The Ukrainian Week
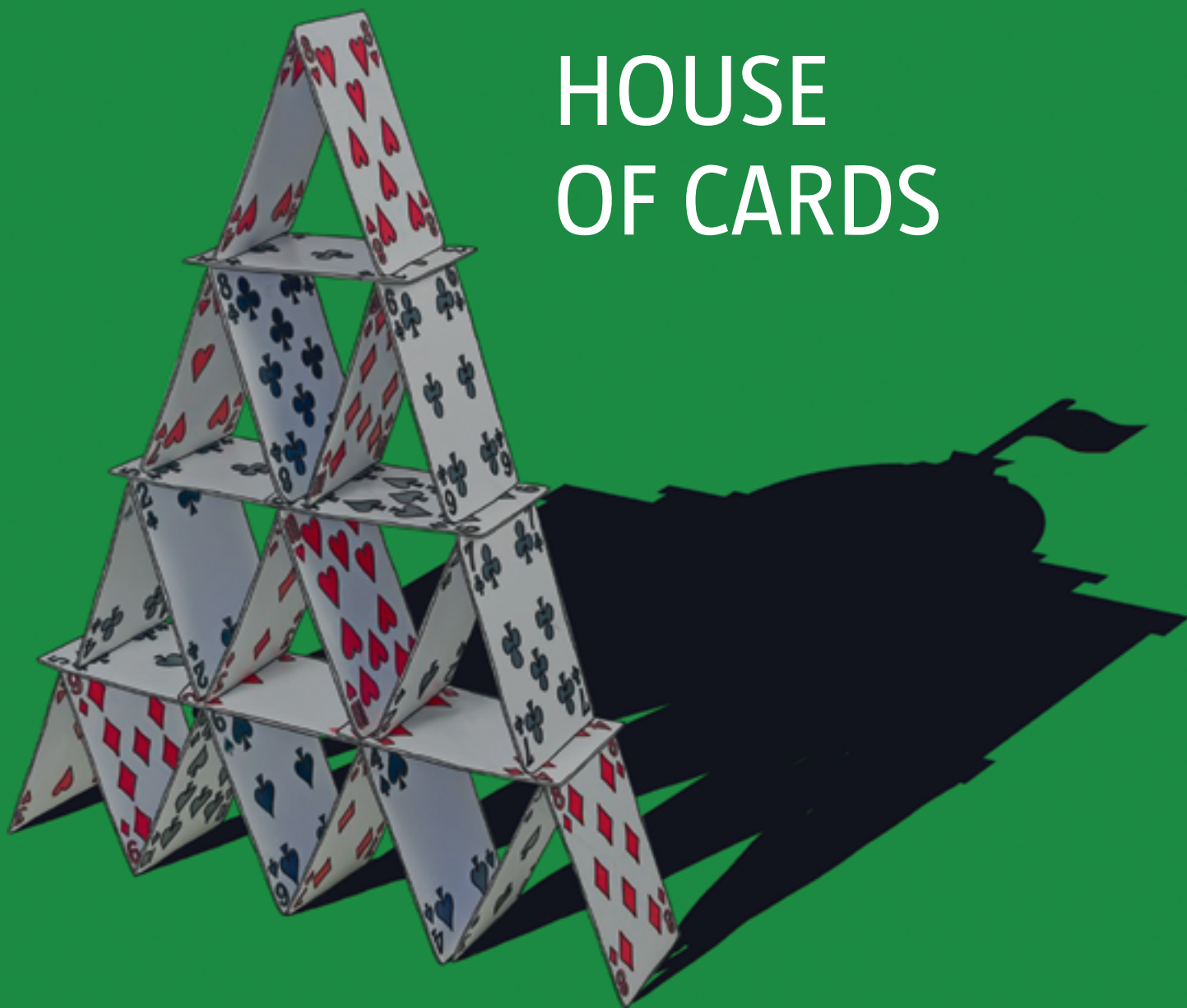
2019 Ukrainian parliamentary election: impact and outcome

Interview with Kurt Volker, U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations

Kremlin and Europe's right-wing parties

HOUSE OF CARDS

Digitize, digitize, let nothing new evade your eyes

Andriy Holub

The main political message during the Viktor Yanukovych Administration was stability. At the time, political advisors recommended that the fugitive ex-president's blue&white team add this word to any situation that seemed uncertain. How to vote in an election? For stability, of course, because this means a better living standard and a growing economy.

Not enough reforms? That's ok, at least the situation is "stable." What do our political rivals want? Obviously to disrupt "stability" and bring economic shocks. In the final analysis, Yanukovych's "stable" governing ended in an economic mess and war.

The Poroshenko Administration went through a number of phases. Initially, Ukraine's fifth president put the emphasis on reforms. But when he found himself faced with too much criticism Eurointegration became the top priority and he developed the habit of adding the adjective "European" to just about every circumstance and event. Even his party, Solidarnist, became "Yevropeyska" when he lost is bid to be re-elected president. In contrast to Yanukovych, whose "stability" remained little more than a word echoing from television screens, Poroshenko had specific reasons for his rhetoric. The signing of the Association Agreement with the EU and gaining a visa-free regime were good news that he made a point of linking to his efforts. Gradually, the government began to use the term "European" with everything, at all levels, from new commuter trains to the airport to new toilets in county centers.

For Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the sacred term could well become "digitalization" and various derivatives like "e-government," "e-democracy" and "the smartphone country." There are a number of indications of this. For one thing, various members of the president's team bring up digitalization precisely when they don't have a clear answer to an inconvenient question. This was when Yanukovych would pull out the "stability" card and Poroshenko would switch to talking about accelerated access to the European Union. Such examples in the current administration include statements about online referenda in response to questions about how the war in the Donbas might be stopped or constant references to digital methods of combating corruption and selecting personnel.

VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S TEAM BRING UP DIGITALIZATION PRECISELY WHEN THEY DON'T HAVE A CLEAR ANSWER TO AN INCONVENIENT QUESTION. THIS WAS WHEN YANUKOVYCH WOULD PULL OUT THE "STABILITY" CARD AND POROSHENKO WOULD SWITCH TO TALKING ABOUT ACCELERATED ACCESS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

The reality that the new Ukrainian president has tried so long to avoid is catching up with him, as it did his predecessors. And suddenly the gleam of "digitalization" has lost its luster. Russian occupying forces continue to kill Ukrainian soldiers, and Zelenskiy, as usual, called Vladimir Putin to ask him to influence "the other side." And Putin once again pretends that he has no connection to the war in Ukraine. The net result is that the Ukrainian president ends up in a very awkward position: What on earth an online referendum might add to the situation remains unclear.

As to the selection of personnel, the LIFT project that the Zelenskiy team launched is nearly three months old. The idea was to find quality candidates and ideas to develop the country. Instead, the entire staff of officials at the highest level has been appointed according to the tried-and-true principle of personal connections or recommendations. Only in mid-July did the new Administrator of Kherson Oblast, Yuriy Husyev, announce that he was looking to put together a team of his own using the presidential online platform. The oblast is now being treated as a pilot project. At the same time, it's still not very clear who will actually select people and based on what principles. The site is op-

erating only in its beta version without any official information about the project management and to whom the site actually belongs. A minor detail: the first vacancy that was posted on the site was for the manager of the LIFT project. The posting is no longer there, nor is there any information about who won the competition, how many applicants there were, and whether there even is a project manager at this point.

