to explain the roots of poverty in Ukraine. These stereotypes have nevertheless very little in common with reality. Just the opposite, they distract public from the real reasons why many Ukrainians are struggling to make the ends meet and why country is facing such hardship. Therefore those above-mentioned explanations are not addressing the problem of poverty in the country, while its scale may endanger the very existence of the Ukrainian state.

DANGEROUS STEREOTYPES

There is a myth that claims that the reason behind the poverty among many Ukrainians is a great income inequality. This myth is based on assumption that the narrow circle of the affluent and rich ones, who accumulated large amounts of wealth, are root of the problem. At the same time, it is clear that in case this wealth was re-distributed among several millions impoverished Ukrainians, those funds would not be sufficient to make those latter ones wealthier. Yes, indeed everyone would

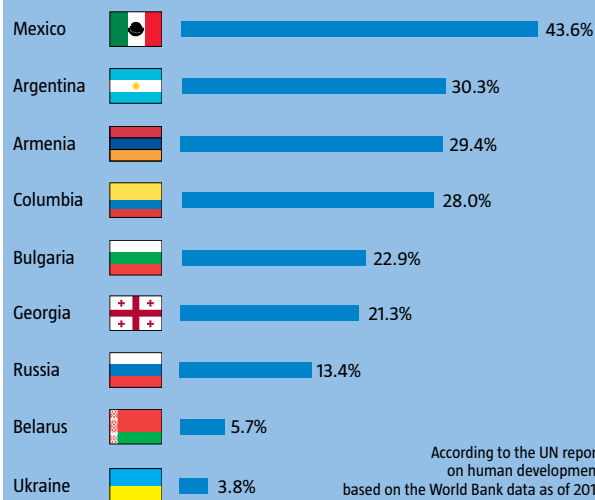
PAST EXPERIENCE OF POOR COUNTRIES PROVE THAT THE ONLY WAY TO FIGHT THE POVERTY IS TO GROW AND INCREASE NATIONAL RESOURCES AND NATIONAL WEALTH. BY NO MEANS SHOULD THIS BE DONE VIA THE SO-CALLED RE-DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

potentially receive extra few hundred — at least no more than a thousand — of hryvnias each month, but this would definitely fail to solve the country’s poverty issue or make its citizens happier. One of the main reasons for this is that the national economy’s ‘cake’ is way too small to feed everyone and, sadly, each year, instead of growing, it melts away. Henceforth regardless of how this ‘cake’ is divided and distributed — it won’t solve the poverty problem.

On top of that, it is similarly a myth that the Revolution of Dignity and the so-called “removal of the pro-

Grimaces of the shadow economy

Population living below the official poverty threshold, 2016, %



According to the UN report on human development based on the World Bank data as of 2018

fessional bureaucrats” from the government and the subsequent disruption of the economic and trade relations with Russia and its satellites led to the deepening of the poverty crisis in Ukraine. Fervent supporters of this claim present three arguments. First of all, they argue that right after the revolution of 2014 the poverty pushed many Ukrainians to seek working opportunities in the neighbouring European countries. Secondly, the costs of the utility bills, especially gas and heating have increased much more in comparison to the regular household income; and thirdly, equivalent of salaries and retirement payments in dollars is considerably lower compared to 2013. All those three factors are populist manipulations, which, have, nevertheless, found fertile ground in Ukrainian society. After all, Ukrainians are the poorest people in Europe, especially when owing to the recent lifting of some job market restriction they’ve been comparing themselves to the other countries in Europe.

It is true that recently Ukrainians have been frequently traveling to various European countries seeking for work — but not necessarily because Ukraine became poorer or unemployment have become unbearable. One of the key reasons is that access to the European job market became easier, while the flow of economic migrants to Russia has decreased. It is also true that costs of utilities, especially gas bills, have grown disproportionately higher compared to the average household income. At the same time, however, costs of other services have been

increasing slower than the consumers' income; additionally, during the previous government the cost of utilities has been kept artificially low. Henceforth, sooner or later the bubble was destined to burst.

There are three reasons for salaries or retirement payments being now lower than in 2013, if calculated in dollars. Firstly, previously considerable amounts of salaries were paid unofficially, cash in hand. Secondly, amount of national social insurance payments, which are then transferred to the retirement fund, were lowered from 36% to 22%. Finally, since 2013 the value of dollar has risen in comparison to other global currencies (for instance, the value of euro to dollar has decreased from 1.4\$ to 1.1\$), as well as various consumer products (it is especially the case with wheat, meat and oil products, which are cheaper in Ukraine and the world in dollars now, than in 2013).

However, despite the fact that Ukrainians did not become evidently poorer after 2013 does not eliminate the fact that they remain hideously poor, just like before 2013.

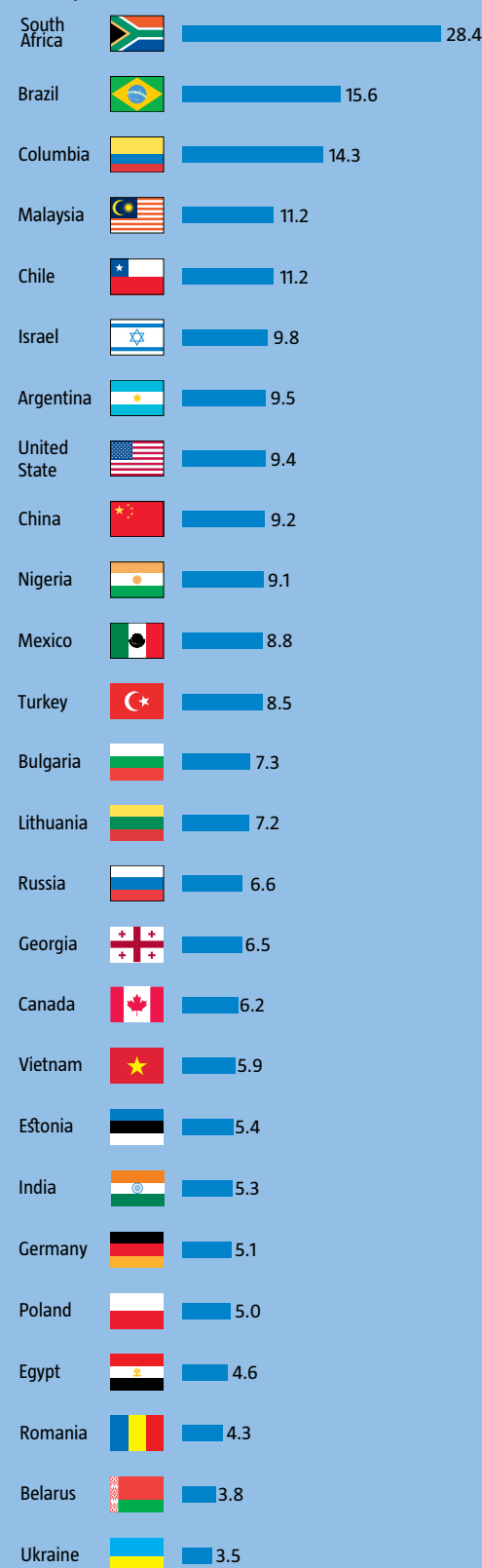
DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

Traditional approach to researching the poverty demonstrates that Ukraine's situation is far from being unique and its dimension catastrophic if compared to similar examples elsewhere in the world. For instance, if we look at the national measurements of poverty, that are based on the calculation of people who live on less than a minimum living wage (according to World Bank), in 2016 Ukraine only had 3.8% of such people (compared to 5.7% in Belarus, 13.4% in Russia, 22.9% in Bulgaria, 28 to 30% in Columbia and Argentina and nearly 43.6% in Mexico). In reality, this has been achieved as a result of intentional lowering the minimum living wage in Ukraine – contrary to the more realistic calculations in several other countries. At the same time, even after evaluating the purchasing power of Ukrainians, the percentage of people living below the poverty threshold still remains lower (6.4%) than in a number of European Union countries, such as Greece (6.7%), Bulgaria (8.7%) or Romania (18.5%) – let alone countries like Mexico (34.5%) or Georgia (45.5%).

Detailed analysis of the poverty levels in Ukraine shows a different picture. According to selected data by the State Statistic Service of Ukraine (SSSU), during the first three quarters of 2018, only 1.7% of the population lived below the minimum level of income set in the state budget, while 29.3% lived below the actual poverty threshold. Those numbers demonstrate the gap between real and actual levels of poverty in Ukraine. Approximately 41% of households in Ukraine reported less than an average income per person below UAH 3,700 (i.e. minimum wage). This can be considered actual amount of Ukrainian citizens who currently live below the poverty threshold. This assumption is also supported by the other study held by the SSSU. According to this study, 42.6% out of the interviewed households claimed that they could not afford the basic goods (apart from food, and sometimes they even had to save on food).

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Social Policies, the so-called "actual living wage" in Ukraine in February 2019 was set as following: UAH 4,100 per month for the children of 6-18 years of age, 3,700 for working adults (or, UAH 4,600 before taxes), and UAH 3000 for retired people. This means that the

Correlation of the average income of the richest 20% and the poorest 20%



According to the UN report on human development based on the World Bank data as of 2018

official average salary earned by Ukrainians in February (UAH 9,200) would allow a hypothetical family, where both parents would earn this sum (i.e. UAH 14,800 after the taxes) to live just above the poverty threshold — of course, assuming that the family had only one child. In case the family had two or more children, it would push them way below the poverty threshold. Industrial sector workers also balanced on the edge — their averages household income would amount to just around UAH 16,300 (with the official estimation of UAH 15,800 to be the borderline).

Majority of the public sector workers (especially those working in education and healthcare), who only had one child, also ended up living below the poverty threshold. The average salaries in these industries amount to somewhat above UAH 11,400 and UAH 10,000 accordingly. Only those employed in aviation, IT, financial and banking sector could boast a stable income. Unsurprisingly, majority of the pensioners were living below the poverty threshold — in January this year the average retirement pension (UAH 2,650) did not cover even the 90% of the officially promised UAH 3,000 payment for the disabled citizens. The minimal payments have not even reached the 55%.

In December 2018 only 32.8% of permanent employees in Ukraine received a salary exceeding **UAH 10,000** (before the tax), which has allowed them to live slightly above the poverty threshold, while raising a child

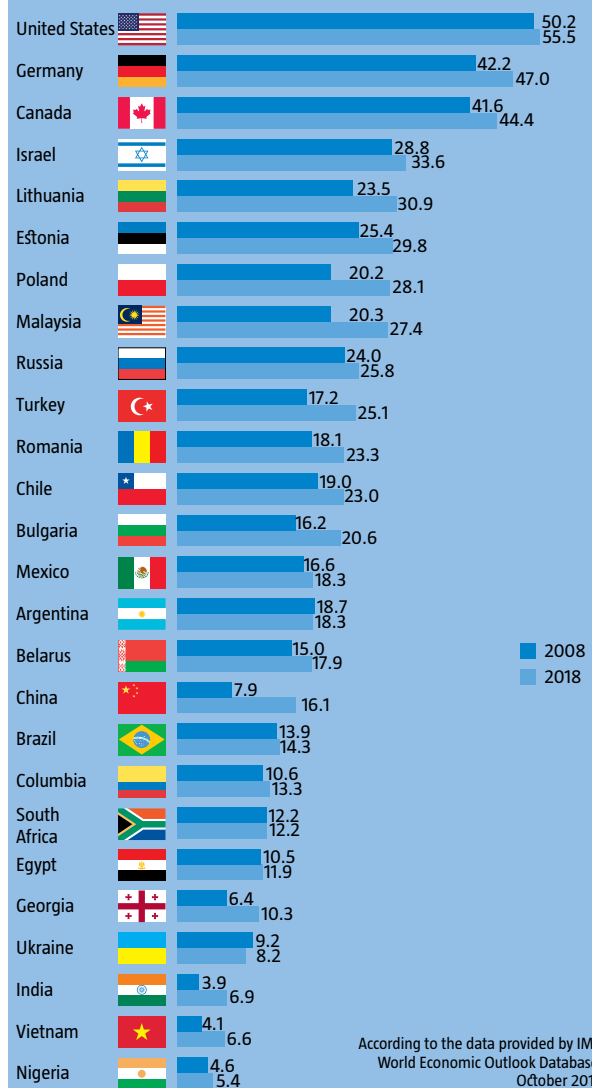
In December 2018 only 32.8% of permanent employees in Ukraine received a salary exceeding UAH 10,000 (before the tax), which has allowed them to live slightly above the poverty threshold, while raising a child. Out of those people, 41.5% were employed in the industrial sector, 25.1% in education, and another 16.3% — in healthcare sector. At the same time, 59% of the finance and banking sector employees could boast a salary of over UAH 10,000; 62.5% were in civil service and 65.6% in aviation.

Needless to say, all of the above mentioned numbers were taken out of the official government-provided data. On one hand, it is not a secret that people working in a private sector frequently receive considerable part of their salary (frequently, the bigger part) in cash. On the other hand, one should also take into account inconsistency of the official living wage in relation to the purchasing power and costs of living, especially when it comes to the prices of rent. This problem has been recently conversed about on a number.

IN SEARCH OF THE SOLUTION

When we compare Ukraine to other developing countries, especially those which demonstrated very high economic growth, we will notice the less obvious division between the rich and the poor (see **Grimaces of the shadow economy**). For instance, in Malaysia, China and even Turkey the income gap between the poorest 20% and the wealthiest 20% is two or three times bigger than in Ukraine. Widening of the income gap accompanied by an accelerated economic growth is a natural process though, since the wealthy ones are able to grow their income faster, than those with less money.

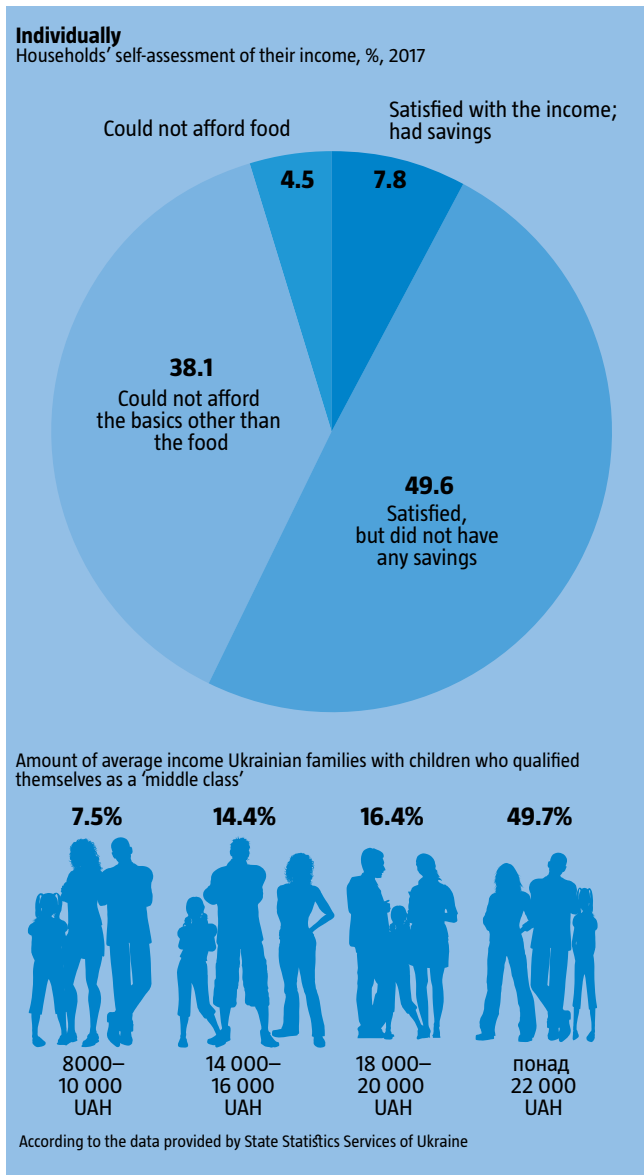
Change of the GDP per person, \$ thousands, equaled to the purchasing power in 2008-2018



According to the data provided by IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2018

At the same time, owing to the economic growth, both categories become richer — even with different levels of intensity. Additionally, when we look at the income gap between 20-30% of those the poorest and of the richest ones, we will see the appearance of the small and middle-size business owners and professionals' middle class. Polarisation of the society and antagonism between the narrow oligarchs' circle as well as the very rich on one hand, and the poor, hardworking majority, on the other and combined with the slow economic growth may lead to little differences in income between the former and the later.