The idea of new approaches to combating corruption using digital approaches not only led to a scandal but also clearly demonstrated for the first time that there are various centers of influence in the new administration. The trigger was an announcement by future MP and one of the candidates being considered for head of the *Sluha Narodu* faction in the Rada, David Arakhamia, about monitoring anomalies in the way MPs vote using the Big Brother analytical tool. Soon afterwards, he backtracked, saying that the analogy with the dictator from George Orwell's *1984* was just a joke.

By then, future colleagues in the faction, Mykhailo Dubinskiy and Maksym Buzhanskiy had called him on it. The former is a one-time presenter on 1+1 and is close to Ihor Kolomoyskiy, although he denies this. The latter was elected in an FPTP district in Kolomoyskiy's own Dnipro. Incidentally, both have already announced that they are setting up a joint MP group within the president's faction. The two came close to accusing Arakhamia of trying to take away free will from elected deputies.

The idea, in and of itself, is nothing especially revolutionary or unusual. What it does is analyze data using neural networks, a practice that is quite common in business. It really can expose an MP who votes exclusively in the interests of a particular sphere of business or oligarch. It has little to do with total control. However, questions also remain. First of all, as an application first launched in 1996, "Big Brother" doesn't offer anything new. Who defends whose interests in the Rada is generally evident after a few months of a new convocation's work without bothering with neural networks. Secondly, *Sluha Narodu* is still trying to cover over patchy places in nice wrapping. In this case, it's the quickly formed and untested list of candidates from the party. The system is already starting to crash, as the conflict between Arakhamia and his faction colleagues showed.

When it comes to the overall concept of digitalization, one of the president's first decrees was an Action Plan to improve the quality of mobile internet in rural areas. This is a key issue, as inadequate internet coverage is possibly the biggest obstacle to developing public e-services in Ukraine. The decree calls for releasing a series of frequencies in various ranges that are currently being used by private companies. A partial solution was supposed to be decided by August 1. Predictably, no agreement had been reached with the companies as of publication. However, the issue really is being tackled and business representatives announced that negotiations continue.

With every passing day, the path to electronic governing is being associated with the official course of the new administration. But in addition to benefits, this is also harming the very idea of ubiquitous provision of e-services. The paradox is that the main driver and main threat to digitalizing Ukraine is now the political career of Zelenskiy and his team. This makes it that much more important to be able to separate healthy initiatives from those that serve only to provide publicity. Otherwise, there is a huge risk that digitalization will turn into a subject for jokes, as happened in the past with "stability" and "Eurointegration."

In the age of informational abundance

Peter Zalmayev

In a TV studio in Kyiv, on the bright and very early morning of November 9, 2016, I was supposed to be calmly dissecting the US presidential election's voting results in the remaining swing states: Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin. When the CNN screen started flashing "red" – for a projected victory of Donald Trump – I shut down and could with difficulty stammer only a few perfunctory comments. To me, the world as I knew it came crashing down at that moment – the world of agreed-on rules of political engagement and decency. In its place came a world of willful deception, bullying, and chicanery.

In Ukraine's crowded field of political pundits I am known as a rabid anti-Trumpist. I have been intimately familiar with Trump and his antics since moving to his native New York in 1999. In 2006, together with my fellow-students at Columbia University, I had a dubious privilege of sharing an elevator ride with the future president into the heights of the Trump Tower.

True to form, I have carried my intense skepticism of Trump to the international affairs talk-show, which I co-host on a Ukrainian TV channel. The show's guests are often incredulous at hearing me ring alarm bells about the state of the American democracy in the age of Trump: "Yes, he's kind of a clown, but isn't the US economy firing on all cylinders?" "Hasn't he, Mueller's investigation notwithstanding, been tougher on Russia than Obama"? My answer is an unequivocal "No." Behind the seemingly innocent and amusing facade, Trump has been steadily eroding the norms and standards of political discourse, which are the very foundation of the American democracy.

It does matter when the American president tells lies at the rate of 50 untruths a day, for a total of 10,796 so far, according to The Washington Post's latest count. It does matter when the American president makes fun of a handicapped reporter. It does matter when the American president tells American-born congresswomen of color to "go back to their countries"; labels African states as "shithole countries"; disparages Mexican immigrants as "rapists" and "criminals"; and considers participants of a neo-Nazi rally as "good people." And it does matter that when the American president does not like media reports about him, he simply dismisses them as "fake news" and labels the reporters as the true "enemy of the people." A normalization of hateful rhetoric sets in, and hateful action is not long in following: witness the October 2018 massacre in a Pittsburgh synagogue (11 dead) and the very recent shooting in El Paso (20 dead).

Indeed, America is living through a bitterly ironic moment when, economically, it is doing better than ever, while its social fabric is tearing apart at the seam and a majority of Americans claim in poll after poll that their country is not on the right path.

The truth is that America, as many other countries, finds itself swamped in "abundance of information," while simultaneously suffering from a decrease in popular consensus regarding basic truths and the very rules of political engagement. This concept is central to the new book by journalist Peter Pomerantsev, "This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality." Pomerantsev has been an early prophet of doom, correctly predicting that, having "weaponized information" in his hybrid war against Ukraine, Vladimir Putin would extend his tactics to the West — a prophecy vividly confirmed by Russia's meddling in the US 2016 election. For, although Robert Mueller was unable to point to a precise incident of Russia-Trump collusion that would stand in a court of law, Trump benefited from the involvement of Russian trolls and bots, and has subsequently – Putin-style – attempted to obfuscate Russia's role.

Presenting his country-specific case studies of politics of disinformation and deception through the use of armies of trolls and bots – including the Philippines, South Korea and Mexico, among others – Pomerantsev makes a persuasive argument that there is a veritable International of real and

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would-be authoritarians – Putin, Trump, Duterte, Xi Jinping – who learn from and perfect each other's playbooks.

Indeed, one of the most effective (though not always so subtle) and copied forms of subversion and manipulation, which has thrived in the current climate of informational abundance, has been to dispute real facts by throwing up a multitude of "alternative facts" – from the utterly ridiculous to the semi-plausible.

Alas, the world is at an early stage of this informational counterrevolution, where we have understood the dangers inherent in the informational abundance but have not yet come up with the tools to check and counter them.

Viewed in this light, the juvenile incident involving the head of Ukraine's Presidential Administration, Andriy Bohdan, whereby he is said to have leaked a mock letter of resignation was a serious misstep and not worthy of a country that has been proclaimed Europe's "first line of defense" against Russia's war on truth. Following President Zelenskiy's announcement of plans to launch a Russian-language TV channel which would seek to counter Kremlin's lies by targeting viewers in Russia and other post-Soviet states, Ukraine's leader would do well to ponder his country's message to the world and the means to convey it.

A title man

Will Boris Johnson be able to repeat the success of his cult-hero Winston Churchill as Prime Minister of Great Britain?