Therefore, redistribution of wealth will not provide an immediate magical cure to poverty problem in Ukraine. On the contrary, speculating on this topic will only deepen the issue. The constant threat of losing one's wealth and assets prevents the owners from investing in long-term projects, and as a result it slows down the country's economic development. When it comes to private property, uncertainty and persistent fear of losing one's



assets, force people to transfer their funds abroad. Ironically, when corrupt officials are hesitant to invest their funds (even laundered money) in the country's economy, it causes more damage to the economic development than money-laundering itself — because even if these funds were laundered, they still remain in the country and contribute to the local economy. There are many examples of developing countries, which, despite the high levels of corruption, show surprisingly high levels of growth. Of course, these are hardly positive examples to follow. The fear of investment equals removal of the resources from the country's economy.

When Ukraine became independent market transformation and economy's transition to capitalism was somehow understood by Ukrainians as an entry ticket to the first-world countries club. There was a horror of joining Latin American countries, or, as many have feared, Asian or African countries. Curiously though, many countries of the former Soviet bloc have more in common with those Latin American, Asian or African

countries, rather than the developed West. Many people in Ukraine failed to understand that the quality of life in the rich countries does not automatically come with the market economy, but is a result of a successful complex economic strategy. In Ukraine economic growth has never become a priority for the policy makers. In 2004 Ukrainian GDP per person amounted to USD 6,300 (compare Poland — USD 14,100; Romania — USD 11,500) and in 2018 — USD 8,200 (again, compare these numbers to USD 28,100 in Poland and USD 23,300 in Romania). Recently, Ukraine has been left behind some Latin American and Asian countries — despite the fact that traditional stereotypes consider the very comparison to those countries somewhat humiliating. For instance in 2018 Ukrainian GDP was two to three times lower than in Malaysia (USD 27,400), Chile (USD 23,000), Argentina (USD 18,300) and Mexico (USD 18,300).

Ukraine was left behind even those countries which used to be considerably poorer in the past. For instance, Ukraine's current GDP fell way behind Egypt (USD 11,900), Colombia (USD 13,300) and China (USD 16,100). At the moment Ukraine's development is comparable to the one of India (USD 6,900), Vietnam (USD 6,600) and Nigeria (USD 5,400). Those countries' GDP was twice smaller than Ukraine's just ten years ago, on the eve of 2008-2009 financial crises. Additionally, their economies grow several times faster than the most optimistic scenario set for Ukraine.

Past experience of poor countries prove that the only way to fight the poverty is to grow and increase national resources and national wealth. By no means should this be done via the so-called re-distribution of wealth. Ukrainian small and middle size enterprises as well as the state should play the key role in this process. It is the state's responsibility to support the businesses already in operation and encourage creation of the new ones, as well as to support citizens' business initiatives. To work and to take a risk must be a prestigious and protected task, safe from the corporate raiding and legal injustice. Property rights and the ability to reap the benefits of one's hard work should be protected not only from the authorities' power abuse, but also from the populist initiatives of various politicians, who are calling to "get hold of what does not belong to you". Otherwise, the country will never be able to break the vicious cycle of progressing poverty and recession.

Ukrainian middle class was formed as a result of continuous confrontation with the alienated oligarchic state and henceforth has always wanted to minimise the contact with the state. However, the future of bourgeoisie and the necessary changes depend on the ability to leave behind the disagreements and rejection of the state and turn it into a tool of its own policies. Avoiding taking responsibility and failing to take an initiative will create a "life isolated from the state", which will ultimately be terminated by the state as such — this time by forces that are in conflict with the middle class. It will either be the current corrupt oligarchic conglomerate, which controls the state system regardless of those who are formally in power. It may also be the newly formed populist forces, which will aim to establish the "strongman" dictatorship. Taking initiative and leading the way is the only solution for the middle class. Only decisive actions and not the weak efforts to hide behind the scene will lead to the positive changes in the country. ■

Persuasive economy vs uncertain policy

What's making the hryvnia stronger and what's likely to happen further on

Liubomyr Shavaliuk

Ukrainians have slowly become used to fluctuations on the currency market. Swings in the hryvnia exchange rate bother them, while seasonal rises and falls in the dollar are no longer a surprise to anyone because they happen at almost the same time every year. This year was no exception: the Christmas period barely ended when the hryvnia began to firmly pick up pace and in about two months, the dollar became nearly UAH 2 weaker. At first glance, this is not the limit and the hryvnia is likely to continue to grow stronger. However, this expectation is in conflict with the political tension that is palpable in Ukraine today because of an extremely competitive presidential race whose outcome few are prepared to predict. And so people are complaining that tomorrow Ukraine will elect a president who will flip the country's course nearly 180°, while the forex market remains still as a waiting python. This is just the time to take a deeper look at why this is so and what might be expected with the hryvnia in the next few months.

The situation on the forex market traditionally depends on fundamental and psychological factors. The fundamentals are reflected in Ukraine's balance of payments, which shows how much currency the country receives, how much it spends and what drives this. Today, the balance of payments is generally positive. The current account balance, based on exports and imports, was much better in December and January than a year ago, based on available data. This was the result of quite solid, long-acting factors — mainly growing exports — not temporary effects. The lively export dynamic has been driven by goods in the group "foodstuffs and raw materials for their production." According to NBU data, this has been growing by 15% on an annual basis every month since October. Yet, prior to this they were not nearly this lively for an entire year.

The reason is that physical volumes of food exports have grown thanks to record harvests. According to the Ministry of

Agricultural Policy, Ukraine harvested 70.1mn t of grains and legumes, which was more than 8mn t more than in 2017. The Ministry also predicts that this will make it possible to increase exports of grains from Ukraine from 39.9mn t in the 2017-2018 marketing year to 47.2mn t in the 2018-2019 marketing year, an increase of over 18%. Industrial crops also brought in good harvests: soybean, sunflower seed and rapeseed. As a result the production and export of oils also grew. In short, Derzhstat reports that the group "cereal cultures" saw physical volumes go up 25% in December compared to a year earlier, while the group "fats and animal- or plant-based oils" jumped 40%.

These indicators are quite meaningful as the results for last year show that these two groups ensured 24.8%, a full quarter of all of Ukraine's exports of goods. Growing sales volumes of grains should allow Ukraine to bring in more than a billion more dollars in revenues, while the export of oils should add a few more hundred million. The addition of at least 1.5 billion dollars will be very useful in a year that the country has to service its considerable external debts. This sum is equivalent to a single tranche from the IMF and will have a positive impact on the forex market. In fact, it could cover the country should problems arise with getting loans from the Fund.

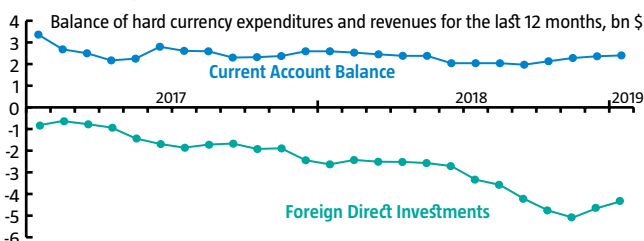
Indeed, a few months ago, the NBU already announced that the good harvest was supporting the hryvnia exchange rate during a period of greater demand for the dollar. Today, this continues to be the case and is unlikely to end at least until the new marketing year. The decline in world prices for food that has emerged in recent weeks has softened this impact somewhat, but is unlikely to completely cancel it out.

Import trends have also supported the hryvnia exchange rate. In December and January, inflows of foodstuffs grew only 1% compared to indicators from the previous year, although they had been growing in the double digits for many months in a row, with a few minor exceptions. According to NBU data, the main factors in this decline were energy and chemical products: the currency cost of these two groups has declined for two months in a row.

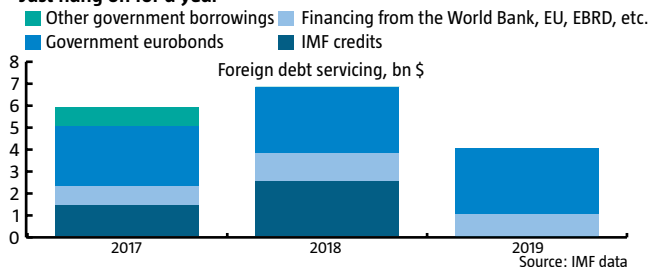
In short, the trend towards a shrinking cumulative 12-month current account balance (CAB) was broken in the last two months (see **A break in negative trends**). And so now the country needs less foreign currency to service its external trade operations, which means demand for foreign currency on the forex market has gone down. This is a fairly convincing trend that will continue to support the hryvnia for some time to come.

The other part of the CAB, the financial account that reflects foreign economic operations, is also demonstrating a positive dynamic. The cumulative balance of FDI has been growing slowly since October (see **A break in negative trends**). Judging by its current dynamic, this indicator is already recovering from its post-crisis nadir, which merits particular attention. Last year, Ukraine saw a good deal of uncertainty because of the protracted break in cooperation with the IMF, a decline in asset prices among developing countries, and the approach of a double election year in Ukraine. Until the last minute, there was no certainty that the country would painlessly survive the peak external debt-servicing period. Despite all this, forcing investors began putting more and more money into Ukraine in QIV of 2018. This brought hope and

A break in negative trends



Just hang on for a year



the thought that, under less uncertain conditions, non-residents might invest even more actively.

Then came a number of positive developments, such as the launch of a new cooperation phase with the IMF and the Fund's allocation of US \$1.4bn in December. This started inflows of cheap loans that added up to over US \$3bn in the last few months alone. Thanks to this, the government was able to properly close out a very uneasy fiscal year and set aside a reassuring financial reserve for the beginning of this year.

Ukraine started 2019 with NBU reserves of US \$20.8bn. This is triple what it needs for external financing according to IMF projections for this year (see **Just hang on for a year**), and several billion more than the three months' worth of imports that financial specialists consider the safe minimum. Even if the country were not to receive a penny more of what is being predicted, it would end the year with reserves of US \$14bn, which is not bad at all. This means that Ukraine should survive the current year without any CAB or forex excesses, go through elections without any brouhaha, establish a new government, and not worry too much that the end of this political cycle might prove the end of the phase of economic growth as well.

In 2020, the country will need far less external financing, meaning that Ukraine could forget about the kind of fiscal stress that it faced in 2018 for a good while. The current Government deserves credit for having made the decision to meet IMF conditions, despite the inevitable social reverberations, which made this all possible. This was remarkably farsighted and quite unprecedented. At the same time, the strength of the CAB fundamentals and the economy as a whole has done Ukraine's political establishment an immense disservice. When the country was faced with the serious threat of an economic crisis, and that was only a few months ago, officials and MPs were more concerned with the national interest, the reforms necessary for the country to develop, and getting the IMF tranche. Now there's the impression that achieving even temporary economic stability has led to the end of rational thinking among these same people. The most blatant example was the Constitutional Court's ruling that illicit enrichment was not a crime. It unceremoniously rolled back Ukraine's achievements in combating corruption, provoked a tsunami of criticism from civil society, and has led to a pause in financial cooperation with Ukraine's international partners for what could be a very long time. Surely that was a very shortsighted move. Another example is the relatively easy-to-meet new program of cooperation with the IMF. It includes some fairly nominal structural milestones that Ukraine could easily meet without excess effort. It would seem that the government should hurry to pass the necessary legislation, get an additional US \$2.4bn from the Fund, and engage in completely different business over the next five-year political cycle: not putting out economic fires but preparing directly for accession to the EU and NATO. But no! Ukraine's lawmakers think in terms of "Let's cut a deal and play some political games" and collapse into a second childhood. If these decisions by Ukraine's establishment change from the exceptions to the rule, serious threats to the hryvnia could appear out of nowhere.

Judging by the hryvnia exchange rate, the forex market is currently playing off the positive fundamentals. Over the last year, participants had some doubts and questions on which their actions depended. With the arrival of the December IMF tranche to Ukraine, it seems that the answer to the final important question was found. One significant nuance is that over the last few years, the winter peak dollar rate was a bit higher each year than the previous one. However, this time, the fall of the hryvnia on the interbank currency exchange market stopped at UAH 28.50/USD, which was about 50 kopyyka less than in 2017. One possible reason for this could be that the relatively expensive dollar hung

in there a few months longer than in 2017. Or, possibly, market players were now more confident in Ukraine's prospects and its national currency than a year ago. If the reason really is greater confidence, the summer minimum dollar rate should confirm it. Over the last few years, it has risen by about 50 kopyikas each year, ending last year at nearly UAH 26.00/USD. At this level, there were enough NBU interventions to balance the forex market and carry it into summer hibernation.

Today the dollar is at around UAH 26.50, so that if the trends of the last few years are extrapolated, the hryvnia should not fall any further. However, on one hand, it's a long way to summer yet, while hard currency keeps coming in, which could increase pressure on the dollar to devalue. On the other, there is the NBU, which understands that an overly expensive hryvnia could hurt the economy, especially public finances: this was fairly evident last year in the dynamic of budget revenues in the first six months. And the psychological factor of a presidential election has not gone anywhere.

THESE KINDS OF NUMBERS TEND TO RAISE THE IDEA THAT QUITE A FEW FOREX PLAYERS THINK THAT THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION WILL AFFECT THEIR FINANCIAL DECISIONS. AND SO THE PUBLIC IS EXPECTING FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT SCENARIOS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY, DEPENDING ON WHO WINS

In short, nothing appears to foreshadow something bad for the hryvnia exchange rate for now. Still, there are two implicit signs that forex market participants have not lost all their sense of uncertainty. The first is evident in the actions of non-residents, who are investing in state bonds. Just like a year ago, they were actively buying up government bonds after the New Year. The calculus was simple: with an expensive dollar, a larger number of bonds could be had for a given amount and when the dollar begins to slip, this same number of bonds can be sold off for more dollars. The scheme was fairly straightforward. And so just last year, non-resident portfolios of government bonds grew by UAH 8.6bn in just two and a bit months, while this year, they grew only UAH 7.7bn.

Meanwhile, the NBU gave a clear signal that the interest rate could go down over the course of the year, which would increase the hryvnia value of the bonds. Based on this, foreign investors should have brought far more capital to Ukraine. But either they do not entirely trust the NBU announcement or, more likely, they are simply waiting for the presidential race to end. And this is the uncertainty that makes it hard to say firmly that the situation is 100% stable. The second sign is that in the first 10 weeks of 2019, NBU interventions resulted in the purchase of a net US \$689mn, meaning purchases minus sales. During the same period of 2018, it was US \$677mn, because purchases were higher but sales were also higher than this year's figures. If positive fundamental tendencies in the CAB were that significant, the NBU would probably have to buy far larger sums of hard currency, but this doesn't seem to be the case. So, the counteragents are in no hurry, after all, to bring their money to Ukraine and are currently in a holding pattern. These kinds of numbers tend to raise the idea that quite a few forex players think that the results of the election will affect their financial decisions. And so the public is expecting fundamentally different scenarios for the development of the country, depending on who wins. Economic theory says that sometimes market expectations form the market. This means that, if nothing basically changes after the election and the country's development continues to be determined by international commitments and public opinion, a formal change of president could lead to substantial turbulence on the forex market. ■

Chronically ruined

Why economic decline of the liberated parts of the Donbas is dangerous

Denys Kazanskiy

Reconstruction and reintegration of the occupied parts of the Donbas is a frequently discussed issue in Ukraine. Debates on this rage in TV talk shows, at conferences and roundtables. Ministers and experts compete in assessing how much the restoration of ORDiLO (the occupied regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts) will cost Ukraine. It is difficult to count the losses caused by the occupation and the fighting just yet. But it is obvious that the bill could amount to dozens of billions of dollars. The proposed sources of these funds include foreign sponsors and donors.

In fact, there is no accurate understanding of the current economic and social state of ORDiLO. Assessing the damage and drafting a roadmap for dealing with the consequences of war and crisis will only be possible after the territory beyond Kyiv's control returns, if it ever does. It is equally impossible to forecast any preliminary timeframe of restoration as reintegration of that territory depends on countless different factors and circumstances. So drawing the roadmaps of ORDiLO restoration looks like counting the chickens before they hatch. If Transnistria, Abkhazia and other geopolitical bastards Russia has bred across the world are indicative, the return of Ukraine's occupied territory can take decades.

AS SOON AS THE DONBAS REGIONS UNDER KYIV'S CONTROL WILL HAVE AT LEAST SOME IMPORTANT SUCCESS STORIES, ESTABLISHMENT OR REVIVAL OF LARGE ENTERPRISES WITH HUNDREDS OF NEW JOBS, THE PRESTIGE OF THE UKRAINIAN STATE AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WILL IMPROVE IMMEDIATELY

Paradoxically, nobody is rushing to restore the territory under Kyiv's control while the debate on the occupied parts continue. These are the towns and regions Ukraine fought back from the illegal military units in the summer of 2014. The key objects of infrastructure, such as bridges, are the only ones restored there in the four and a half years since then. The economy of these regions remains the key problem, though, as it remains paralyzed in its proximity to the frontline.

Obviously, the priority task will be restoring the normal work of local enterprises rather than rebuilding the destroyed buildings, roads and bridges. According to the OSCE, at least 36 mines have been destroyed and flooded in the territory beyond Kyiv's control. It is currently unclear what state its other industrial objects are in, which ones have been looted and which ones can still be relaunched. In a number of cases where the militants didn't do intentional damage, fixed assets have worn down, grown outdated and fallen apart without

due maintenance. Workshops and production facilities collapsed at several plants in ORDiLO this winter alone, killing two people in Horlivka and Debaltseve.

Even if it takes a while before Ukraine can deal with the economy of the territory beyond Kyiv's control, the liberated towns can be taken care of already. But the government is not rushing to do that either. As a result, they find themselves in a situation that is not much better than that in "Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics". Clearly, this plays into the hands of the separatists. Their entire propaganda machine, as well as that of Russia, works to show that, however bad things are in Luhansk and Donetsk, it's even worse in Ukraine. Unfortunately, reality in Ukraine's frontline regions helps the militants create the necessary image.

Unless quick and comprehensive action is taken on the government level, the situation will hardly improve. The economy in a number of towns near the frontline, especially Kostiantynivka and Lysychansk, is in a deep low and will hardly manage to get better on its own. The ruinous activities of the local elite destroyed the industrial potential of the region even more than the war did. Whatever the reasons for this destruction are, it will have to be fixed. The effectiveness of this work will largely define the sentiments among the ORDiLO population. If people there see that the Ukrainian government does care about the troubled regions and is trying to restore it, far more people will want to live in Ukraine. Today, the situation in the frontline Lysychansk, Rubizhne, Kostiantynivka and Toretsk points to the lack of any program of dealing with the ruin in that eastern region.

Economic problems in the towns liberated from the militants have resulted in ruined infrastructure which is especially bad in Luhansk Oblast. Severodonetsk and Rubizhne experienced heating breakdowns this winter. The local water supply operator can soon be switched off the electric grid because of its debts. Power supply was seriously cut down for the mining enterprises of LysychanskVuhillia and PervomaiskVuhillia, both coal conglomerates, as a result of their debts. This de facto created a vicious circles of poverty. As the companies stop, people don't have enough money to pay for the utilities, the water operator does not receive enough revenues from consumers and accumulates debt to electricity suppliers.

The coal mines owe UAH 77.3mn for electricity over the two months of 2019, including UAH 52mn from PervomaiskVuhillia and UAH 23.5mn from LysychanskVuhillia. These are loss-making enterprises but they cannot be closed down: virtually nothing works in Lysychansk, except for the coal mines, so people have no other jobs. The shutdown of these mines will trigger a



PHOTO: DENIS KAZANSKY

The territory of industrial extinction. Most factors that have stopped or have been looted will hardly manage to resume their operations anytime soon

social catastrophe because large industrial objects had stopped or had been destroyed before the war, so there is no alternative to the mines. The Proletariy glass factory was the last one to stop in 2013, and it was declared bankrupt in October 2017. It had been leased, not privatized, however. So all that's left from it under the management of entities led by MP Serhiy Dunayev will now go back to public property.

Lysychansk is in a dire situation and the state is the only actor that can help it. Obviously, no private investors will invest into a depressed frontline town with gloomy chances, so state investment is its only hope. While the author of this article is not a fan of state ownership, this case would have to be an exception given how difficult the situation is. The restoration can start with the glass factory. Clearly, its current state is terrible. The company requires serious investment. But there is no other way for it. Given the dire economic situation in the region, developing even a small business in Luhansk would be extremely challenging. Therefore, the investment should go into production.

Some say that bringing Lysychansk, Rubizhne or Kostiantynivka back to order is primarily for the local population and authorities to take care of. Ukraine is decentralizing, so taxpayers from other regions are not obliged to solve problems in Luhansk Oblast. This approach is reasonable to a certain extent but hardly helpful. This territory will not be able to restore its economic potential and get out of the crisis without serious financial investment from elsewhere. Left alone, it will turn into a permanent social wound, eventually turning into a source of problems and various destructive sentiments for many years ahead, as it had been before 2014.

Anti-Ukrainian stereotypes are still very entrenched in the Donbas. This sentiment sticks largely

because people are upset with the Ukrainian state and see the economic decline as a result of its emergence in 1991. These people are hardly aware, or don't want to be aware of the fact that Russia experiences identical problems.

Real actions are the only way to change this situation. As soon as the Donbas regions under Kyiv's control will have at least some important success stories, establishment or revival of large enterprises with hundreds of new jobs, the prestige of the Ukrainian state and the central government will improve immediately both among the residents of the territory under Kyiv's control, and in ORDiLO.

Today, people there barely see any contrast between the damaged roads and grey worn down facades in the occupied territory and in the towns under Kyiv's control. If the contrast is more visible, the popularity of anti-Ukrainian agitators and separatists will plummet, ruling out a repeat of the 2014 scenario.

It also makes sense to return to the civil-military administration in the frontline towns. They were established in the summer 2014 in some places, but abolished later under agreements with the regional political elite and replaced with local elections. Lysychansk and Severodonetsk showcase what this has led to. The mayor of Lysychansk is in a permanent conflict with the local deputies. In Severodonetsk, the local council has sacked the mayor, so the town is now officially run by the council secretary and by the local businessman Ihor Butkov unofficially. Endless political squabbles makes the dire economic situation worse. So bringing back civil-military administrations is necessary, especially given the frontline status of these towns. All it takes to implement this plan is political will and the desire of those in power to help the region in trouble. ■



Yuichi Hosoya:

“Both Ukraine and Japan need to strength our own national defence capabilities and we have to keep the cooperation in defending the rule-based international order”

Interviewed by Yuriy Lapayev

The Ukrainian Week talked with a Japanese political scientist to learn about Tokyo's relations with Beijing, the situation with the Kuril Islands and possible scenarios of exacerbation in Asia.

Which perspectives or plans has Japan in ongoing tensions with China?

— The relationships between Japan and China are always influenced by relations between US and China, which are now two largest economies and two largest military powers. And of course, we need to keep in mind that Japan is an ally to the United States. Currently we are seeing the deteriorations in relations between US and China. And naturally, trying to avoid the isolation, China is coming closer to Japan. So now our relations have been greatly improved for certain period of time, putting the territorial issue beside. The incentive of China for having a better relations with Japan is driven not only by that reason, but this is also driven by the possibility that China will unavoidably face a serious problem of aging society caused largely by its own “one child” policy as well as by the probability that Chinese economic growth rate will be rapidly falling down. So this means that China seriously needs cooperation with Japan, particularly in economic terms. So now, we are seeing rapid improvements in relations between Japan and China. That means that territorial problems is not at the center of this relationship, but rather the economic cooperation is taking the lead, especially in the context of a severe trade war between the US and China.

But still there is at least one area with clear competition of interests — Indian ocean.

— The basic philosophy of Prime Minister Abe's foreign policy is to enhance the cooperation among four leading democracies in this region, these are the US, Japan, India and Australia. And this will be the core of Indo-Pacific region. Now Japanese government is promoting a strategy of creating the free and open Indo-Pacific region. We are combining two oceans. These four powers will define the future of this region in the coming decades. In that sense, the cooperation between India and Japan is one of the most important proposals that Japan presents.

Recently Russian authorities announced that resolving of disputes with Japan over Kuril islands could take years or decades. Could you share your opinion on that issue? Do you see any signs of political will to resolve this issue from Russian side?

— Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Putin have met at the summit meetings more than twenty times, so they can develop their personal friendship and trust. The other point is that both sides agreed on several important points, like economic cooperation and a limited cooperation in security as well. Although they have also agreed to create a peace treaty, we have not seen that happened. We have many common interests, but because of one difficult issue, the territorial issue, two sides cannot move forward. In the last recent years, we had a hope that two sides could solve that territorial dispute in the end. But I feel that, because of several reasons, now it is becoming more difficult than before. The first reason is Russian annexation of Crimea. After that the annexation, I have a feeling that Russian peoples become more and more sensitive to territorial issues. It means that it would be very difficult nowadays for President Putin to show any kind of concessions in territorial issues. That is

why I see some link between Crimean and Japanese territorial problems. Maybe we are seeing the toughening of the tone. Second is that in the last several years we could not see any valuable concrete result in economic cooperation between Japan and Russia, because of several barriers. Actually, we see some stagnation. Russia is becoming little bit more frustrated. For some reasons, the two sides are becoming more realistic than before. In the sense that it is not so easy to solve that issue within few months, or even few years. Some time ago, we have hoped that, because of the fact that Prime Minister Abe and President Putin are both strong leaders, and also because of their strong leadership, political basis and friendly relations, we can solve the problem. But now we are retreating from the previous position. The most difficult thing is now whether two sides will be able to show any further concessions. Both sides need to show them. One of the biggest reasons for this step back is hardening public opinion in the two countries, which become more nationalistic than before. Many media are covering this issue today and if the media of two countries does this more frequently than before, people become more familiar with the problem. What is more important is that people in Japan and in Russia become more irritated to face any more concessions. That is why I think, due to these two factors, President Putin is now in a very difficult position to show any signs of compromise with Japan on the territorial issue, and then he now shows the opposite attitude — a more hardline position. The key issue in this is that the strategical importance of Kuril Islands is now much larger than before. It is because of the increasing importance of the North Pole. Now we can more easily navigate the North Pole area because of global warming. That is why Russia regards these islands as a strategically important asset. The Second reason is the rapid rise of Chinese military power in this region. By controlling these islands, Russia will maintain an important strategical advantage by having an ability to contain Chinese naval vessels. Besides, of course, Kremlin doesn't like to see further expansion of the US military activities in that area.

Despite efforts of President Donald Trump, North Korea is continuing its missile (and maybe nuclear) program. What is Japanese approach to that problem?

— There are several different issues in this problem. The number one priority is denuclearization of North Korea. Japan has been responsible for that, because Japan is a member of the six-party talks on that issue. So Japan has a say in denuclearizing North Korea, and also needs to maintain its influence in the negotiation process. In that negotiation direct talks between the US and North Korea is a key. And now I think that Mr. Trump's negotiation last year in Singapore was amateuristic. He didn't know the details of previous negotiations, and that's why he didn't stick to the importance of the verification process. North Korea really doesn't like to be inspected internationally. But this time in Hanoi, Mr. Trump seemingly became more sophisticated in many points about the negotiation. That's why he becomes tougher. I think North Korean government, particularly Chairman Kim Jong Un, did not really prepared well for the reality that his counterpart president was becoming tougher. That is why North Korean government was disappointed at that American administration under President Trump actually came back to the original tough position of putting a strong pressure upon denucleariza-

tion. I'm now sure that North Korea has no strong willingness to abandon its nuclear weapons. That means that we will continue to see this deadlock. The second important issue in this problem is the termination of the war. In 1953, two sides concluded an armistice of the Korean War. The main parties of creating a peace treaty are the United States, North Korea, China and South Korea. Japan is not supposed to be a member of these talks, so it is natural that we are marginalized in this particular process. Then the third dimension of that issue is economic reconstruction. Because now North Korea is in a difficult economic situation, it needs huge amount of economic assistance to reconstruct its own economy. Japan is a country which perhaps will provide the largest amount of economic aid to North Korea. That means that North Korea needs Japan, more than we need them. At some point, I believe that Japan will play a very important role for the reconstruction. Of course, there are some other dimensions as well concerning with this issue.

What other hot spots do you see in Asia?

— Now we see a rapid change in global balance of power. China has a clear strategy, and it tries to create an exclusive sphere of influence to become a hegemon in the region by rejecting the intervention of external powers, particularly the US. To do that China needs to control two seas — East China Sea and South China Sea. Now Beijing more or less controls South China Sea for the purpose of rejecting American reconnaissance activities there. China doesn't want their submarines to be detected by US reconnaissance planes. If Chinese submarines can move freely and remain undetected, China will have the second nuclear strike capability. So even if China's mainland is attacked with massive American nuclear weapons, these Chinese submarines can survive and strike back. It means that China will become equal to the United States in the area of nuclear deterrence. So if China can completely control South China Sea in the coming years, it will become much more arrogant and the US will become much more vulnerable. On the other hand, in East China Sea, the situation is a little bit different. Japanese and American ships and planes can enter this area freely. If we allow China to create a kind of exclusive zone of influence there, China will become the only hegemon in the region. So now US, Japan, Australia, India and other Asian countries are sharing this concern, and they are now trying to prevent that happened. As long as they are in cooperation, they are able to increase pressure on China.

Nowadays we can see some troubles for international multilateral organizations and treaties, politics of Mr. Trump changes global agenda to more bilateral type of relations. Do you believe, that organizations like NATO are still effective?

— We have to remind that all the three big powers, US, Russia and China, have very strong unilateralist foreign policy. These countries basically do not like to be controlled by multilateral international institutions. As long as they can control them, they are happy, but if not — they can be easily irritated. If they were really serious in damaging these institutions, they cannot survive. But on the other hand, Japan and the EU with the UK in it are really serious in trying to defend the rule-based international order. Because they really need to depend on international rules, their power is not equal to US, nor to Russia or China. If international organizations are seriously undermined, we will face more difficulties. We are now in a critical moment. Whether we see a breakdown of these institutions or whether we can maintain them depend on our own effort to keep them alive.

Coming closer to Ukraine — how can you evaluate our relations? Which fields could be improved? Specially in security and defence sectors?

— First of all, I think now is the best time for relations between Japan and Ukraine. We have no negative feeling towards Ukraine, unlike our feeling towards Russia. At the same time, we both share the same kind of feeling — our territories are occupied by Russia. That's why we have

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same views, same position. We need to enhance cooperation among like-minded countries. That's why the G7 is now supporting Ukraine. But, basically, we are now entering in the time of more self-help, because of the decline of multilateral institutions. I see that much more than before. We have to defend ourselves. We cannot rely too much on others, because in each country populism and nationalism are rising. We see many countries, which are interested more and more only in their domestic problems. So both Ukraine and Japan need to strengthen our own national defence capabilities. But, at the same time, we have to keep the cooperation in defending the rule-based international order. At the security level, maybe we also have some areas for cooperation — we can share some intelligence information. And we need to increase the exchange of people, experts and officials between two countries. Then we can share more common interests. In that case political leaders and public opinion feel that time has come for further and deeper security cooperation.

Do you see any signs of populism and nationalism rising in Japan?

— There is no radical change. Some people say that Japan is the only exception among leading liberal democracies in this problem. Maybe there can be several answers. In a country which experienced structural reforms and liberalization of the market, we see a much broader widening gap between the rich and the poor. Japan didn't experience such radical reforms and market liberalization, so we don't see that huge gap. Usually, populism is driven by those who are left behind, or abandoned. This problem is limited in Japan. The unemployment rate is extremely low today.

Talking on strengthening national defence — what is current view on changing the Japanese constitution to have its own army?

— It seems that Prime Minister Abe is trying to make a bridge between those who support it and those who not. While understanding the necessity of changing the constitution, but at the same time he understands basically that it is really necessary to Japan to stick to its national identity as peace-loving country. So I don't see no radical break from the previous position, that we have lots of homework to do in sphere of security. But it is now more difficult than before to remain simply pacifist. We are surrounded by nuclear powers like China, Russia and North Korea and sometimes they are threatening Japan.

We witness the last months of Heisei period in Japan, which was named also a "peaceful ruling" period. Can we expect some shifts in Japanese policy due to that?

— In the Heisei period for the first time in the last 150 years, we didn't experience any wars. That's why Heisei period means "peace" and we didn't fight any battle during that time. After that new Emperor will come, we still don't know new name of the period, but I am sure that our new Emperor will be the most open-minded and the most international. He has studied at Oxford University and Empress has studied both in Oxford and Harvard. So they can speak fluent English and they have many friends in the West. In that sense the new Era, I think, will be the symbol of internalization of Japan. Our country cannot live without friends and international cooperation. This will be more significant in the next period. ■

"Nervous and predictable"

How Donbas elected president after almost a decade break

Yelyzaveta Honcharova, Mayorsk — Bakhmut

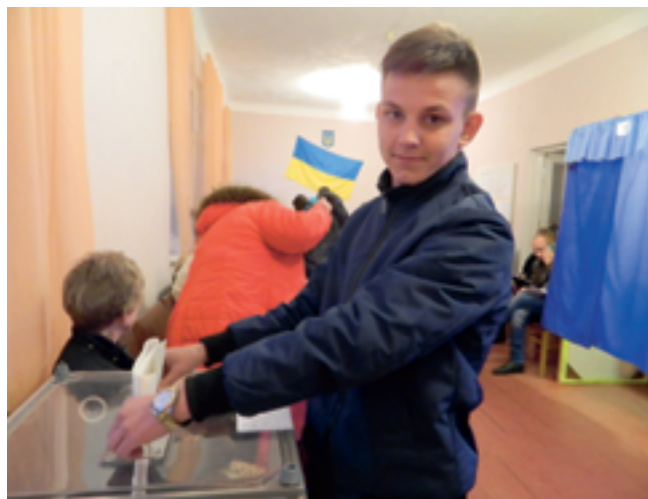


PHOTO: YELYZAVETA HONCHAROVA

Unlike in 2014. Voting in Donbas has taken place without excesses

Most of the Donetsk region residents were not able to elect the head of state five years ago, because in many settlements electoral district commissions were robbed on the day before elections; also due to commission members' intimidation, kidnapping and retention, and direct blocking of electoral districts by armed militants, it was impossible to organize the process of will expression. But no matter how paradoxically it may seem, among the people to whom their constitutional right have recently been returned, there are still quite a few who do not understand (or pretend not to) who were behind the events of five years ago, hinting that Donbas then did not become an object of Russian aggression, but was simply removed from the political life by the Ukrainian government. And therefore, the results of the will expression in the front-line area can hardly be called unexpected: Donbas traditionally votes "for local men" who promise peace at any price. Even if this peace is going to be similar to the one from which residents of Donetsk and Luhansk regions are fleeing.