Michael Binyon, London

Cartoonists love his hair – blond, long, untidy, looking as though it hasn't been combed for a week. All they need to do is draw his hair and everyone knows it is Boris. It's just the image he wants – recognisable, amusing, popular, informal, a man who does not take himself too seriously but who is always the centre of attention. And like so much about Britain's next prime minister, it is deceptive and carefully staged.

Boris Johnson often messes up his hair just before he appears on camera or at a political rally – it makes him look informal and dispels his image as "toff" – a privileged son of a middle-class family. He is naturally an

untidy and disorganised person, but he has learnt to use any fault to his advantage – playing the clown in public or pretending to be confused as a way of concealing his razor-sharp intelligence and driving ambition that has always focused on his own career and advancement. He has frequently got into trouble making remarks that are normally considered borderline racist – talking about black people as "piccaninnies" or saying that a Muslim woman wearing a burqa covering her face makes her look like a letterbox. But he then pretends it was all a joke, or he wasn't serious. In this way he avoids being branded a racist or an elitist while at the same time appealing

Camouflage. Boris Johnson often uses his intentionally untidy look or jokes to hide his true intentions and views

PHOTO: REUTERS

to those in the Conservative party who agree with such views.

His greatest deception, however, is to leave people uncertain what he actually believes and what views he holds. Is he a conservative or a social liberal? Does he really hate the European Union, or is he simply using this popular prejudice against Brussels to further his own career? Is he quick-witted and able to make impromptu speeches without preparation, or is he simply intellectually lazy and cannot be bothered to ready the briefs and advice he is given? The answer is that he holds all these contradictory views at the same time. The true Boris Johnson is rarely visible.

The irony of his career is that he comes from a family that has long been closely associated with Britain's efforts to forge closer links with the EU. His father Stanley Johnson was a member of the European Parliament and then became an environmental official in the Brussels Commission. His brother Joe is also a Conservative Member of Parliament, but opposes Brexit and resigned from the May government over the issue. His sister Rachel is a high-profile journalist who quit the Conservative party and joined the Liberals Democrats because she wants Britain to remain in the EU. The rift in British society caused by Brexit is perfectly illustrated in his own family – although they still loyally support him in public.

Boris himself was educated at Eton, the most prestigious private school in Britain, and went to Oxford University where he studied classics. He now makes a joke of this, often quoting phrases in Latin – both to please other well-educated Britons but also to make fun of his own privileged background, which pleases Labour voters. He is quick in using colourful language to get himself out of awkward situations: when he was accused of having an affair with another journalist while he was editor of the weekly magazine "The Spectator", he dismissed the allegations – which were true – as an "inverted pyramid of piffle". People remembered the funny phrase and forgot that he had lied about the affair.

After Oxford, Boris went into journalism, joining The Times newspaper as a trainee. He didn't last long there: he was sacked after less than two years for inventing quotations for a story he was writing about the discovery of an old castle in London. He then joined The Daily Telegraph and was sent to Brussels to be their correspondent there. He arrived when I was the correspondent for The Times in Brussels, and so we were rivals for two years. Boris was always amusing. But he was an unreliable journalist. He decided that it would appeal more to his readers if he concentrated on negative stories about the EU, and so he wrote many – about EU regulations insisting on straight bananas and cucumbers, or EU rules for classifying the size of condoms. It made Britons laugh at the stupidities of the Brussels bureaucrats and slowly created a climate of public opinion that was hostile to Britain's EU membership. And frequently his stories, published in the Daily Telegraph, were either exaggerations or shown later to be untrue. It infuriated the officials in the Commission – but there was little they could do to set the record straight.

Despite his clear attempts to build support for him on the right of the Conservative party, Boris is not a typical conservative. He is a traditionalist, he is contemptuous of what he believes in Left-wing infantilism in the Labour party, he is patriotic – almost to the point of being an English (not British) nationalist – and he believes the state should interfere with people's lives as little as possible. But he is also a social liberal. He believes in freedom and in personal freedom. He is tolerant of today's younger generation and on issues such as gay marriage, poverty, racial questions he supports equal opportunity for all. When he was mayor of London, he ran an inclusive team, which included four gay people and officials from Muslim, Sikh and Hindu backgrounds. This is the reason that he was a popular Mayor of London, where he served for two terms. He managed to persuade a city, normally overwhelmingly Labour-supporting, to vote for him. He was a colourful figure, instantly recognisable, and effective in raising London's profile around the world, especially during the 2012 Olympics.

Critics say that Boris's social liberalism is because his own private life is so chaotic. He has been married twice, has had several affairs and is currently committed to a new girlfriend who may move into Downing Street with him but who was recently heard having a violent quarrel with him. The neighbours even called the police. Boris refuses to discuss this, saying he values personal privacy and does not want to involve loved ones in his own political future.

HE IS NATURALLY AN UNTIDY AND DISORGANISED PERSON, BUT HE HAS LEARNT TO USE ANY FAULT TO HIS ADVANTAGE – PLAYING THE CLOWN IN PUBLIC OR PRETENDING TO BE CONFUSED AS A WAY OF CONCEALING HIS RAZOR-SHARP INTELLIGENCE AND DRIVING AMBITION THAT HAS ALWAYS FOCUSED ON HIS OWN CAREER AND ADVANCEMENT

To a large extent Boris models himself on his hero Churchill. He wrote a book about Britain's greatest prime minister, and his own political career is somewhat similar. Churchill also began as a journalist. He quarrelled with his party. He was out of power and in the "wilderness" for several years in the 1930s when he disagreed with Conservative policy over Germany. And he returned to power in 1940 at a time of national crisis. Boris thinks he can return to power now at a time of the greatest political crisis and uncertainly Britain has known since the Second World War. He wants to infuse the country with a spirit of optimism and reunite a fractured party and society. All that matters, he says at rallies, is a belief and optimism that challenges can be overcome.

His problem, in taking over as Prime Minister, is that the job demands a level of seriousness, concentration and detail that Boris finds boring. He was a poor Foreign Secretary, as he did not bother to read the briefs and made mistakes. He still thinks like a journalist, saying things that may be true and certainly make lively headlines but which might have serious diplomatic consequences. He has a short attention span, and prefers to do business by personal relations rather than through conventional civil service channels.

Will this make it easy for him to deal with Trump? Or will the difference in interests between Britain and the US make closer transatlantic relations difficult? Will the new prime minister be able to overcome his image in Europe as a clown, and will he be sufficiently tactful not to make jokes that Britons find funny but which have often angered the French, the Germans and the Italians? Boris Johnson is a complex and colourful personality. Things will not be dull with him as Prime Minister. But things could also be disastrous.

Iranian strategic culture and hybrid warfare

Iran's hybrid expansionism in the Middle East, the "Shi'a axis" and Russia: from soft power competition to hard confrontation with the US

Mark Voyger, Baltic Defence College, Estonia

Iran has been in the international headlines constantly over the last couple of months, with the prospect of military action looming on the horizon with every belligerent statement made by President Donald Trump, and every Iranian threat to fight back any attempted US aggression. While the US and its allies in the region clearly enjoy a conventional superiority over Iran in terms of the quantities and quality of military assets they can bring to the potential fight, the Islamic Republic possesses multiple tools at its disposal through which it could retaliate asymmetrically across the entire Middle East and in Afghanistan. What is more, it has actually been using those for years across the entire arc of instability from the Arabian peninsula through Syria to Afghanistan, which, coupled with the suspicions of the "hawks" in Washington that Iran's ultimate goal is to develop nuclear capabilities in violation of the nuclear deal, has triggered the ire of the current US administration.