Accompanied by loud songs and under the supervision of observers from different candidates, but of the same athletic constitution, I dropped the ballot in my ballot box at my polling station. By the way, I had no problems with my ID-card; no one demanded from me any additional document on registration, although I happened to hear complaints about such a violation that day. All in all, there was nothing special, as usual, except that this year there were no snack-bars. But at the bus station, from where you can get to the checkpoint "Mayorsk", where there are two polling stations left over from the once huge election district No. 51, changes were noticeable on Election Day. To fill the bus with passengers, which usually takes several minutes, the driver had to wait for a whole hour. "It's strange that

today no one comes, no one goes. And there were rumors that they would take people from Donetsk here to the polls by buses. That's when we drove people to Kyiv on the "carrousel" to elect Yanukovich, then that was really well-organized, — said the bored driver almost with pride. — And as for me, I, perhaps, will not have time to vote today. What a shame, my vote would be appropriate, because, I think, they will not let a new man come to power, the administrative resource rules!"

A lot was said about the administrative resource in the Donetsk region on that day; complaints were written in different polling stations about the fact of "voting" by people who were not in the country at the time of will expression, some voters were intercepted who "accidentally" carried not one but two ballots into the box. And there were stations where they worked even more traditionally and primitively. In Toretsk, for example, activists recorded several cases of outright dumping of a bundle of ballots, and in Konstantinovka observers complained about poor sealing of boxes, which made them convenient for throwing a large amount of paper. The headquarters of the candidates reported violations, quarreling and even jostling at the polling stations, seven criminal cases were opened in the region, but after the preliminary results were announced, it became clear that this time the administrative resource somehow did not work.

At least, the relatively high result of the current president is spoken of only in the district with the center in Toretsk, just where the two most significant violations were registered. This situation happened to be also hardly surprising to anyone, because it was clear even before the start of the race Poroshenko had relied, in particular, in Donbas, on the authority of the very people who had supported Yanukovich before. And this claim regarding the support of the old elites in order to use them for falsification was repeatedly voiced by local Ukrainian activists, trying to point out the harmfulness of such a personnel policy. Because "experienced organizers of voting carrousel" have no other strategy but bribing and intimidating state employees, "engaging" the dead and those who had left in voting. And this is one of the reasons for the so-called protest vote among patriotic East residents.

But the phrase of one experienced participant in the electoral process at the Bakhmut polling station, who explained why, in her opinion, this time it does not work, seemed very revealing: "They have carried the country to the extreme, so that people do not care who will win. Before they used to come from authorities and say how many per cent it should be, and we tried to reach it. And now no one will be doing this for anyone." And, it seemed to me, she said this with incredible regret...

On the bus to Mayorsk, where you can get to the occupied territory, more than half are the elderly. While we are going, they are watching the Russian TV series about the police, shuffling things in their bags, asking their neighbors how best to hide the battery or sausage so that they won't be noticed when crossing the checkpoint. They do not talk about elections, and when I ask, they look away. Somewhere at my side a student girl tells that this morning she was travelling from Gorlivka: "There DPR policemen went completely crazy: they turned all

my things upside down, they checked all the photos and contacts on the phone. What has driven them mad?”. Someone asks if they let people pass through at all, because she is going to her mother to check how things are going after yesterday’s shelling, and wants to manage to return to Bakhmut this day. “I heard that they had promised to detain because of the elections, but they didn’t ask me anything about it,” the student reassures, and everyone goes on silently. — No, we did not vote. We don’t care much, — says the woman sitting nearby.

Perhaps, after five years of occupation, some people no longer feel in the mental space of Ukraine. But the reasons why at least those who cross the front line by public transport did not become active participants in the electoral process are in fact much more. Among them quite a big sum of money that you need for at least two trips: to get permission to vote not at the place of registration and to actually vote. And fear: for several months now, newsmen of the unrecognized republics have been telling that at the polling stations Ukrainian passports would be taken away from the residents of the occupied territory, they have been scaring people by terrorist attacks, as well as the consequences that may be for ideological opponents of the “DPR” or “LPR” who are interested in politics of hostile Ukraine.

“At our station among voters there are a lot of those who live in the occupied territory,” — say members of the election commission of polling station № 141527, where residents of the village of Zaitsevo, which before the war was subordinated to Gorlivka, vote. — Firstly, they are those who have registration in our village, even if their street is located in an occupied territory. Secondly, people from the nearest settlements who intentionally registered with us in order to be able to quickly give a vote.” In total, 634 voters voted on this polling station, the figures correspond to the majority of the Donbas polling stations. According to the CEC, 184 of them voted for Yuriy Boyko, 188 for Volodymyr Zelenskiy, 165 for Petro Poroshenko. When I ask the voters who leave the polling station, the majority say that they voted “for peace”, it is quite reasonable that for those who have been living under shelling for many years, this is the most important thing. “Even if these people need to be explained that the peace can be “Russian”, what can we say about others. If the occupation expands, I will go to the trenches again, but what will they do?” — the head of Zaitsevo Civil military administration Volodymyr Vesvolkin admits wearily, although he says that he has done everything to give people the opportunity to make their choice so that they would feel like citizens of a democratic state. He says that today the residents of remote parts of the village will go by bus, which has been provided by volunteers. A little later, members of the commission tell: for more than an hour there has been no connection with the group that went to those who vote at home. They reassure each other, saying, nothing bad has happened, it’s just due to poor signal in those areas.

Medical volunteers from the ASAP group, which is located nearby, also vote in this area. “Everyone who is now on our base has expressed a desire to give a vote. This is important because we choose not one person, but the policy of the state. Having the opportunity to express your will is not so much a duty as an advantage. In Poland, for example, more than a million of our citizens, but there are few polling stations, so not everyone will be able to exercise their right. And I, being on the front line, can do this much easier. Therefore, I believe that it is necessary to show our unity, the desire to defend the national idea, which during the years of independence, no matter what they say, has been extending to the whole country” — says one member of ASAP Roman Polychuk after the vote. And his colleague adds: he is glad that, unlike Russia, we have real elections and that even this nervous state in which the country is today is an indicator of democratic transformations.

In the same building where the civil-military administration of Zaitsevo is located, on the second floor there one more section of this, perhaps, the smallest district in Ukraine, where Mayorsk residents vote, is organized. From time to time bullets fly to the upper floor of the building, so there is protection and sandbags on the windows. “Yes, it seems to be quiet, although the military said that it was gunfire in the morning,” — say the women working on the commission. Most of them are local, but there are also some from other cities of the Donetsk region. The representative of the Opposition Bloc also leads in this section, but Zelenskiy and Poroshenko have changed places. Literally, on the next street there is a special station in which the soldiers who serve here vote. Near the tent it is quiet and empty: the military are brought from time to time by transport, they make their choice quickly and in a disciplined manner. Just after the counting of votes, it becomes clear that the administrative resource has not worked even here: in most of the special sections, the military have given their votes to different candidates. And even in the Bakhmut remand prison, where traditionally about 100% is always received by any current president, this time he has taken only the fourth place, and Zelenskiy, Tymoshenko and Boyko are in the lead. It is interesting that in the mentioned remand prison, in particular, there are those who are suspected of separatism. Immediately prior to the elections, for example, the head of the settlement of Novoluhanske got there, although perhaps it was he who did not have time to issue permission to vote at the place of stay.

ALL IN ALL, EVERYTHING HAPPENED TRANSPARENTLY AND QUIETLY,
THE RESULTS ON THE STATION WERE MORE THAN EXPECTED:
THE FIRST IS YURIY BOYKO, THE SECOND IS VLADYMYR ZELENSKIY,
THEN OLEKSANDR VILKUL AND PETRO POROSHENKO

Despite the scandals and even car mining in Kramatorsk, where instead of explosives found fake ballots with marks for one of the candidates, all the stations worked until the end of the allotted time. During the counting of votes, I had to visit an ordinary polling station in Bakhmut, where 731 people came to the polls from 1094 voters. A few minutes before closing, students of the local college, the hostel of which is located on the territory of this station, rushed in. Someone joked that, apparently, the hostel manager would not allow them to enter until they vote. Perhaps this was just a coincidence, but on 13 spoiled ballots after that there were pictures that turned out to be more eloquent for an irritated forced electorate than a vote for one of the candidates.

All in all, everything happened transparently and quietly, the results on the station were more than expected: the first is Yuriy Boyko, the second is Volodymyr Zelenskiy, then Oleksandr Vilkul and Petro Poroshenko. But the general atmosphere, to be honest, required patience and moral strength. When destroying unused ballots, a woman cut her hand, almost immediately the joke about “elections on blood” turned into moans about impoverishment. During the counting, members of the election commission and observers (even those who represented a completely different candidate) did not hold back emotions: they rejoiced to a large number of votes “for our candidate, from Gorlivka”, and one elderly man openly and loudly laughed upon hearing the name of another candidate, surprised that someone could even vote for him. To the remark that such comments are not included in the list of duties of a member of the commission, he proudly replied: “Why should I be silent? Now everything can be said, we have democracy...” ■

The “Kronos Syndrome”, the “Trojan horse” strategy

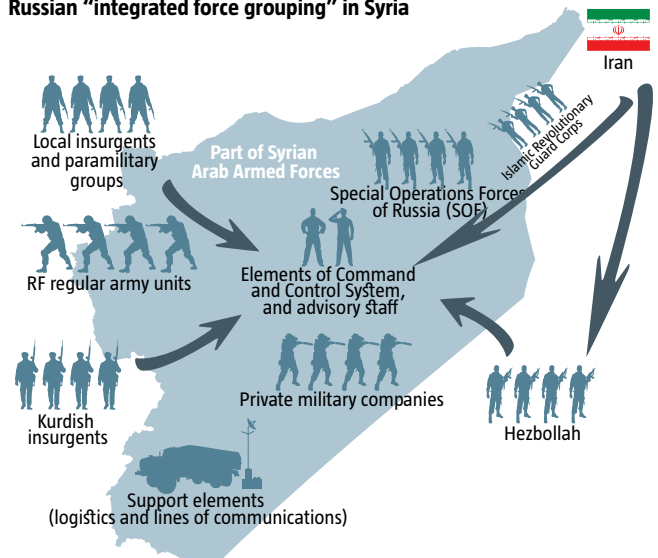
Potential Russian courses of action in Venezuela based on the experience of Ukraine and Syria

Mark Voyger, Estonian National Defence College, Tartu

When it comes to the potential threats emanating from hybrid warfare, the dominant views within the Russian regime and experts' community is that Russia is a target of Western hybrid offensive. The Kremlin is deeply convinced that the West's secret goal is to foment and trigger the so-called ‘Color Revolution’ aimed at disrupting the current Russian constitutional order and toppling the regime. This irrational threat perception among the Russian ruling elite of the so-called ‘Color Revolution’ can be dubbed the “Kronos Syndrome”, after the ancient Greek god Kronos who feared that his children, the gods of Olympus, would one day overthrow him the way he had overthrown his own father, the god of the sky Uranus. This political syndrome can be defined as the preemptive fear of violent regime-change among elites in countries that are historically prone to revolutions, coups or manipulated elections. This fundamental insecurity results in the Putin regime's attempts to stifle and suppress the societal forces that its own policies have generated, for example, the demands for political change and democratization of the Russian middle class and the youth. These Russian threat misperceptions have been reflected clearly on numerous occasions. For example, during the Moscow Security Conference in Apr 2016 ‘Color Revolutions’ were portrayed as tools of ‘Western hybrid warfare’ aimed at the destabilization of Russia, Eurasia and the Middle East. Earlier, in December 2014 and 2015, the Russian military doctrine and national security strategy clearly stated that the Russian government regards itself as the target of Western hybrid efforts to destabilize it from within.

The current Russian leadership, which has undisputed Soviet upbringing, mentality and reflexes, apparently cannot fathom the fact that hundreds of thousands of people can gather spontaneously on the Maidan in 2013-2014 in the middle of the harshest winter to defend Ukraine's pro-EU choice under the bullets and batons of the Berkut and riot police deployed by the Russian satrap Yanukovich. Russia's own history with popular movements clearly demonstrates that such attempts at regime change in a popular format traditionally either do not succeed, or do not last long (the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917, for example). Based on the Soviet experience, the only successful way of toppling a government or a ruler, and holding onto power is through a well-organized conspiracy of a small group of dedicated operatives, such as the Bolshevik coup in October 1917. Similarly, those Soviet leaders who did not pass of natural death were taken down by small groups of conspirators from within the regime, who then started deposing each other: Beria — Stalin, Khrushchev — Beria, Brezhnev — Krushchev, etc. Thus, the idea of a successful regime change being brought about by genuine popular protests runs contrary to the Kremlin's

Russian “integrated force grouping” in Syria



long-established view of the people as masses, mere subjects to the almighty rulers, incapable of having a coherent will of their own. If those masses gather and rise against a regime friendly to Russia, such as those in Ukraine, Syria and nowadays Venezuela, then, according to the Kremlin's twisted conspiratorial logic, they must have come under direct influence, even control, from the outside. The usual suspects in this Kremlin's propaganda playbook borrowed from the Soviet Union, are the CIA and the State Department, as in 2015 Putin himself directly blamed the latter for expending five billion dollars to organize the Maidan in order to hurt Russia's interests in Ukraine.

The results of this Kremlin's Kronos Syndrome within Russia have been extremely detrimental to the already sufficiently crushed and divided Russian civil society. The creation of the Russian Guard (Rossgvardiya) headed by Putin's former bodyguard, General Zolotov; the constant bans on protests against the regime and “unsanctioned” demonstrations; the defining of ‘Color Revolutions’ as a domestic military threat to Russia — all those measures indicate that the Russian government takes those threats very seriously and is ready to employ any tools at its disposal in order to crush all dissent before it evolves into a broader movement capable of challenging the Kremlin's control over all of Russia.

The impact of this Russian political syndrome on the Russian actions abroad since 2014 has been even more dramatic, involving massive human casualties, in particular in

Ukraine, Syria and potentially soon — in Venezuela. Ultimately, it all comes down to the now notorious “Gerasimov Doctrine”.

UPDATING THE “GERASIMOV DOCTRINE” AND THE PERCEIVED AMERICAN “TROIJAN HORSE SCENARIO”

When the Chief of General Staff of the RF Armed Forces, Army General Gerasimov first revealed in February 2013 the now infamous “Hybrid Warfare model” before the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, his goals were twofold — a descriptive one, trying to demonstrate what the world of Western-style warfare in the 21st century looks like from the perspective of Russia; and a prescriptive one, by directing the Russian military science to work with the Russian General Staff in finding ways to both counter those perceived “non-linear” hybrid threats emanating from the West and at the same time exploit them against both the West and its allies worldwide. Gerasimov’s presentation at the time did not constitute a full-fledged “Hybrid Warfare Doctrine”, as many in the West assumed, rather it was a conceptual model. Over the years, however, his writings have gradually formed something that can justifiably be called the “Gerasimov Doctrine” of Russia’s dual approach to hybrid warfare by trying to counter its effects at home, and employ it to the fullest against its enemies abroad.

This year was not an exception, as on Saturday, 02 March 2019 Gen. Gerasimov gave his annual speech to the Russian Academy of Military Science, in which he accused the Pentagon of developing a new military actions strategy dubbed the “Trojan Horse”. According to him, its core tenet is the active use of the protest potential of the “Fifth Column” in order to destabilize the situation inside a country, combined with the simultaneous launching of high-precision weapon strikes against the most important government and infrastructure sites. He also stated that the Russian Federation is ready to prevent any of those strategies with the combined efforts of the Russian military scientists working hand in hand with the Russian General Staff, who over the past several years “have developed conceptual methods of neutralizing the aggressive actions of the likely adversaries”. According to him, the fundamental principle of Russia’s response will be the “strategy of active defense”, which envisages the carrying out of a series of measures for preemptive neutralization of the threats to the security of the state, while at the same time recognizing the defensive nature of the Russian military doctrine. He stated that “This is one of the priority directions for guaranteeing the security of the state. We must preempt the enemy in the development of military strategy, and always be a step ahead of them”.

Further on, Gerasimov again accused the USA and its allies for having set on an aggressive course in their foreign policy by designing military actions of offensive nature, such as the “global strike”, and the “multi-domain battle” concepts. He also blamed the USA for using “Color Revolutions” and “soft power to “deprive of their statehood” those countries that have fallen out of favor with the US, in order to replace their legitimately elected institutions, and undermine their sovereignty. Gerasimov asserted that this has already occurred in Iraq, Libya, as well as in Ukraine, and according to him, similar activities are currently being observed in Venezuela, as well.

These annual updates to the “Gerasimov Doctrine” have traditionally been based on the analysis of events over the course of every year, together with an assessment of the evolution of hybrid warfare worldwide and the future vector (direction) of what Russian military leadership perceives

as Western, primarily American actions. Given the inherent duality of Gerasimov’s descriptive-prescriptive discourse, his presentations have proven to be a valuable resource for both analyzing, and even predicting potential Russian actions. By applying the principle of “mirror-imaging” to Gerasimov’s analysis and guidance — that is by recognizing that Russia traditionally mistakes the West’s actions for its own, but blames those entirely on the West, one could easily detect a growing concern within the Russian leadership with the situation in yet another potential theater of “Color Counter-revolution” — Venezuela.

THE CONFLUENCE OF POLITICAL, LEGAL, INFORMATION AND MILITARY DOMAINS OF RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE

Gerasimov’s analysis coincided with the increased activity of the legislative, diplomatic and information branches of the Kremlin regimes’ machine. On Sunday, 03 March, the Speaker of the RUS Federation Council, Valentina Matvienko officially stated during a meeting with the executive Vice President of Venezuela Delsy Rodriguez who is in Moscow on a work visit, that the Russian Federation will do everything possible to not allow a military invasion of Venezuela. Matvienko was reported as saying that, “We are very concerned that the USA could launch any provocation so that blood is spilled, in order to find a cause and a reason to invade Venezuela. But we will do anything in order not to allow this to happen”. She also stated that Russia is categorically opposed to any outside intervention in the affairs of sovereign independent states.

On the foreign policy “front”, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov had a conversation with the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday, 02 March, to discuss the situation in Venezuela, during which he re-

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF RUSSIA’S RESPONSE WILL BE THE “STRATEGY OF ACTIVE DEFENSE”, WHICH ENVISAGES THE CARRYING OUT OF A SERIES OF MEASURES FOR PREEMPTIVE NEUTRALIZATION OF THE THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF THE STATE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME RECOGNIZING THE DEFENSIVE NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN MILITARY DOCTRINE

portedly condemned the threats the US has made toward the Maduro regime, and stating that any overt interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state constitutes severe violation of the international law. Lavrov also stated that Russia is ready to participate in the bilateral consultation on Venezuela proposed by Washington. In the meantime, on the information “front”, on 22 February 2019, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zaharova, pushed through the propaganda thesis that the US is preparing to use the intended delivery of humanitarian aid to Venezuela as a pretext for a military intervention, that it is deploying forces to the Colombia-Venezuelan border, and that it has also purchased a large batch of fire arms from an Eastern European country to distribute them to the Venezuela opposition thus helping them to launch a civil war, to serve as a pretext for a US invasion.

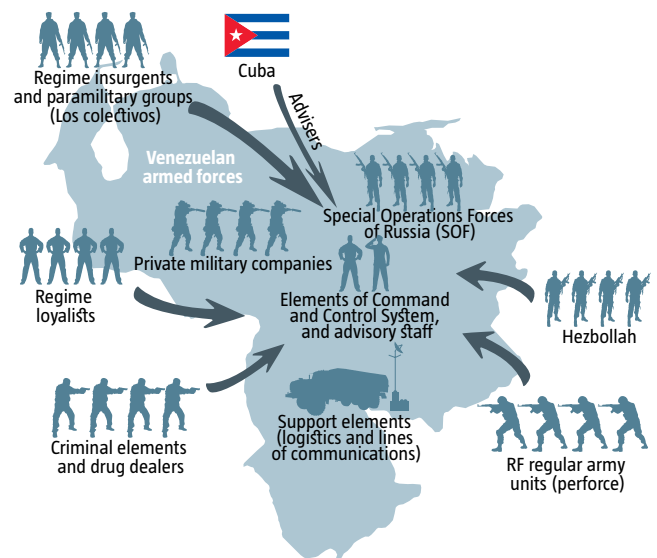
Matvienko’s institution is the one that authorizes the use of RUS forces overseas, so any such statements should not be discarded lightly, especially when coupled with the similar statements made by Gerasimov over the weekend, and the delay tactic used by Lavrov by proposing negotiations to slow down the US response. Coupled with the ongoing information warfare since the end of January, that includes also the

Russian military analytical publication on that topic — all those serve as the perfect example of the synergy of the Russian “all of government” approach as applied to potential hybrid actions abroad — the simultaneous activation of the Russian diplomacy, legislature, military, and information (propaganda and analytical) branches, preferably done on the weekends, as a rule of thumb, to surprise the West and gain a headstart.

VENEZUELA AS THE NEXT POTENTIAL TESTING GROUND FOR THE RUSSIAN MILITARY’S “HYBRID WARFARE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE GENERATION MODEL”

If Russia decides to intervene in Venezuela to prop the Maduro regime and help him crush the still fledgling opposition movement, then it will most employ there a version of its “integrated forces groupings” that were initially tested (albeit unsuccessfully) in Ukraine, then perfected in Syria since 2015. The concept of integrated forces groupings was first revealed in July 2017 by Gen. Aleksander Dvornikov, the first Commander of the Russian expeditionary force in Syria, who currently commands Russia’s Southern Military District. Based on Russia’s experience in Syria, those formations comprise units of Russian special forces (“spetsnaz”), together with a small number of conventional forces, serving as command, control and military advisers to the regime’s armed forces. Upon arrival in the host-country those units become the core of that integrated force grouping, supported by Russian private military contractors, such as the notorious “Wagner” Group. Once on the ground, they start building that grouping by embedding those advisory and support elements into the local armed forces units at all levels, and then augmenting those groupings by pulling together regime loyalists, local militias and paramilitary groups, as well as terrorist groups and criminal elements. This represents nothing less than a perfected Russian “hybrid warfare expeditionary force generation model”, whose main objective is to support friendly regimes across the globe against popular revolutions, by fighting with “less blood and money on foreign territory”, as postulated by Stalin and Tukhachevsky back in the 1930s. These hybrid forces are not bred to win wars against

Russian “integrated force grouping” in Venezuela



Latin America, on the US doorsteps, to save yet another odious regime from its people, and position Russia as a power-broker, if not the kingmaker in the Western hemisphere, just like it has succeeded in doing so in the Mideast.

The composition of a future Russian integrated forces grouping in Venezuela would revolve similarly, around Russian spetsnaz, command and control, support elements (communications and logistics), and advisors, plus private military contractors. There it can count on the support of the Venezuelan armed forces that are still generally loyal to Maduro. Many of their officers are trained in Russia and their forces receive Russian equipment, including anti-aircraft systems. The role of the Iranian IRGC will be played in Venezuela by the Cuban advisors — some 20,000 — 25,000 of them, who are also training the regime forces to use the Russian military hardware, and to suppress popular protests. Russia would also likely augment its expeditionary forces by bringing in the regimes’ militias, the notorious “Los Colectivos”, and use them to patrol the border with Colombia, to terrorize the population seeking humanitarian aid, and to break down and disperse large-scale demonstrations, or even as “cannon fodder”, should the situation evolve into a full fledged civil war with the use of fire arms on both sides. Just like in Syria, in Venezuela Russia could also likely receive support from the terrorists group Hezbollah that has been welcomed by Maduro and that has been using Venezuela as sanctuary and training ground since the era of Chavez. Criminal elements, most notably drug traffickers, could also be brought into the equation, especially against Colombian forces that have been fighting them on their side of the border for decades (see Russian “integrated force grouping” in Venezuela).

RUSSIA’S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN VENEZUELA

The Russian objective in Venezuela is clearly to preempt any US action by accusing the US of preparing an invasion of its own under the pretext of humanitarian action in support of the Russia-perceived “Color Revolution”, that it blames the US for organizing. Russia will most likely legitimize its own involvement in that country by signing a deal with Venezuela, including a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to protect its military personnel deployed there. In

HAVING DECLARED VICTORY IN SYRIA, ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN, THIS TIME IN AN EXOTIC LOCATION IN THE US BACKYARD WOULD SERVE THE RUS REGIME BY DISTRACTING THE PUBLIC OPINION AT HOME, BY BOOSTING PATRIOTIC FERVOR, AND BY SLAPPING THE US IN THE FACE

regular armies, thus their defeat in Ukraine since 2014, but they are perfectly capable of winning hybrid wars “on the cheap” against rebels whose forces are weak and divided, and who do not enjoy the decisive long-term support of the West of the type provided to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

In Syria, the Russian integrated forces groupings incorporated, along with the remnants of the Syrian Arab armed forces still loyal to Assad, also the Baathist regime’s militias, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) forces and Quds Force advisors, Kurdish fighters, as well as terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah (see Russian “integrated force grouping” in Syria).

Now that RUS has successfully tested this “Color counter-revolutionary” model in Syria and has effectively helped the Assad regime survive, it is only logical that the Russian political and military leadership would be eager to test it in



International duty. At the Moscow meeting with Vice President of Venezuela Delcy Rodríguez, Chairwoman of the Federation Council Valentina Matvienko claimed that Russia would make every effort to prevent a military invasion of Venezuela

fact, the visit of the Venezuelan Vice President in Moscow last weekend could have included the signing of such a legal instrument. Using the Russian experience in Syria as an example, the Russian-Syrian SOFA was signed in mid-August 2015, a month and a half before the launching of the Russian operations there. This was followed in September 2015 by an increase in the number of publications, especially in the Russian specialized military journals, calling on Russia to take sides and join forces with the Shia forces in the Middle East (from Iran and Hezbollah to Assad's Allawite regime). A similar flurry of publications is being observed nowadays, with Russian military analysts rushing in to describe the various aspects of a potential US operation against Venezuela. Given the "mirror-imaging" mentality of the Russian leadership and expert community, this trend indicates that similar preparations are likely well under way in Russia itself.

At the strategic level, this "strategic preparation of the environment, or the battlespace" constitutes yet another example of Russian strategic information warfare coupled with lawfare. The RUS leadership must be feeling compelled to act urgently and decisively before the Venezuelan opposition is organized and ready to take up arms, and most importantly, before a critical number of Venezuelan service members defect and join the opposition to give it a "military muscle", as it happened in Syria after the spring of 2011.

The timing of such actions cannot be more propitious for Russia these days and weeks for the following reasons. The US military currently is focused on the battle to take over the last ISIL bastion in Syria; the US media, public and political and legislative branches have been distracted with the latest revelations related to President Trump's activities and contacts with Russia; the Trump administration is having to deal with the negative effects of all that, and design its crisis-response strategy for the upcoming Mueller investigation report. To compound things, the US administration's focus over the preceding weeks has been clearly set on Singapore, where yet another international show staged by the North Korean regime resulted in a waste of US time and effort, and

has served to distract America by drawing its attention to a major issue on the other side of the planet.

There are also domestic reasons why the Kremlin might be tempted to seek a quick and easy victory in Venezuela. Venezuela, with its vast oil reserves, is considered the "personal fiefdom" of Putin's friend Igor Sechin, the head of Rosneft, a company that must feel compelled to protect its investments and continued presence in Venezuela. On the political front, Putin's popularity ratings are dropping, and there were protests in Russia recently during the fourth anniversary of the assassination of Boris Nemtsov. Having declared victory in Syria, another successful campaign, this time in an exotic location in the US backyard would serve the RUS regime by distracting the public opinion at home, by boosting patriotic fervor, and by slapping the US in the face through proving that America is finally incapable of upholding the Monroe Doctrine almost 200 years after it was declared (1820). Last, but not least, a potential Russian victory in Latin America will also galvanize the left-wing forces across the continent and will demonstrate to their nations that any hope of reform and democratization are futile. This will boost the cohesion of regimes from Cuba and Nicaragua to leftist-dominated countries, such as Bolivia and could lead to the proliferation of such governments across the region, as was the case during the Cold War during and following the Khrushchev era.

The human dimensions of a potential civil war in Venezuela won by Russia and the Maduro regime, will involve the inevitable migration of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of refugees across Latin America, including up north toward the US. This will be the dramatic logical result of one of three potential courses of events in Venezuela: a protracted conflict, if the RUS and loyalist forces meet stronger opposition; the likely direct Russian targeting of opposition-controlled civilian infrastructure, as it was done in Syria; or simply by ousting the "undesirable" elements of the population if the Russian hybrid expeditionary force and the Maduro regime forces succeed in scoring a quick and decisive victory. Regardless of the exact reasons for such an exodus out of Venezuela, it will undoubtedly cause tremendous pres-



Regime defenders. Director of the National Guard of Russia (Rosgvardiya) Viktor Zolotov and Chief of the General Staff of the RF Armed Forces Valeriy Gerasimov are the guaranty of the current Kremlin overlords' staying in power

sure on its neighbors in Latin America, first and foremost on the governments in Columbia and Brazil that are hostile to Maduro's regime. Within the US itself, such a migrant wave will also prove Trump's thesis right about the perceived danger of refugees from the South and the need to build a wall along the border with Mexico.

WHAT SHOULD AMERICA AND EUROPE DO?

The United States and the European Union are already in a difficult spot when it comes to addressing the evolving crisis in Venezuela. They, together with a number of Venezuela's neighbors and other countries across the world, have tried to delegitimize the Maduro government by recognizing his political opponent — the Speaker of the Parliament Juan Guaidó — as the legitimate President of Venezuela. This has led to vehement criticism on the part of Russia and has boosted

SHOULD RUSSIA DECIDE TO INTERVENE MILITARILY IN VENEZUELA, IN A HYBRID OR MORE CONVENTIONAL FORM, THE US MUST IMPOSE A FULL BLOCKADE OF THE COUNTRY OF THE TYPE IT HAD OVER CUBA DURING THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS. SHOULD A CIVIL WAR ERUPT, THE US SHOULD ALSO BE READY TO ESTABLISH SAFE ZONES WITHIN VENEZUELA FOR REFUGEES FROM MADURO'S REGIME LEST THE MISTAKES OF THE SYRIAN CAMPAIGN ARE REPEATED

the Russian propaganda machine that is currently spinning wildly and producing conspiracy theories of a Western plot against Venezuela designed and implemented by the United States. The political and social tensions within Venezuela continue to rise exponentially with the massive blackout caused by the failure of the largest electric power station last week, which also triggered an unprecedented water supply crisis, and forced Juan Guaidó to declare a State of Emergency in Venezuela's National Assembly. In an attempt to divert popular discontent, President Maduro openly accused the US of launching a cyber attack against the Venezuelan power plant, as he also insinuated that the electric grid had been damaged by saboteurs. In response, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued strong statements denouncing Maduro's allegations, and laying the blame for this chaos on Cuba and its advisors in Venezuela. The domestic scene is rapidly being set for a showdown between the regime forces and the opposition. The recent return of Guaidó to the country has so far not been opposed by the regime, but should he be arrested or murdered, the US and the EU will be put before a

fait accompli, that would inevitably also leave Maduro's regime beyond the point of no return with regard to the West. He will then be forced to cling to power with the help of Russia, China and Cuba, and will likely be facing a growing protest movement, involving guerilla actions and urban warfare, if the protests turn violent and are joined by defecting elements of the Venezuelan armed forces, as it happened in Syria. This will inevitably unleash a civil war, in which Russia will be an active participant, albeit initially on the cheap, through its "hybrid expeditionary force", and that it will strive to win at all cost regardless of the casualties, as it did in Syria. Thus, the US will be faced with the tough choice between witnessing yet another popular movement crushed by a radical socialist regime, this time right at its doorstep across the Caribbean, or moving in to provide assistance to the potential rebel forces in Venezuela, and building a coalition for an international humanitarian operation. By default, Russia and China will try to block such a coalition at the UN by exercising their veto rights. From that point on, the US will have to work with the Organization of the American States (OAS), to build such a coalition to include the governments opposed to Maduro, for example Colombia and Brazil. In Eurasia, Russia has devised a quasi-legal mechanism for justifying its own "humanitarian" actions in its "Near Abroad" by legitimating them as being undertaken under the auspices of the CSTO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The US task in Latin America will be more difficult, as it will involve building a real, legitimate coalition within an organization such as the OAS that it does not control the way Russia influences the CSTO.