THE IRANIAN-STYLE HYBRID WARFARE HAS BECOME AN ELEMENT OF IRAN'S STRATEGIC CULTURE OF GRADUAL, BUT CONSTANT EXPANSIONISM BY DIVIDING THE ADVERSARIES SURROUNDING IRAN –
THE US AS THE GUARANTOR OF STABILITY IN THE REGION, AND ITS ALLIES – THE ARAB MONARCHIES IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Given its recognized inability to compete with the US in conventional warfare, Iran has resorted to its own version of Hybrid Warfare – "Soft War" ("jang-e-narm") in response to its perceived challenge by Western and in particular American "soft power". Just like Russia, Iran also views soft power as an existential threat to the stability of its regime, as it perceives it as an American hybrid tool to foment popular protests and potentially – an uprisin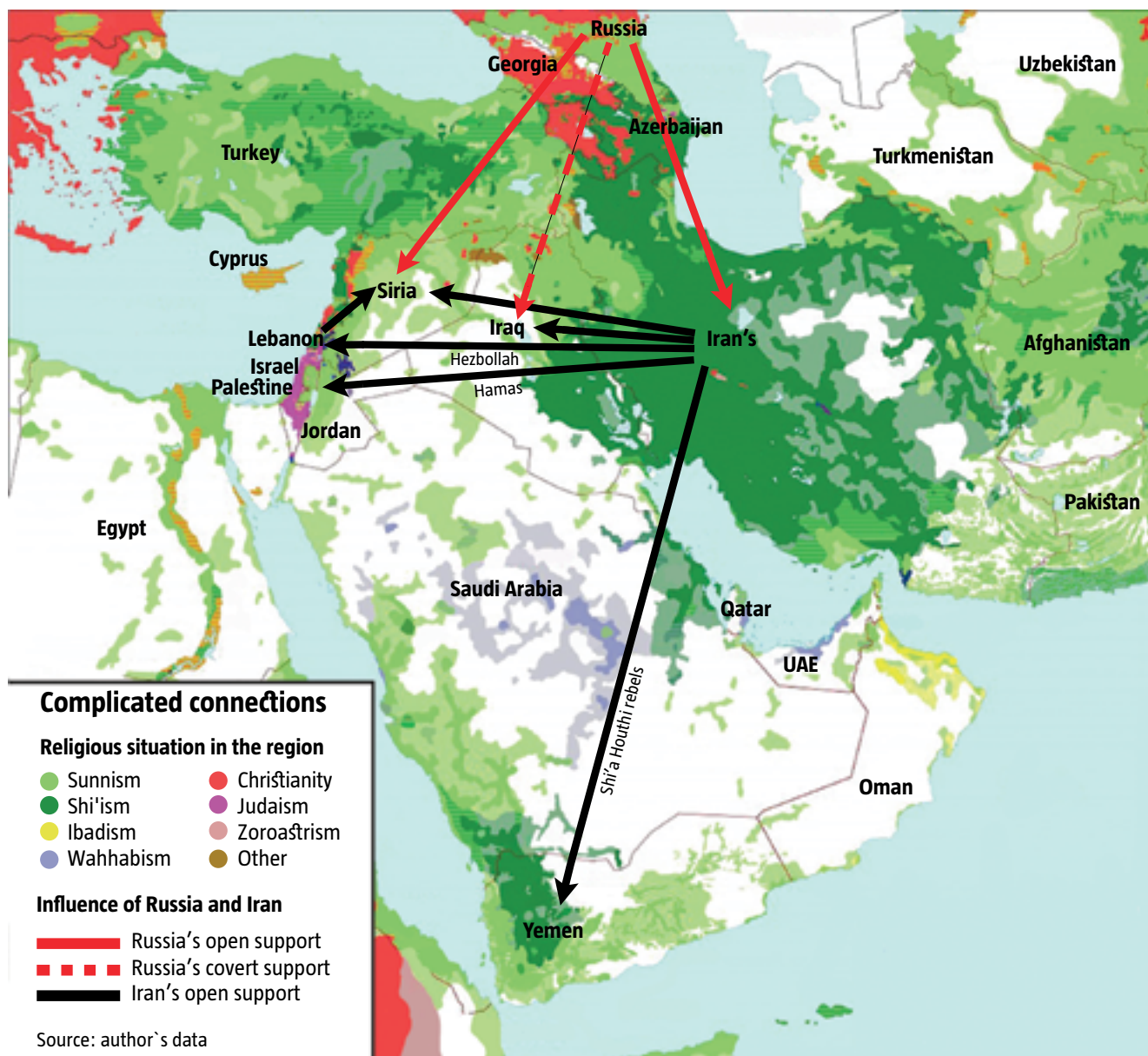g within Iran against the theocratic regime. Therefore, the Iranian-style hybrid warfare has become an element of Iran's strategic culture of gradual, but constant expansionism by dividing the adversaries surrounding Iran – the US as the guarantor of stability in the region, and its allies – the Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf. In that regard, Iran's hybrid warfare is structurally similar to the models of Russian hybrid warfare as practiced during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, as it uses similar elements – from historical, socio-cultural, legal, diplomatic and economic to conventional military and covert ones.

The strands of Iranian Hybrid Warfare can, therefore, be identified, as follows: historical – the past Iranian imperial domination of the Arab Middle East; religious – the exploitation of the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divide in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrein, and Yemen; geopolitical – the threatening of strategic maritime chokepoints, such as the Straits of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb; military – Iran' nuclear ambitions and direct military support to its allies in Iraq and Syria; diplomatic – Iran's support for the Shi'a-dominated political systems in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria; economic – the economic penetration of Iraq and the financial support for the embattled Syrian regime; and last, but not least – covert, the most prominent examples being the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) support and training of Shi'a militias in Iraq, the support for the Shi'a Houthi rebels in Yemen, and Iran's sponsorship of Hezbollah in Lebanon, but also of Hamas in Palestine.

The patterns, by which Iran has established a hegemonic presence in Iraq, for example, offer a classical example of the Iranian penetration of a neighboring state that has historically been its primary strategic competitor in the Middle East. The featured model provides an analytical assessment of Iran's domination of Iraq, that revolves around its ultimate objective of being the stronger actor in the neighborhood (the hegemon). Iran's preferred target groups are both the elites and the population of Iraq, especially the ethnic, religious and social groups that could best promote its long-term interests. Iran influences those at the personal, domestic and regional levels through a hybrid toolbox that combines "Fear, Funds, Faith and Friendships", and whose darker dimensions involve intimidation and assassinations, the corruption of government officials and community leaders, bound to Iran by sectarian linkages or personal bonds.