As a practical response, should Russia decide to intervene militarily in Venezuela, in a hybrid or more conventional form, the US must impose a full blockade of the country of the type it had over Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis. Granted that the size of Venezuela is substantially larger, the US blockade can be aided long its land borders by Colombia and Brazil. Should a civil war erupt, the US should also be ready to establish safe zones within Venezuela for refugees from Maduro's regime lest the mistakes of the Syrian campaign are repeated, and the refugees issue spills out of control to destabilize the neighboring countries.

Imposing additional sanctions on Russia should it intervene in Venezuela will automatically be one of the US responses, only this time these have to target the Russian oil sector, including Rosneft that has the largest stake in exploiting Venezuela's oil riches.

Last, but not least — sanctions should be imposed on the Russian military leadership involved with the command and control of any Russian expeditionary force in Venezuela, including by exposing their connections to terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, thus employing against them all available international legal regimes that target the supporters of terrorism worldwide.

Ultimately, the battle for the future of Venezuela belongs to the Venezuelan people, and it should be first and foremost a political battle, by using any and all parliamentary means still available to Guaidó and his followers. Should that project of democratization from within fail, however, and the political situation in Venezuela erupts into violence, the West cannot remain on the sidelines and watch yet another totalitarian regime destroy its people, consolidate its grip over its country, and spread its lethal influence across yet another strategic region of the world. Russia realizes fully that the time to act decisively in Venezuela has come, and it is likely already preparing to do so, through the hands of the regime, if possible, or with its own, if necessary. So must the West. ■

Decolonizing the minds

Why sympathy with Russia is a threat for Ukraine and how it can be diminished

Maksym Vikhrov

Sociologists revealed troubling data in February 2019: the share of Ukrainians sympathizing with Russia went up almost 10% to 57% (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, February 2019). Based on KIIS data, the fast growth of positive attitude towards Russia began in 2018. Unless this trend changes, Ukraine will go back to the prewar level in several years (see Attitudes of Ukrainians to Russia generally and key political developments by years) even if Ukraine-Russian relations have barely seen any change.

Why are Ukrainians increasingly sympathetic with Russia? The decline of 2014-2015 radicalization may be one explanation. Society may be getting used to the war as it transforms into the background of everyday life from the shocking disaster initially. The Russian aggression has thus not become the point of no return for Ukrainians: the surge of anti-Russian sentiment reflected the peak of emotional reaction rather than the profoundness of mentality transformations. KIIS sociologists also assume that the media have affected the sentiments as pro-Russian forces have been more proactive in the runup to the election. This is an equally troubling signal of the fact that the Kremlin's propaganda still influences public opinion more than the Ilovaysk tragedy or the attack against Ukrainian sailors in the Sea of Azov. The factor of propaganda should not be considered as the sole one: Ukrainians have high mistrust for the media and politicians. But the media activity of pro-Russian forces has shown that public demonstration of such sentiments is no longer a taboo. The respondents have become more open in surveys which, too, affects the overall results. Clearly, none of the above factors are exhaustive, but the fact is that many Ukrainians sympathize with Russia. This could become a political problem for Ukraine.

Sympathy with Russia is the basic prerequisite for the revival of the pro-Russian political camp. Obviously, nobody will promote the Customs Union — ideological rearmament is necessary here. It looks like Russia's interests in Ukraine will be promoted under the slogans of stopping the war, fighting extremism, revival of mutually beneficial relations and more. The typical Great Russian chauvinism will probably be disguised in liberal phrasing: resistance against decolonization will be presented as struggle for the rights of the minorities, civic freedoms, multiculturalism, etc. Pro-Russian politicians can count on the large numbers of average citizens unhappy with decommunization, the ban of Russian films, the blocking of Russian social media, language quotas, etc. Putting all this under one policy and presenting this to the voters in an acceptable shape is a purely technical task. The forces involved did not rush to do this in the past years as excessively pro-Russian activity could have faced a disproportionate response from the radicalized society. But the mood is changing today. The result of the current election will show the Russophiles that they are not so few after all. This is not just about the voters of Yuriy Boyko or Oleksandr Vilkul. Volodymyr Zelenskiy, too, is broadcasting pro-Russian narrative with his proposals to kneel before Vladimir Putin for peace and the blatantly anti-Maidan and Ukrainophobic jokes. The presence of such characters in mainstream politics and their electoral results signal that the hawkishness against Russia dominant

in the public space until recently is no longer a no-alternative option. In 2014, politicians massively switched to patriotism in order to stay in the political arena. Now, the opposite process may start. When they sense the change of status quo and the new limits of what is allowed, candidates for power at all levels will work for the pro-Russian audience more proactively. They can hardly expect to get political revanche without the electorate in the occupied territory in the short-term prospect. But they have every chance to strengthen their position in the regions.

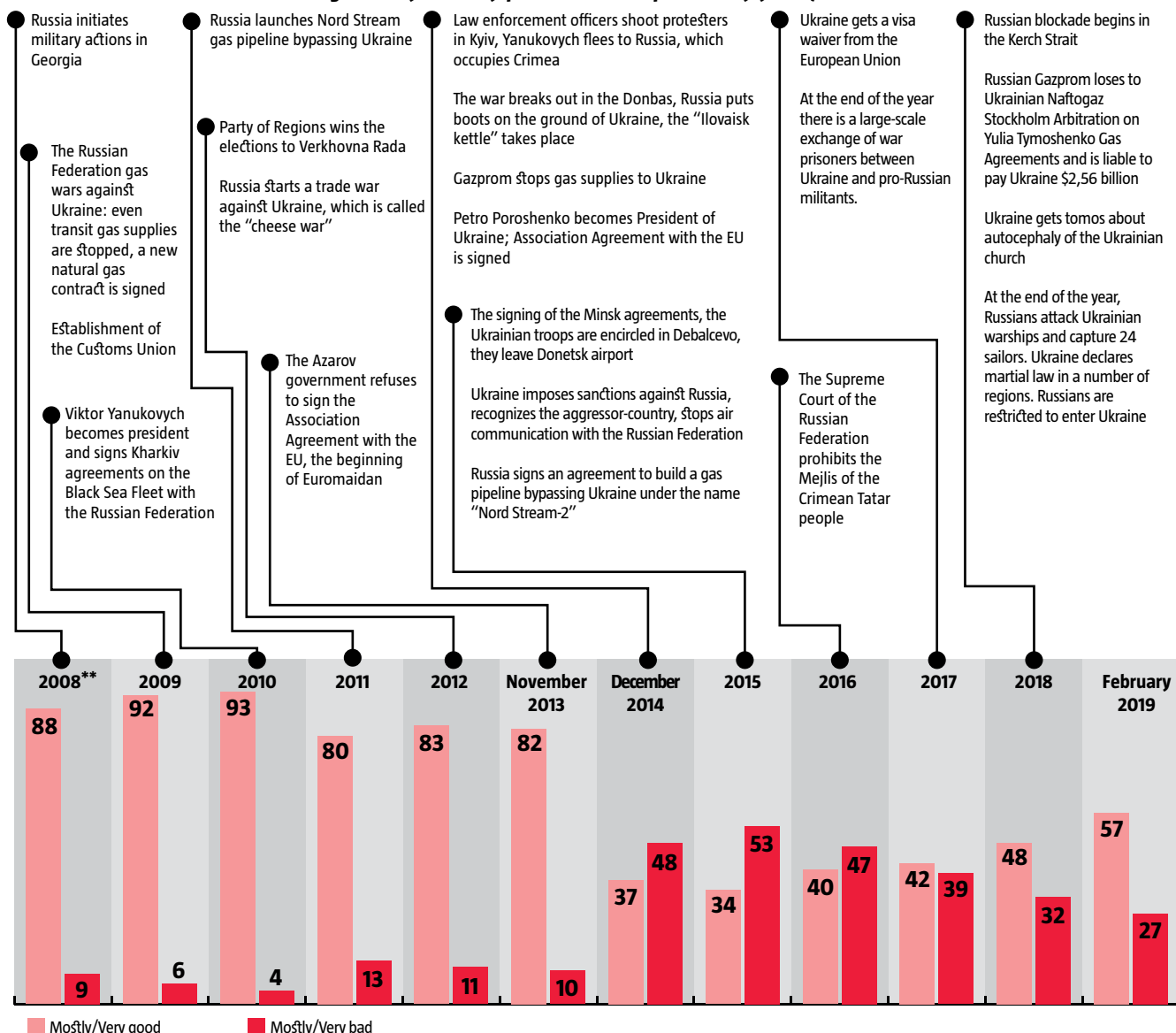
There is another serious, if less obvious threat. According to sociological surveys, the attitudes of Ukrainians to Russia, its leadership and the Russians are differentiated. 57% sympathise with Russia, just 13% with its leadership, and 77% are positive about the Russians (KIIS, February 2019). The upside of this is that Ukrainians are not sympathetic with the Russian authorities. In the future, however, the diversified attitudes towards Russia, the Russians and their leadership may result in political problems in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin is not a fairy tale eastern despot. Just like any authoritarian chieftain, he primarily serves the interests of his circle. Self-isolation from the world which Russia has embarked on in 2014 is not just to satisfy personal ambitions of the leader, but to prolong the life of its regime first and foremost, of which the specific group of the Russian elite —

UKRAINE'S BEST CHANCE FOR FAST DECOLONIZATION IS NOW WHEN MOSCOW PROVES FULLY INADEQUATE, INTIMIDATING UKRAINIAN LIBERALS WITH ARRESTS FOR POSTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, AND AVERAGE UKRAINIANS WITH ITS TALK ABOUT NUCLEAR ASHES

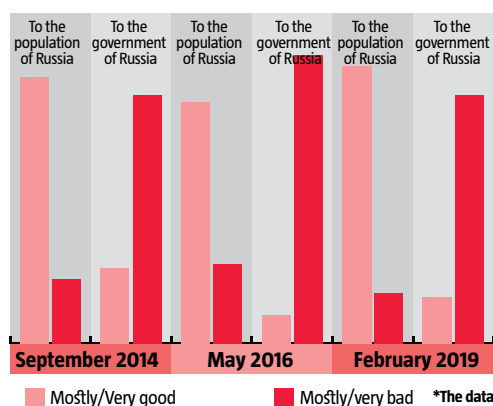
the "Ozero cooperative" and others — are beneficiaries. As soon as the Kremlin's elite decides to reset its relations with the West, Putin and the most scandalous functionaries of his regime will be removed in one way or another, from power at least. After that, they will be declared the scapegoats for everything, from political repressions and the destruction of the economy in Russia to the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas. It is for this reason that Russia's leadership has been pretending for the last two decades that anything happening in the country is Putin's personal will. This performance is intended both for the domestic and the external audience. The latter includes Ukrainians, some sincerely believing that the Russian society is a silent hostage rather than an active co-author of Putinism. When the regime collapses for one reason or another, sympathy for Russia will grow further in Ukraine, especially if Russia's new government declares a vector towards peace and democracy.

Last year's presidential election in Russia showed that Ukraine has no real friends in Russia, even in its liberal opposition. However painfully and courageously Aleksey Navalny or Kseniya Sobchak criticize Russia's government, their attitude towards Ukraine remains essentially imperial. Not everyone realizes this in Ukraine. Many in Ukraine's liberal political camp and non-government sector are willing to hold the hand out to "the good Russians", especially if they come to power through a

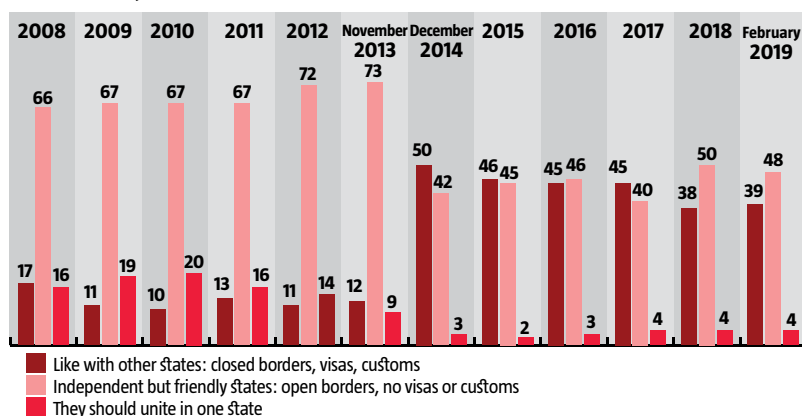
Attitudes of Ukrainians to Russia generally and key political developments by years, %*



Attitudes of Ukrainians to the population of Russia and the Russian government, separately, %*



How would you like to see the relations between Ukraine and Russia evolve? *



*The data in the infographic are given without taking into account the "It's hard to say" answer option, which was offered to the respondents

**The latest survey for every year

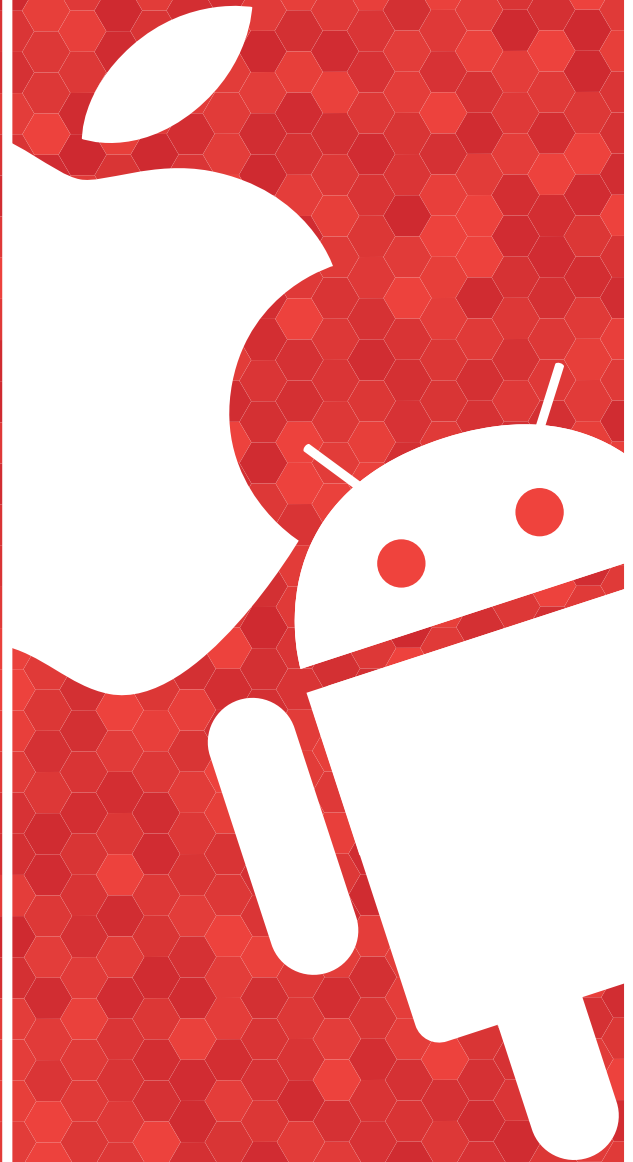
Source: KIIS surveys in different years

wave of mass protests presenting themselves as “the Russian Maidan” and make a few friendly gestures towards Ukraine. This will be a gift for the pro-Russian camp in Ukraine: promoting “normalization of relations between neighbor countries” will become much more comfortable if the Kremlin revamps itself slightly to look more European. It is clear, however, that their essence will not change: Moscow will keep trying to hold Ukraine in its geopolitical orbit regardless of what ideological framework it will take — of the Russki Mir slogans or of a “common movement towards peace and democracy”. In this sense, Ukraine’s best chance for fast decolonization is now when Moscow proves fully inadequate, intimidating Ukrainian liberals with arrests for posts on social media, and average Ukrainians with its talk about nuclear ashes. As soon as Russia puts on a democratic mask, Ukrainian society will once again split into those who will happily stop the resistance and those who realize that Russia’s appetite for Ukraine began well before 2014, and that the imperial ambitions are not the whim of its bad president but a cornerstone of Russia with its political order, culture and identity. It is the latter that many Ukrainians fail to realize, as the sociology shows.

It is impossible to wipe out pro-Russian sentiments quickly for objective reasons. The average age of Ukrainians is 40 — their cultural burden is obvious. It takes time and consistent work by the respective institutions to deliver massive profound change in the minds. The products of educational, cultural and historical policy will be visible later when the identity of young Ukrainians shapes under their umbrella. Yet, we cannot expect a fantastic result. Firstly, all institutions in Ukraine are weak and insufficiently effective. The work of the Ministry of Information Policy has shown that government interference in any sphere does not guarantee fast and good results. Secondly, nobody has monopoly on information or absolute authority in the 21st century, so the efficiency of educational work is always below of what one could expect. Quite a few Ukrainians listen to the crazy and ignore the authority of the state, medicine and global science in matters like vaccination. So pro-Russian sentiments will stay in Ukrainian society much longer. To what extent they will impact the position of Ukrainians in other issues, such as NATO and EU membership and more, is another matter. The cultivation of a new Ukrainian identity which would be impossible to return to the Little Russian format depends on how long and consistent Ukraine’s efforts in this field are. This, in turn, heavily depends on the current political situation.

It is too early to speak about the pro-Russian revanche. But the “moderate” forces are perfectly capable of pausing the decolonization as they avoid any measures that could lead to controversial reactions from society. These measures have included decommunization, the blocking of Russian social media and others. The general election is a factor of risk in this sense as the preferences of the audience can tilt in any way. In an environment where public policy is done as show business the mechanisms of democracy start working in unpredictable ways. In practice, however, state policies are defined both by the sentiments of the wider public, and the position of civil society — a domain of street activists, intellectuals, functionaries of non-state organizations, politicians, volunteers, media people, artists, officials and many more. Civil society is quite amorphous in the organizational sense and very diverse in the political sense. Yet it holds strong social, symbolic and political capital. Therefore, it can influence those in power that remember the lessons of the Maidan, and the wider audience when consolidated. Unlike the current leadership of Ukraine, its civil society is not as dependent on public sentiments. It is thus largely responsible for how consistent and long-lasting the decolonization of Ukrainian mass consciousness is going to be. ■

У К Р А Ї Н С Ь К И Й
Тиждень



Polyphonic Donbas

Who's talking to the world on behalf of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and what they are saying

Yelyzaveta Honcharova, Bakhmut

With the start of Russia's aggression, a tradition quickly developed that the pro-Ukrainian voice of occupied Crimea was, with a few exceptions, mostly that of the Crimean Tatars. From the first day, they were united and actively made their position known — and they suffered repression and persecution. Donbas produced a wider range of opinion leaders who now represent the territory at war and partly occupied region in free Ukraine and on the international level. And each of these is broadcasting a different message, depending on their own reputation.

THE OLD DONBAS ELITE AND ITS TEAM OF "DOVES OF PEACE" WERE INITIALLY DISORIENTED IN THE FACE OF A REAL WAR AND LOST THEIR POSITIONS FOR A TIME. TODAY, HOWEVER, THEY ARE CONFIDENTLY INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF EXPERT COUNCILS AND ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN POLITICS AT THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

In contrast with occupied Crimea, where the old elite has remained on the peninsula, almost to a man, Donetsk's political mastodons had no desire to run the place from within a war zone. To this day, they are active players in Ukraine's political, social and media environments. The old elite and its team of "doves of peace" were initially disoriented in the face of a real war and lost their positions for a time. Today, however, they are confidently involved in a variety of expert councils and actively engaged in politics at the local and national levels. Their main message is, "Give us the power and we will resolve everything in Donbas — 'the country will work again,' 'peace will come,'" and so on.

Former Regionals scattered among the PR spin-offs are now trying from every possible tribunal to persuade Ukrainians that the war is only happening because Ukraine's leadership is unable to cut a deal, and because of "internal conflict" in the country. If this position does not come across as persuasive and popular at the international level, domestic consumers are happy to agree with this rhetoric. Trust in experts who anticipate a rapid resolution of the conflict through a change of leadership is quite high, even when it relates to individuals who already had a chance to show themselves as crisis managers in the most critical period for the country and failed.

A separate group that is trying to broadcast its view of events on Donbas is the revolutionary elite that appeared on the occupied territories. Without doubt they have powerful channels for bringing their information to the world community through Russian propaganda media, although the "official persons" themselves are not acknowledged, don't participate in serious international movements, and have no political clout. Against the background of Russians lobbying, the aspirations of the "people of Donbas" to be recognized and independent are unlikely to be convincing.

Still, it would be naive to believe that the truckloads of money that Russia is investing for the "right" presentation

of its aggression in Ukraine are not achieving definitely success that is growing in the fertile soil offered by the substantial network of European friends of Moscow. From time to time, different countries show a burst of unexpected although very much calculated love for the unrecognized republics among certain political forces.

For instance, by the beginning of this year, the Embassy of Ukraine in Italy was forced to respond to the provocative opening of a "DNR representation in Verona. "Alas, even Italy has its political outcasts who are obviously prepared to continue to raise the level of provocation and put their efforts into gaining the approval of their Moscow handlers," said a statement. "Still, we are confident that these provocative actions on the part of certain representatives of Veronese political circles will not be able to put in question the firm position of the Italian government regarding support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine."

Not terribly patriotic but generally constructive rhetoric can be heard from a slew of Ukrainian human rights advocates and various confessions that have been working actively in Donbas since the beginning of the war, genuinely help the local population, and don't simply follow events from a distance. They have been working very productively with international institutions, participating in high-level events, and a substantial part of those who are interested in events in eastern Ukraine, both within and outside Ukraine itself, listen to them carefully. These "spokespeople" maintain a principled neutral stance towards evidence of Russia's aggression, apply international norms to their work and try to remain outside the conflict, emphasizing the fact that civilians are suffering on both sides of the frontline. By bringing the stories about those who are suffering during the war to the rest of the world, they make sure to add one final statement: if a state cannot defend its own citizens, it is at fault and should be condemned by the world community. The message about Ukraine's obligation to ensure social benefits on the occupied territories for all, without exception, is the clearest example of a position that is warmly accepted by one part of the country's population and rejected on principle by the other.

Another group of powerful opinion leaders emerged through the tragic circumstances of this war: residents of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts who became well-known because of the principled pro-Ukrainian position that had led to their captivity and torture at the hands of the militants. Volodymyr Zhemchukhov, Ihor Kozlovskiy, Iryna Dovhan and hundreds of ordinary citizens in the region endured the hell of illegal imprisonment all talk about the torture, the murders, and the illegal detentions, the violations of human rights under occupation, both at the level of ordinary social interactions and at the highest, global level. They certainly don't hide behind neutral-sounding phrases but prove through their own cases that Russia is not "rescuing the Russian-speaking people" of Donbas but is murdering them. Trust levels towards these individuals who have shown the strength, not just to talk about their own difficult trials, but to also establish a powerful grass-



European tours of separatists. Populists of various types in Western Europe contribute to the opening of “DPR offices”, such as in the Moravia region

roots movement to counter Russian propaganda are understandably high. Many of those who have returned from captivity have remained on non-occupied parts of the two oblasts and are supporting the organization of local and national civil society organizations that work to expand the Ukrainian space in Donetsk and Luhansk. They communicate actively with the press, including foreign journalists.

Activists and journalists who moved away from the region from the beginning of the armed conflict and occupation have also been doing this kind of work. The Donetsk and Luhansk intellectual class has become an active force in running an entire range of cultural and social events. Many of them see themselves as supporting the “Ukrainianness” of IDPs, organizing and stimulating a community of active resistance through social and cultural projects, protest actions and demonstrations, participation in international forums, and work documenting the crimes of the militants and their henchmen.

For instance, the *Ukrainska Narodna Rada Donetchyny ta Luhanshchyny* or Ukrainian National Council of Donetsk and Luhansk Country, a civic organization wrote into its Manifesto the desire to be a voice of influence in the region: “We are no longer prepared to resign ourselves to the fact that oligarchs, criminals, guides of the Russian aggressors, and political losers aspire to represent our interests. The Ukrainian citizens of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts who moved from the occupied territories have to become a new social force that will actively and effectively defend Ukrainian interests regardless of where they happen to live today.”

Despite the professionalism and scale of these movements, sometimes trust in them is somewhat undermined by the fact that most of the leading experts have not lived in the region they are writing about and analyzing for five years at this point. Perhaps they no longer feel the speed of changes in the two oblasts and this possibly reduces the overall level of confidence,

but the position that is most common among the members of this group is: We are trying to build a new world again because ours was destroyed by Russia. And generally those experts who once lived in the Donbas are still seen as quite influential and constructive.

But it’s very hard for volunteers, service personnel and IDPs who have gone into politics to continue to be homeboys for the average citizen. There are examples of commanders such as Kostiantyn Mateychenko and Semen Semenchenko or former volunteer and now official Georgiy Tuka. Although they have far more opportunity to represent the Donbas, to support or even initiate changes, there are typically plenty of challenges to them, as individuals who are perceived as connected to the establishment. In broadcasting the message, “We’re on top of things, so we know what’s better,” they often become subject to criticism from other groups that are opinion leaders, who hint that they are more focused on their own interests than the real interests of the region.

But even more criticism comes from all possible sides against local activists who have stayed on the non-occupied territories. Having made their position clear in the dangerous early years of the war, they joined the process of active change in their own towns. But in trying to bring to light information about problems that they run into, they rarely get support from outside. In other regions, they are often perceived as being “against Ukraine,” although they are actually standing against corruption or smuggling. They are also carrying the right message about Donbas wanting to be active because it is convinced that passivity leads to war. Still, they often simply lack the experience and skills to do this and persuade others convincingly.

It’s hard to say how justified each of these messages is, but put together they provide a general picture of attitudes in the oblasts towards the situation that has resulted from Russia’s armed aggression. ■

Predictable revenge

The Donbas and especially the Luhansk Oblast have remained to be the domain of the pro-Russian forces, although the electoral map of the region has changed significantly

Denis Kazanskiy

The first round of presidential elections has ended up with the result that a year ago might have seemed insane for the Ukrainians. The first place by a significant margin has been taken by the showman and actor Vladimir Zelenskiy. The current president, Petro Poroshenko, has squeezed into the second round with only 2% ahead of Yulia Tymoshenko. And the intrigue remained until the end. Many were sure that Poroshenko would even end the fight in the first round.

Opinion polls unanimously gave the first place to Zelenskiy even before the election. However, but there was not much belief in his victory until the very end: this scenario seemed too incredible. After all, Zelenskiy practically did not lead the traditional election campaign and addressed his voters / supporters mainly through accounts in social networks. It seemed that his electorate simply would not reach the polling stations and would stay at home on the Election Day. But these predictions did not come true, and Zelenskiy received high support throughout the country. There was no outright failure in any Oblast of Ukraine, which is extremely rare with top Ukrainian politicians. But the current president could not boast of such an achievement. His results in the West and East of Ukraine differed fivefold. If in the Lviv Oblast Poroshenko received 35.3%, in the Luhansk Oblast he got only 6.6%.

If in the Lviv Oblast Poroshenko received **35.3%**, in the Luhansk Oblast he got only **6.6%**

The electoral map of Ukraine has acquired new interesting outlines. The mental split of the country into the north-west and south-east, which was clearly manifested in the 2000s, is now less noticeable. Almost the entire territory of the country, from Volyn to Slobozhanshchina, is now painted in a single color. Volodymyr Zelenskiy and his "Kvartal-95" has become the bond that has united the Russian-speaking proletarians of Donbas, the cosmopolitan Kiev hipsters and Ukrainian-speaking farmers in Western Ukraine. The remnants of the former mental split are now visible only at the poles of the country. The current president Petro Poroshenko has won in Halychyna, where he received the highest result in the country. In the Donbas, Yuriy Boyko, the leader of the pro-Russian party, "Opposition Platform "For Life", has got to the top.

It was mainly the Donbas that riveted the attention of journalists and experts. Some areas of this region actually elected the president for the first time since 2010, be-

cause in 2014 they could not vote. Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Lysychansk, Severodonetsk, Rubizhne, Konstantynivka and other cities and towns of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in May 2014 were controlled by illegal armed groups, and the election of the Ukrainian president was banned there. The parliamentary elections in the fall of 2014 cannot be called full-fledged — the war in the Donbas was still in full swing at this time, so the local residents were just not in the mood for elections. Turnout was then minimal, so the results of the will expression were distorted.

The current elections can be called the first full-fledged campaign in the areas controlled by Ukraine in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts since the pre-war times. Now the turnout there is equal to the average Ukrainian indicators. But the electoral mood, as it turned out, has not changed much. The main triumph was gained by the odious ex-Regional Yuriy Boyko. The third place in most districts was taken by another former representative of the PR Olexander Vilkul.

The highest result Yuriy Boyko received in the Luhansk Oblast — where he, seemingly, should have received only a curse. In the towns of the so-called "chemical triangle" (Severodonetsk-Lysychansk-Rubizhne, where a number of large chemical enterprises worked in the days of the Soviet Union), the Boyko team left the ruins behind. Even before the war outbreak, these cities had the appearance that the war had already taken place there. The giant factories with thousands of workers were artificially brought to bankruptcy and destroyed by representatives of local elites, which at that time were part of the Party of Regions and were Boyko's associates. Especially Lysychansk suffered from the activities of this team, where the post of mayor was held by the Boyko's comrade-in-arms and companion, People's Deputy Sergiy Dunayev (in these elections he worked as Boyko's electioneering agent). Almost all industrial enterprises were destroyed or brought to bankruptcy in the town: soda plant, rubber products plant, glass factory "Proletary". The latter was controlled by Dunaev and was closed down in 2013, at the height of the so-called stability.

Now Serhiy Dunaev is considered the unofficial master of Lysychansk. The People's Deputy, who in 2014 won the elections there in the single-mandate district 107, having received only about 7 thousand votes, in fact, controls the city council. The consequences of his managerial talent application can be seen with the naked eye by any guest of the town even at the entrance to Lysychansk. Broken roads, deep potholes in the main streets, endless fields of ruins and broken bricks remaining at the site of industrial enterprises, interruptions in water supply, bridges that collapsed because of old age. Lysychansk is



PHOTO: DENIS KAZANSKY

The legacy of experienced managers. Many ruins in the Luhansk Oblast are caused not by the war, but by the activities of Yuriy Boyko, the most popular politician in the region

in a neglected state, but continues to support those who turned the once developed industrial center into a depressive zone. Yuriy Boyko got a confident victory in this city: 40% of Lysychansk residents voted for him. And he received a similar result in other cities of the Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts.

However, the main event for the East of Ukraine, perhaps, has become the second place of Volodymyr Zelenskiy. The uniqueness of this achievement lies in the fact that he, not being from the Donbas and not having a pro-Russian position, without resorting to administrative resources and bribery, has received such a high result in the region that was usually received either by representatives of pro-Russian forces like “Regionals” or communists, or representatives of local elites and those who they put their stakes on (before Yanukovich it was President Leonid Kuchma). Not having neither party cells, nor local deputies and mayors at the local levels, Zelenskiy has received 25% of the votes in the Donbas. Perhaps from Kiev or Lviv, this fact does not seem to be something strange. Many have recorded him in the ranks of the pro-Russian candidates and therefore do not see anything unprecedented in the fact that he has received high rates in the East.

But for the authorities, the election results in the East are disappointing. If in the Donetsk Oblast Poroshenko unexpectedly has shown a quite high for this area result of 12.6%, then in the Luhansk Oblast there has been a complete failure and the worst indicators among all Oblasts of Ukraine. And such a result can be considered natural. The Luhansk Oblast has long been turned into a godforsaken spot and ulcer, always bleeding, about the problems of which they know little in Kyiv. Suffice it to say that in the frontal area they have not had Head of ORDiLO for half a year! Since last fall Acting Head has been ruling the Luhansk Oblast.

It is obvious that independently, without support at the state level, this Oblast will not be able to get out of the pit into which it fell due to the outrages of local clans and hostilities. And while there is no such support, people who live in a front-line region with closed factories and broken roads have few reasons to vote for the current government. But any destructive forces — from former “Regionals” to radical separatists — are happy to use the difficult economic situation of the region in their own interests. And that turned out to be a predictable revenge on the anti-Ukrainian forces, which has been talked about so much in recent years, but which has never been prevented. ■

Will the Russian sea swallow Ukraine?

How Russia's policy of assimilation transformed over time

Stanislav Kulchytskiy



The troubadours of the empire. Karamzin in history and Pushkin and Lermontov in literature forged a framework that supported Russia's politics of expansion

The Ukrainian-Russian conflict in the unusual shape of a hybrid war has been simmering for six years now. Society has grown weary and wants peace. The politicians linked to Russia use that desire pledging to get peace with Vladimir Putin if they win this year's presidential and parliamentary elections.

Obviously, peace on Putin's terms could come quickly. But what awaits us if we once again end up in the "brotherly" embrace of our neighbor?

Forecasting the future is a dangerous thing. But there is a convincing answer to that question. One simply has to peek into the past in order to understand that we will have no future if the abovementioned scenario comes to life.

LITTLE RUSSIANS OR UKRAINIANS?

When Bohdan Khmelnytsky's state was dragged into the Russian tsardom, its autonomous rights were restricted, then abolished under Catherine the Great, while Ukrainian history was appropriated by Russia (with a helping hand of many Ukrainians).