The ongoing Iranian attempts to achieve hegemony throughout the Arab Middle East seek to exploit, but also inevitably exacerbate the sectarian divide in the Middle East. Iran's expansionism is defined by Iran's cultural affiliations with the Shi'a populations in the region, and the sectarianism promoted by Iran ultimately has a strong destabilizing effect on the entire region, as it triggers strong opposition and push-back on the regional and international scenes by the dominant Sunni powers in the region represented by Saudi Arabia, the other Gulf Cooperation states, and the Arab League, as a whole.

Complicated connections

Religious situation in the region

- Sunnism
- Christianity
- Shi'ism
- Judaism
- Ibadism
- Zoroastrism
- Wahhabism
- Other

Influence of Russia and Iran

Russia's open support
Russia's covert support
Iran's open support

Source: author`s data

IRAN IN AFGHANISTAN:
THE ART OF PLAYING BOTH SIDES

In Afghanistan Iran is faced with a different "human terrain" compared to Iraq – one based on linguistic and cultural affiliations that also comprises the traditionally suppressed Shi'a sectarian element. While Iraq is dominated by Arab-speaking populations – both its Shi'a majority and Sunni minority, the groups in Afghanistan that share direct linkages with Iran's ethno-religious characteristics are the predominantly Sunni Persian-speaking community (the Tajiks) and the Persian-speaking Shi'a minority (the Hazaras).

Iran's long-term objectives in Afghanistan are defined by what it views as systemic threats posed by Sunni extremist groups – the Taliban and Al-Qaeda; but also by the long-term US and NATO presence in that country. Of course, deeply-rooted economic issues, such as the flow of drugs and migrants originating from Afghanistan are also of concern for Iran. Iran traditionally views itself as the dominant player in its relationship with Afghanistan, and inevitably tries to shape the future political and cultural outlook of that country, especially its future after the potential departure and disengagement of NATO there. In that regard, Iran is pursuing a set of short-term goals that run contrary to stability through its attempts to subvert the NATO coalition efforts in Afghanistan. Iran is playing both sides by maintaining friendly ties to officials in Kabul, and by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) clandestine supply of weapons to Taliban groups in order to undermine the NATO-led stabilization and speed up the NATO troops' withdrawal. Afghan and US officials have long accused Iran of supporting the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, especially Iran's Quds Force and its Ansar Corps, based out of the Iranian city of Mashhad. The fact that by doing so Iran ›

is seemingly crossing the Shi'a-Sunni divide should not be viewed as a leap of faith, as Iran has proven through its support for Hamas and other radical and Jihadist groups in the Middle East, that it can successfully co-operate with radical Sunni groups who share its anti-Western agenda.

In Afghanistan Iran is able to apply extensive tools combining hard and soft power – both its "soft war" ("jang-e-narm"); and asymmetric warfare ("jang-e-na-monazzam") across the entire military and non-military spectrum. Iran's religious and socio-cultural influence is manifested by the promotion of Shi'a Islam along with Iranian culture, especially among the Shi'a Hazaras; by the numerous Afghan students in Iran; and by promoting the Persian language culture that both Iran and Afghanistan share. Cultural influence, just like in Iraq, often translates into political influence, as Iran uses corruption to influence Afghan politicians, along with exerting diplomatic pressure to have anti-NATO statements pushed through the Afghan Parliament. Iran also benefits from strong economic influence over Afghanistan based on Iranian investment and commercial engagement, which feature an imbalanced economic relationship in favor of Iran, and where the supply of Iranian oil and gas are used as political tools. Last, but not least, Iran uses extensively to its advantage the issue of Afghan migrants in Iran (over 2.5 million; of which nearly 1 million refugees) as a powerful tool for exerting pressure based on threats of mass deportations, that when followed on could trigger humanitarian and political crises in Afghanistan.

The Iranian hegemonic model that is used extensively in the Arab Middle East is, therefore partially replicated in Afghanistan, based on structurally similar tools and primary agents of influence. From the Iranian point of view its rationale is twofold – the protection of traditionally marginalized groups, such as the Shi'a in Afghanistan, and using them to promote and expand Iran's interests. Iran, however, also plays a perilous opportunistic game that ultimately contributes to the destabilization of the country by supporting non-status quo actors, such as the Taliban, which can only trigger more conflicts and bring about stability in the long-run. Iran and Afghanistan, thus, share an uneasy relationship derived from Iran's attempts to play a dominant role in their relationship.

THE RUSSIA-SHI'A AXIS AND THE LOGIC OF RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC ORIENTATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The ongoing Russia operations in Syria since 2015 have revealed the shaping of a de facto "axis" between Russia and the main governments and non-state armed groups under the control of religious groups belonging to the Shi'a sect of Islam. Those include the regime in Tehran belonging to the most numerous branch of Shi'ism – Imamism, the government in Baghdad dominated by the Iraqi Shi'a, as well as the regime in Syria, whose top leadership and support base belong to the Gnostic sect of the Alawites, an offshoot of Shi'ism. The non-state actors in this "axis" are the Shi'a militias in Iraq and Lebanon (Hezbollah). They are traditionally supported by Iran, but they also fight alongside Russian forces in Syria as part of the Russia-controlled "integrated forces groupings", the Russian military's hybrid expeditionary formations.

Iran's hegemonic strategy in Iraq: The model

Source: author`s data
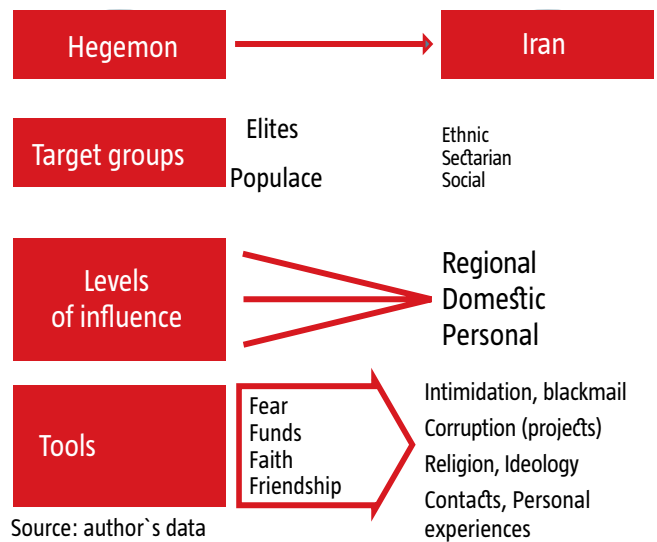
Each of the elements of this alliance has diverse identities – socio-cultural and ideological, and their interests do not always overlap completely. Russia is a Christian Orthodox country with a Russian-speaking majority, but it is also the legal successor of the Soviet Union with its militant secularist transnational ideology of Communism. Iran is a multi-national state with an ethnic Persian linguistic and cultural majority, and dominated by the Imami ("Twelvers") branch of Shi'ism. The Shi'a in Iraq are ethnically and linguistically Arabs, as are the Lebanese Shi'a. The Syrian Alawite sect also comprises speakers of Arabic who are viewed within Islam as a distant offshoot of Shi'sm, or even as heretics by Sunni radicals and traditionalist alike. They are largely secular, and form the power base of the ruling Syrian Ba'athist regime, which combines elements of Arab socialism and pan-Arabism. Three major relationship nodes can be identified within this complex set of alliances: Russia-Syria (with Syria as a regional ally and client-state of Russia); the Russia-Iran strategic partnership; as well as the node comprising the linkages joining Iran with 1) the Iraqi Shi'a politicians and militias; 2) the Hezbollah Shi'a militia in Lebanon, and 3) the client relationship Iran has developed with the Alawite-dominated Baathist regime in Syria during the course of the ongoing civil war; 4) Hamas in Palestine, and 5) the Shi'a Houthi militias in Yemen that are supported and armed by Iran and used as proxies against Saudi Arabia.

Regardless of the Alawites' traditional secular orientation and Ba'athist pan-Arabist ideology, at the strategic level the Iran – Syria alliance has become possible for a) historical reasons – namely, the shared hostility (Iran) and rivalry (Syria) with the former Sunni-dominated Baathist regime in Iraq; and b) more contemporary ones, ranging from their joint opposition to the traditional Sunni regimes in the Arabian peninsula; their perception of Jihadist extremists claiming affiliation with Sunni Islam as one of their primary existential threats; their historical hostility toward Israel; and their support for Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Russia's long-term objectives should be analyzed within the larger context of Russia's strategy in the Middle East to replace the US as the hegemonic power in the region, which every nation-state or ethnic group in the region would be forced to talk to, regardless of the Soviet history of supporting mainly non-status quo powers and groups in the Middle East. Russia clearly has its preferences, and it has taken sides in the ongoing Sunni-Shi'a divide by joining the Shi'a forces since the fall of 2015. Prior to the launching of Russia's campaign in Syria in September of 2015, leading Russian military analysts argued that, "It is perfectly obvious that in the Sunni-Shi'a confrontation that is taking shape in the Middle East, Russia must take the side of the Shi'a due to natural pragmatic reasons. In the first place, at least 90 percent of Islamic terrorism is Sunni. Secondly, 95 percent of the Russian Muslims are Sunnis. Correspondingly, the most serious threat for us is exactly Sunni terrorism. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, as in this case the logic of it is self-evident. In the future the situation might change, but currently the situation is exactly like that." (Hramchihin, Military-Industrial Courier, 7 September 2015).

This view provides the rationale for Russia to join what is a de facto "Shi'a axis" from Tehran through Damascus to Lebanon to isolate the West and counter both Jihadist extremists, such as al-Qaeda and Da'esh, as well as the moderate Sunni states – the Arab monarchies in the Mideast, as well as Turkey. Russia's participation in Syria was initially perceived by the Sunni Arab powers as taking sides in the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian war, and in late 2015 the Saudi Sunni clerics issued a fatwa against both Iran and Russia calling for jihad against them. Ultimately, through the combination of its diplomatic efforts, economic (energy) projects, and military victories on the ground in Syria, Russia has achieved the impossible, namely, forcing all players in the region to work with it – the Arabs and Israelis, Turks and Kurds, Shi'a and Sunni, the Taliban and the Afghan government, India and Pakistan, etc. Paradoxically, instead of ruining its relationship with the Sunni powers in the region, Russia's active military support for Assad's regime has so far resulted in positioning Russia as one of the "king-makers" in that turbulent region.

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF RUSSIA AND IRAN IN THE REGION AND THE LIMITS OF US OPTIONS

As matters stand now in the Middle East, the Shi'a world is largely dominated by anti-Western forces led by Iran, with even moderate Shi'a groups and leaders across the region not being particularly pro-Western. This continues to bring benefits to both Russia and Iran by exploiting the ongoing political and sectarian divides in the region in order to reduce the threat to the Syrian regime, decrease the US and Western influence and destabilize the US Sunni Arab allies in the Gulf region. Ultimately, however, the brutal Russian campaign in Syria, combined with the ongoing Iranian attempts to achieve hegemony by destabilizing the Arab Middle East through the use of Shi'a radical groups as Iranian proxies, can only exacerbate the overall tensions in the Middle East, with a strong destabilizing effect on the entire region.

Given the global scope of Russia's Hybrid Warfare as the 21st century style of warfare favored by the current Russian political and military leadership, and Iran's own hegemonic ambitions in the region, the "arc of instability" across the Middle East to Afghanistan should be regarded as one of the primary theaters of both Russian and Iranian hybrid warfare, where both states apply political, diplomatic, legal, economic, socio-cultural and information pressure against the US and NATO, together with overt cooperation with, and covert support for militant groups, Shi'a and Sunni alike. In this regard, the current Iranian confrontation with the US serves the Russian strategic objectives perfectly, as the United States is portrayed as an irrational and aggressive superpower that prefers conflict to diplomatic deals and dialogue, and positions Russia as the "responsible" status-quo power. A potential military conflict with Iran also threatens to disrupt the flow of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf, thus making the supply of energy resources from Russia to the West and China indispensable in the future. Iran will also inevitably activate its network of proxies across the region to target US, Saudi and UAE military facilities and civilian infrastructure.

> Iran uses extensively to its advantage the issue of Afghan migrants in Iran (**over 2.5 million**; of which nearly **1 million refugees**) as a powerful tool for exerting pressure based on threats of mass deportations, that when followed on could trigger humanitarian and political crises in Afghanistan

Currently, the Trump Administration's reluctance to respond in kind to Iranian provocations such as the magnetic mines attack against oil tankers in the Straits of Hormuz and the downing of the US reconnaissance drone over what the US claims were international waters, sends a strong message to both Iran and the US allies in the Gulf, that the US is hesitant and inconsistent in its proclaimed firm approach toward Iran. This has the potential to deal a strong blow to the image of the United States as the superpower that has traditionally provided stability to the entire region by protecting its allies there (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), and punishing the perpetrators who have dared to challenge the status-quo (Saddam Hussein's Iraq). This is the adverse strategic environment in which the United States will be forced to operate should President Trump decide to choose military strikes as the US primary tools of subduing and punishing Iran. So far, despite all his belligerent rhetoric, he has shown unusual restraint by abstaining from launching conventional military strikes, opting instead for information, economic and diplomatic pressure, targeted economic sanctions and cyberattacks against Iran's military. The coming weeks will show if this strategy will be sufficient to force Iran to back down (likely not), or whether both sides will inexorably go down a spiral of confrontation, as Iran tries to save face and prove to its regional allies and its population that it will not yield to American pressure, and that the United States is still a global superpower capable of imposing its will on a rogue power in the Middle East by punishing it for its alleged non-compliance of the nuclear regime, and its continuous conventional and hybrid attacks against US forces and US allies, and other provocations across the region. ⯎

Kurt Volker:

"Russia is running a military operation in the Donbas" Interviewed by **Yuriy Lapayev**

The Ukrainian Week talked with U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations on prospects for the release of Ukrainian prisoners, the specifics of negotiations with the Russia and options for resolving the conflict in the Donbas.

Do you see any changes in policies of Russian Federation in negotiations with Ukraine after the Ukrainian elections?
— There have been different signals from Russia. You obviously noticed, that Russia had offered to provide passports to Ukrainian citizens, which is fairly provocative and contrary to what we are trying to accomplish through

Minsk. At the same time there has been an improvement in ceasefire and Russia did also disengage its forces at Stanitsa Luhanska. In the Minsk negotiations themselves there has been renewed discussion about the possibility of a prisoner exchange, so there have been some things that are positive and some, that have been aggressive.