The Moscow dynasty of the Romanovs fully expropriated historical memory of the Ruriks' medieval empire centered in Kyiv. The fact that the Rurik dynasty functioned in Moscow up until the tsardom of Ivan the Terrible and his son Fedor made this easier. The tsar's subjects were educated through brilliant works of historians, including Nikolai Karamzin (*History of the Russian State*, vol. 1–12, 1818–1829), Sergey Solovyov (*History of Russia from the Earliest Times*, vol.

1–29, 1851–1879), and Vasily Klyuchevsky (*A History of Russia*, chap. 1–5, 1904–1922). None of them bothered to consider the fact that the history of the Russian people initially unfolded along the banks of the Dnipro between the 9th and the 13th centuries, then flowed smoothly to the banks of the Oka and the Moskva River. In their version of history, the Russian Empire started when Rurik, a Varangian and the founder of the Rurik dynasty, was summoned to the prince's throne in Novgorod. Nestor's 11th-century *Primary Chronicle* dates that to 862. The Millenium of Russia, a grandiose monument, was erected in Novgorod in 1862 to celebrate exactly that.

Yet, before Rurik was invited to Novgorod, an army of the "Ros people" (in 860 according to Byzantine sources and 852 according to Nestor the Chronicler) went down the Boryspnen (Dnipro) and devastated the suburbs of Byzantium's capital. This points to the existence of the state in the Dnipro area by that time. But no monument to celebrate the Millenium of Rus-Ukraine was erected either in 1852, or in 1860. The reason was very trivial: Ukraine was then swalled by the Russian Empire. It appropriated Ukraine's territory, its people that had shaped that territory, and Ukraine's past. It appropriated Rus, the Rus people or Rusyn, the ethnic self-name origintaing from the Varangians (the Normans), albeit changing it to *ruskiye* (Russian).

Ukrainians did not dissapear completely. When Russia emerged (as the Russian Empire after 1721), the Great Rus-

sian nation appeared with two ethnographic “offshoots”, the Little Russians (Ukrainians) and the Belarusians. They were presented as offshoots from the one Rusky tribe because they had lived beyond the Muscovy (Russian) state for a long time. They were believed to constitute the one Russian people together with the Great Russians. Moreover, both the Little Russians and the Belarusians were supposed to appreciate being Russians, even if second-rate in a system where subjects of the Russian tsar were divided into the Russians and the non-Orthodox non-Russians conquered by the empire. The empire was flexible in the way it treated them. For example, those in the Ostsee governorates (in the conquered territory) and the Germans invited to serve the tsar enjoyed high status. The Little Russians were diminished to aliens when they insisted on being a separate people.

The Little Russian intelligentsia thought about ways to separate from the Russians and to name their people once it lost its historical self-name. The logical decision was to transform the name Ukraine known since the 12th century into an ethnotoponym. That’s how Ukrainians appeared on the verge of the 19th and 20th centuries. Historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky emerged as a figure who returned their own history by writing a multi-volume *History of Ukraine-Rus*. This made him such an authoritative figure in Ukraine’s society that he was

uniformly elected head of the Central Rada, a revolutionary body that led the war of the Ukrainian people for independence, after the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty.

The episode of the Little Russians and Ukrainians completes in November 1918. That’s when the First World War ended and delegations of the participant countries were going to Paris for the peace congress. Authorized representatives of the victorious Entente gathered in Iași (Romania). The attendees included well-known Russians — Pavel Miliukov, Nikolai von Dietmar, Vladimir Riabushynski and more. They begged the Entente to occupy Ukraine and help restore the unified and undivided Russia. The gathering produced an instruction for the Russian delegation to the Paris congress, reportedly authored by Miliukov. “Conversations with the Ukrainians are unacceptable because the mere notion “Ukrainian people” was made up by the Germans. The official recognition of the words “Ukraine” and “Ukrainians” will inevitably lead to the shrinking of the Russian (Rusky in the original version) people by a third and cut off the Russian lands from the Black Sea. Even if the Paris congress were to include “Ukraine” into the Russian state with its name preserved, we would leave a rich field for separatism in the future. Because for as long as a separate nation exists, there will remain ground and reason for the seeking of its own separate state.”

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One people? Russian and soviet propaganda proved the most effective in 2014

THE ENDLESS "RUSSIAN SEA"

The Russian society got used to almost unstoppable expansion of the imperial borders during the 18th and early 19th century. The collapse of Napoleon's empire allowed Alexander I to swallow Poland. The insurgency the Poles started in 1831 was drowned in blood. Alexander Pushkin, 32 at that time, reacted to this with a poem and a purely rhetorical question:

*Which shall stand fast in such commotion
The haughty Liakh, or faithful Russ?
And shall Slavonic streams meet in a Russian ocean? –
Or il't dry up? This is point for us.*

A year later, the equally freedom-loving, liberal and progressive Mikhail Lermontov, 18, commented on the bloody advance of the tsar's army in the Caucasus:

*Accept it, oh Circassian! West and East
Might soon share your fate.
The time will come when you will utter haughtily:
A slave I am, but of the tsar of Universe!*

Supported by the Russian society, the next emperor Nikolai I took on the function of a gender of Europe, making the last attempt to ultimately crush the weakened Ottoman Empire in order to expand his state to four continents, from Alaska to North Africa. That did not happen. Guided by their interests, the UK and France protected the sultan. Tsarism faced a crushing defeat in the 1853-1856 Crimean War and the autocratic Russia realized that military might could not rely on slavlike dependence.

The era of reforms under Alexander II introduced the Russian Empire to the industrial epoch and revived its military might. But it remained an autocratic empire and was defeated in the First World War even though its allies, the UK and France, came out victorious. The military defeat led to the collapse of the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian Empire – Ukrainian lands were part of both. The Ukrainian people gained a window of opportunity to create their own statehood. The Ukrainian People's Republic emerged on the European map in 1917, followed by the West Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918. In January 1919, both republics announced their intention to unite in Ukraine. But the War of Independence fought by the Ukrainian people was defeated. Ukraine ended up carved between four countries for the interwar period, including Russia, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

THE COMMUNIST SUPERPOWER

The War of Independence was defeated largely because the autocratic Russia did not provide any environment where the Little Russians could turn into a united Ukrainian nation. That environment only began to emerge during Ukraine's war for national statehood.

Ukrainians had to clash with two Russias, white and communist, in that war. The White Russia stood for the revival of the united and undivided Russia. It met resistance both from the Lenin-led commune state, and from the new statelets in the national regions of the former empire. The bolsheviks used the misleading tactics of interaction with the national liberation movement of the oppressed and won. Lenin built the commune state with two parallel power hierarchies: one based on the extraconstitutional Communist Party with dictatorial powers, and the other as the hierarchy of constitutional soviets with managerial functions. This helped him create a centralized state that initially misleadingly looked like a conglomerate of independent, then union republics with a fake constitutional right to leave the Soviet Union.

In the fall of 1917, the bolsheviks got power, appropriating the hethero alien slogans of the revolution of workers and peasants. In January 1918, they disbanded the Constituent Assembly although that convention had initially been the ultimate goal of the Russian Revolution. As a result, the revolution launched to overthrow autocracy exhausted its potential. Then, using the soviet slogans and declaring their authority soviet, the bolshevik leaders gained control over most of the former empire except for Finland, Poland and three Baltic States. Communist transformation followed. Party propagandists declared them to be the natural continuation of the revolution of workers and peasants. In reality, however, these transformations had nothing to do with the people's revolution. Instead, their aim was for the state to expropriate society so that every citizen would be economically dependent on the state. This economic dictatorship complemented the political dictatorship of Lenin's party leaders established after the 1917 October overthrow. This made the commune state omnipotent.

By acknowledging Ukrainians as a separate nation, the Kremlin gave them external symbols of statehood, recognized the borders of the national state outlined by the Central Rada, and attached the annexed territory populated by Ukrainians predominantly to it when moving its borders westward. Ukrainians obtained the right to a third of their historical heritage while Kyiv was declared the cradle of the brotherly nations. Widescale de-Russification took place in administration, education and socio-political life. Communist Party and soviet officials and nomenclature propagandists were forced to impose the values of communism in Ukrainian.

Ukrainians resisted expropriation of society by the state disguised as the construction of a socialist country much stronger than other peoples did. This put then in the epicenter of Stalin's various repressions, including genocide. Communist transformations lasted two decades, ending up in the massive cleansing of the soviet society in 1937-1938. Catastrophic defeats of the Red Army in the first stage of the soviet-German war, especially in the Ukrainian section of the German assault, had just one cause: Stalin's prewar repressions. The society did unite in the face of the Nazi aggression while British and American allies provided soviet troops with effective technical assistance. The Soviet Union made the key contribution into the victory on the European war arena, came out of the war as a superpower and immediately launched its expansionist policy into all continents. The union republics made the internal belt of the Russian-soviet empire, while the Kremlin-dependent states of the post-Yalta Europe made the external belt. After liberating Central-Eastern Europe from the Nazi conquest the Kremlin kept it under control for dozens of years and applied armed interventions to prevent a threat of overthrow of its puppet regimes.

The communist superpower did not have internal or external enemies that could end its existence. It fell apart when it exhausted the development resources laid into its foundation (of expansionist nature primarily), when it failed to respond to the challenges of the new post-industrial era.

NOSTALGIC FOR THE IMPERIAL GRANDEUR

By claiming that Ukraine's War of Independence in 1917-1923 was defeated we only see one side of this, and not the most important one. We must remember that the soviet statehood Ukraine gained then was fictitious and limited to the force orbit of the Kremlin's dictatorship. The 1988 constitutional reform pushed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the sidelines and free elections of government authorities in 1989-1990 turned the fictitious statehood into the real one. All elements of the Russian-soviet empire, including Ukraine,

thus organically turned into independent states. The collapse of the Soviet Union was completely unexpected for the soviet people. For the Ukrainian society, however, it was an event of primary importance as proven by the December 1, 1991 referendum. Most of the Russian society saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as a geopolitical disaster. It is shocking how arrogant that interpretation is — less so from Vladimir Putin who expressed it, and more so from the millions of people in solidarity with him. One thing to remember is that Russian society has been indoctrinated with the idea of a higher Eurasian civilization for centuries. This came from brilliant writers (Nikolai Karamzin was not just historian) and genius poets. This came from soviet propaganda. Just think of the Soviet Union's coat of arms where the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was symbolized as the crossed sickle and hammer over the contours of the Earth. It is also worth remembering that the absolute dependence on the state as the sole employer aggravated the apocalyptic nature of the situation in the eyes of the people used to state paternalism. This was true both for the Russians, and for many Ukrainians.

In the past three decades, generations have changed in post-soviet states. Yet the dependence on state paternalism (homo sovieticus) is still palpable. The Russian Federation used its oil and gas dollars to cement economic dependence of its citizens on the state. Ukraine does not have such resources, yet its overdue reforms are very slow as they face resistance both from the paternalism-prone population and the corruption-ridden groups in power. Still, Ukraine's and Russia's vectors of development are opposite. Ukraine wants to join the countries of the Euro-Atlantic civilization that are already in the post-industrial world. Russia is defending archaic Eurasian values.

Russia has aspired to the revival of the former empire since the moment it collapsed. When Putin came to power, his course of militaristic nationalism began to define all aspects of its domestic and foreign policy. As they cement soviet legacy that helps them control the country, Russia's ruling elite does not want to see Ukrainians and Belarusians as different nations that deserve their own, even if fictitious statehood. Putin has stated more than once as he used force to drag post-soviet states into Russia's orbit of influence that Ukrainians and Russians are one people. This means no national republics on the table. His model of the future is shaped after the pre-bolshevik revolution administrative division into gubernias. Ukrainians longing for the revival of the Soviet Union in its last, fairly liberal stage have to remember that.

What Ukrainians need to do is build a mental wall between Ukraine and Russia. Mental unification of the two peoples was a serious factor in the defeat of the War of Independence and is fatal for Ukrainians. Hopefully, the mental unification of the Russian state and society during the annexation of Crimea will help us understand the situation we are in.

Putin's regime has employed all available tools to take over Crimea in the shortest time possible. The annexation was accompanied by journalists talking about a "radioactive desert" and Putin's assurances to the leaders of the West (made public a year later in a film screened by Rossiya 1 channel): "As to our nuclear deterrence forces, we are ready to put them in full combat readiness." The euphoria permeating Russian society during the annexation and reflected on TV and online had some notes of nostalgia over the lost Alaska. ■

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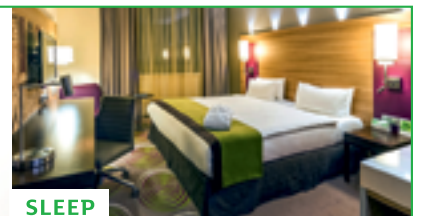
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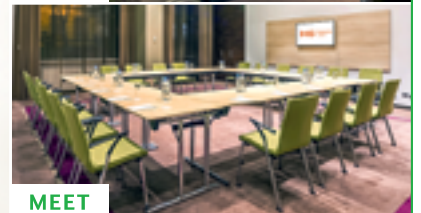
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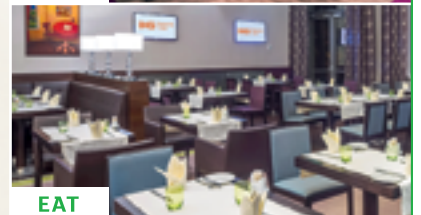
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April 11–15

Austrian Cinema Week – 2019
Cinema "Kyiv"
 (vul. Velyka Vasylykivska 19, Kyiv)

Five days of the Austrian cinema-spring in Kiev – the 8th festival of the Austrian cinema which will present the best pictures of diverse genres and subjects from the country of Mozart will take place there. The comedy "Love machine" will reveal the story of the gigolo; what it, our land, is like the documentary "Erde" will show, while the historical drama "Angelo" will take the audience to Vienna of the XVIII century. The last block will consist of short films of the Austrian festival Ars-Electronica 2018, which has been a partner of the Austrian Cinema Week in Ukraine for eight years in a row.

**April 16, 19:00**

LP
Palace of Sports
 (pr. Shevchenka 31, Odesa)

Sunny Odesa has been lucky to become the second Ukrainian city after the capital, which will be visited by a shocking LP with a concert. Laura Pergolizzi — this is the real name of an American of Italian descent — has conquered the world of music not only as a singer, but also as a songwriter. Her oeuvre includes songs for Rihanna, Christine Aguilera, Backstreet Boys, Cher and other famous performers. She acquired the world-wide fame with the hit "Lost on you", which still wins airtime not on the same radio station. In this song LP shared a personal story from her life.

**April 18, 19:00**

Estas Tonne
Lviv Regional Philharmonic
 (vul. Tchaikovskyi 7, Lviv)

A virtuoso guitarist. An American of Ukrainian origin. One of the most famous street musicians of the world. Estas Tonne, who we are speaking about, stands out against the background of other guitarists, because he plays in his own style, originated from flamenco and gypsy music mixed with electric and Latin American motifs. He draws his musical inspiration in different cultures, so he does not stop traveling. Ukrainian music lovers are preparing for the visit of the traveling musician – his Ukrainian tour will cover not only Lviv, but also Kyiv, Odesa and Zaporizhzhia.

**April 21, 19:30**

Benito Gonzalez trio (USA)
Sumy Regional Philharmonic
 (vul. Petropavlivska 63, Sumy)

A special surprise for the International Day of Jazz — New York Benito Gonzalez trio goes to Sumy! There American jazzmen will begin their Ukrainian tour. It is interesting that the trio will visit Ukraine for the first time, although Benito Gonzalez himself has repeatedly been a guest of Ukrainian jazz festivals. In addition to Benito Gonzalez, the trio includes the famous American contrabass player Essiet Okon Essiet and the young Italian drummer Alessandro D'Anna. Together the musicians will present their tribute album "Passion Reverence Transcendence" to the Ukrainian public.

**April 23, 19:00**

Mario Biondi
M. Lysenko Kharkiv State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater
 (vul. Sumska 25, Kharkiv)

As part of the European tour, the king of the Italian soul will make a stop in Ukraine, where he will present his latest program to music lovers. Live sound, live performance, live emotions — this is how the public knows Mario Biondi. His first album Handful of Soul was released in 2006 and in three months it became platinum. For 13 years, nothing has changed — each new composition becomes popular with audience and sells out concerts halls. The virtuoso combination of acid jazz, funk and soul, as well as the velvet baritone of the artist, have magical power that makes you hold your breath and surrender to music.

**April 10 – May 5**

Easter egg festival in Lviv
Museum Square
 (Lviv)

How to know that Lviv has already begun to prepare for Easter? Everything is very simple! If in the city center you can notice more than fifty half-meter-high author's painted eggs, then Easter preparations are in full swing. The festival of Easter eggs has already become a good tradition and is held in the city of Lev annually. In addition to admiring and taking pictures of colored Easter eggs, there you can visit the Easter art workshop and take part in the "Good Deed" charity project, which aims to raise funds for those in need.





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