Is there any progress in process of returning or exchanging Ukrainian prisoners of war, the captured sailors, in particular?
— In terms of the sailors it is very disappointing, that there has been absolutely no indication from Russia that

they are looking at the release of the sailors. These are sailors, who were attacked in international waters, their vessels were seized, the sailors were imprisoned. All of this is completely illegal under international law, the international court has ruled against Russia in this. They have continued to be detained in Russia, they are not treated with any kind of immunity or respect as a members of foreign military. They are being charged under Russian civil criminal court, which is entirely inappropriate. Russia keeps pointing at this court process as a reason to continue to detain them and they keep delaying the dates, so originally it was April, and then it was July and now it is October before they will look at this issue. It is unacceptable and it is really a lost opportunity for Russia. Because it would be possible to build momentum with Ukraine in prisoner exchanges and building peace. They have not taken this opportunity, instead, they are continuing to treat these sailors as hostages.

There is another player, Viktor Medvedchuk, who is trying to be a negotiator or mediator between Russia and Ukraine in process of prisoner exchange. In your opinion are his efforts obstacles or some kind of help?
— I think what is necessary is a direct contact between the Ukrainian and Russian governments in order to agree on the terms of what happens. Certainly, the United States and Normandy format partners all support that. But there does need to be thas direct contact. President Putin and Zelenskyy have a phone call, I think this is a positive step that did facilitate a positive meeting in Paris in Normandy format and then these meetings in Minsk. I think that is a way to go, I don't think having other outside parties helps, I think it is establishing the direct contact between the President of Ukraine and Presiudent of Russia and their emissaries, their responsible parties, to agree on what exactly will happen — that's the surest way to negotiate a positive result.

Just recently you came back from Stanitsa Luhanska where the disengagement of forces occurred. Are there any effective tools to control such disengagement, especially on occupied territories, because there are some signs that Russia did not fully respect this?
— It has been up and down. I think it is fair to say, that after a few obstacles, the Russian-led forces have withdrawn from the disengagement areas that they were supposed to withdraw from. As I saw yesterday there remains one outpost on the north side of the river, where Russian-led forces are supposed to pull back from and to take down the fortifications. They haven't done that yet, but they did disarme it. And there are plans to continue working towards further dismantling of fortifications and moving it. I'm actually reasonably optimistic, that this has gone well, it has just taken a little bit to get there. One of the reasons it is difficult, it is because there is no direct channel of communication between the Ukrainian forces and the Russian-led forces. Russia has pulled out of Joint Center of Coordination and Control and has pushed forward its proxies, the so called people's republics, which do not have a place in Ukraine and should not be represented. That has made it much more difficult for there to be a direct communication between the two sides. The OSCE has facilitated this communication with the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and it adds a little bit of time and complexity for the SMM to be conveying

intentions of the Ukrainian side, conveying the intentions of the Russian side and then seeing the execution and sequencing steps in the execution. But even with those difficulties it has progressed. So I'm optimistic and it should continue to progress.

Are there any signs of progress in other possible mechanism to stop the conflict — international peacekeeping mission in Donbas?
— I continue to believe that this is an important option. But let's speak clear what is the purpose. The purpose is for there to be full implementation of Minsk agreements, security in the Donbas and Eastern Ukraine. Russian forces have to leave. And there needs to be a period of time and space where there is security, so that the Minsk political steps could be implemented and so that there could be a condition for having local elections. One way for doing that and I think the best way is to deploy a UN-mandated peacekeeping operation to create that space and security for a period of time. It is not the only way, maybe it is not necessary, maybe people will find a better way. But I think it is an option, that should be seriously considered to facilitate the execution of the Russian withdrawal and the implementation of Minsk.

Still there are no practical steps?
— Not yet.

> THERE HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO INDICATION FROM RUSSIA THAT THEY ARE LOOKING AT THE RELEASE OF THE SAILORS. THESE ARE SAILORS, WHO WERE ATTACKED IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS, THEIR VESSELS WERE SEIZED, THE SAILORS WERE IMPRISONED. ALL OF THIS IS COMPLETELY ILLEGAL UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, THE INTERNATIONAL COURT HAS RULED AGAINST RUSSIA IN THIS

You have visited Vienna before your came to Ukraine, could you share some aspects of your cooperation with OSCE?
— First of all, Miroslav Lajčák, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, is my personal friend and I think has done an excellent job as the Chairman. I also have a very good connection with Thomas Greminger, Secretary General of this organization. So I think we are in the very good partnership with the OSCE. The SMM has done outstanding work under extremely difficult circumstances. You have a situation, when they have a mandate, agreed in Vienna, including by Russia, which says that they have freedom of movement throughout Ukrainian territory, obviously on the occupied area. And yet on the ground Russian-led forces obstruct that freedom of movement. They had people killed, — American has been killed as part of the monitoring mission — they had their access repeatedly blocked, their equipment had been shot at and destroyed, their vehicles have been shot at. So this is an extraordinary difficult work they are doing there. The US is a larger contributor to the SMM, we support them very much, we think that they play a critical role and indeed if we make progress in disengagement and building peace along the contact line, we only need more of the SMM. I think the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine Martin Sajdik has been a very valuable contributor to these efforts and we are looking forward to the appointment of the next OSCE Representative as well.

Talking about OSCE SMM, in their latest reports they noticed multiple deployments of Russian military equipment to occupied areas of Donbas, including some newest models of Electronic warfare and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. Is this information taken into account during high-level negotiations between Russia and USA, between Ukraine and USA?

— I need to say, it is what we expect. Russia is running a military operation in the Donbas. They want to train their people, try out their equipment, they view that as a military operation. What we need to focus on is political decision-making about that, can that change. So far it hasn't, but that's what we have to work on.

Our politicians often refer to at least three initiatives: Budapest Memorandum, Minsk agreements and Normandy format. Which of them could really help to solve the conflict, in your opinion? Some members of parliament often appeal to Budapest Memorandum, do you understand what they mean by that?

— Yes, I do. On Budapest memorandum, parties of it are the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and Ukraine. One country is violating this Memorandum and that is Russia. Russia promised to support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons and Russia has instead seized Crimea, invaded and occupied the Donbas. You can say that the Budapest Memorandum is a failure or that the US or UK haven't done their part, but the issue is that the only country which is violating the Memorandum is Russia. The problem therefore is not the Memorandum, but Russia's actions. Same thing with Minsk. The Minsk agreemenst have three parties: Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE. Who is violating the Minsk agreements here? I'm not someone, who really cares very much about the format. I think the issue is what is Russia doing. Up until this point I think Russia has made a calculation, that by continuing the war in the Donbas they can weaken Ukraine, can destabilize, can put pressure on the government in Kyiv, can try to keep Ukraine somehow under Russian influence. What's happened over five years is exactly the opposite. Ukraine has become stronger, it has become more democratic, more prosperous, much more committed to the sense of national purpose and identity across all of the communities in Ukraine. So now it is more unified country, more pro-Western, pro-EU, pro-NATO and more anti-Russian, because Russia keeps killing Ukrainians. Whatever Russia may have thought it is trying to do with the Donbas, but it has produced the opposite result. And that's where I hope we can work with Russia to bring it to an end.

Some experts arguing, that it could be useful to invite the President of the USA, Mr. Donald Trump to join the negotiation in Normandy format. Do you think that could really make a difference and what needs to be done by Ukrainian government to make it interesting for him?

— I think the issue again is Russia's actions and policies. If there is an indication that Russia is serious and is prepared to really end the conflict, I'm sure this would be very important to President Trump. Again, the format is less important than the content. But if a meeting were to be useful, we would certainly look at that. And in terms if there is a new format created, where the U.S. and you've also mentioned the UK, France, Germany or whoever have meetings in the new format as well, we are prepared to support these meetings. I don't know if we could main-

Kurt Volker. Born in 1964 in Pennsylvania. He has taught Transatlantic Relations at The George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs. After that started his career an analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency in 1986. In 1988, he joined the United States Department of State. While in the Foreign Service, he served in various assignments overseas including London and Brussels. Now Volker serves as Executive Director of The McCain Institute for International Leadership, a part of Arizona State University based in Washington, DC. He is also a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, a Senior Advisor at the Atlantic Council, and a Trustee of IAU College in Aix-en-Provence, France. He is a consultant to international business. In July 2017, Secretary of State Tillerson appointed Ambassador Volker as U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations.

tain the high-level one of Head of state or Secretary of State on a long-term basis, as the Normandy group does. But we certainly want to be supportive of efforts in any means to try to advance the negotiations and bring peace.

What is your view on economic blockade of Donbas? Is it needed?

— It is a very complicated issue. I'm sympathetic to both sides of the argument. One side of the argument is that if the occupation forces come in, they take over assets that belong to other people, they take resources, take profits from those things. And if you do normal business with those entities you are only facilitating the fact that that continues and you are rewarding illicit gains. So I can understand why you need to say, "No, we can't deal with those". At the same time, I think it is a tragedy, that the economy of Donbas has completely collapsed and people who live there have no options for employment, for productive work. They live under a thuggish state, thuggish regime that the Russians have put in place there. And they have no options and no opportunities anywhere.

Except to go to "the army"…

— Yes, that is right. They get pressed into service, if they remain. This is why all the young people have left. I mean if you are young man, you can't stay in the Donbas, because you will be pressed into military service or service of the so called people's republics. So they all leave trying to find employment or some way of living in non-occupied territories or somewhere else. Those who remain are the elderly, who need assistance, they stay principally to make sure that nobody takes their property. This is awful.

And what about another part of this activity — blockade of water supply to Crimea.

— Let me start with the Donbas. Water is a humanitarian issue, everybody needs it. You can't use water as leverage. One of the reasons why the water supply is challenged is because water filtration plants are located right on the contact line, so it is difficult to conduct repairs, to get crews to do their normal shifts and to repair some of the distribution lines, that go from the plant into the occupied territory. What needs to happen is disengagement,

protection of the critical infrastructure and access for teams. And this is something that the Russian side has not been willing to agree to as well. This is an important issue and I think it should be treated as a priority among others for improving the humanitarian situation. By doing so you would be able also to improve the climate of the conflict on the contact line.

Now on the Crimea. It is the same thing, you can't play with people's access to water. For its price of course, it is a business arrangement, I think that is necessary. I'm concerned, the other way around, that by having taken the Crimea, Russia feels is does not control the access to the water supply. And that could prove a temptation for Russia to launch some kind of new aggression. That should be avoided at all costs. I think the Ukrainian government and security forces are sensitive to that. And I think the international community is sensitive to that.

Are there any practical steps from the American side to avoid further militarization of Azov Sea and Black Sea?

— On Azov Sea all of the issues there stem from the Russia's claim of jurisdiction of Crimea. They claim the land and therefore they claim the water around the land, then they therefore claim unilateral control over the straits, and finally they claim that they have the right to completely control access to the Azov sea. All of this is illegal and wrong. And absolutely no one agrees with or supports this Russian position. It puts Russia physically in the position of squeezing access, whether it's commercial or whether it is military. This is something that we are concerned about. We want to help Ukraine with its maritime domain awareness, with its coastal defence capabilities. We reject the Russian claims and support the freedom of navigation. We would like to find some creative ways that navigation could be improved without recognizing Russia's claims and without Russia being forced to recognize Ukraine's sovereignty, since we know it won't.

Are there any leverage?

— Sanctions. We have been putting sanctions on Russia for five years. Some of them reference the Sea of Azov and there is always an opportunity for more. We are not lifting sanctions on Russia. In fact, we have increased them over time, the EU has kept them and increased them a bit. It is all due to Russia's continued behavior.

Turning to the Black Sea. I think we often talk about the Black Sea in a distorted way. The Black Sea has countries that are litoral states around the Black Sea: three NATO allies, three NATO partners (if we also count Moldova) and Russia. Russia has a legal claim to about 10% of the Black Sea coast. So this is not a region that we should be looking at as Russia's dominion. This is a region that is of interest to over a couple hundred million people, who live in countries there. All of them are either democracies or emerging democracies. All of them are growing or transitional economies. All of them have challenges with governance and corruption and need to see their economies and political systems developed and reformed. All of them need access to the outside world, to the global economy. All of them see and use the Black Sea as an energy transit corridor. The energy is flowing to the wider Europe as well. For all of this you need security. And every country, which surrounds the sea, contributes to security. As I said, three are NATO members, three are NATO partners, NATO has a role in contributing to security as well, so that this region could grow in its democracy, prosperity and security

for all these couple of hundred million people. That's the lens that we have to look at the Black Sea with. This is a part of the world that is emerging and that should be supported that way. It is not about Russia. Russia is a country that has a Black Sea coast, has interests and military forces there as well. We ought to be able to live there together.

Regarding the returning of Russian Federation to PACE, is it true, that right now we can spot the beginning of the era of new relations with the Russian Federation on the international level, with a significant improvement for Moscow? Return to business as usual?

— No, it is not. I think the decision to readmit Russia to PACE was a mistake. It damages the credibility of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe had been a critical organization for the defence of democratic institutions and human rights in Europe and it has just damaged its own credibility. This does not mean that Europe as a whole is now turning the page and forgetting about Russian aggression. Quite the opposite. You have, I would argue, growing concern in Europe over Russian interference in democracy in Western European countries. You have concern over Russian aggression throughout Europe. You have now clarity in the language, with which people talk about Russia. You have concern over Russian abuse of national sovereignty, conducting murder, attempted murder on the territory of members of Europe, such as UK, and the chemical weap-

RUSSIA HAS MADE A CALCULATION, THAT BY CONTINUING THE WAR IN THE DONBAS THEY CAN WEAKEN UKRAINE, CAN DESTABILIZE, CAN PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT IN KYIV, CAN TRY TO KEEP UKRAINES OMEHOW UNDER RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

ons attack and the willingness to use it to begin with. You have a frustration with the lack of Russian responsiveness on number of issues that Europe has raised concerns about in Eastern and Central Europe, and in Western Europe in some places: deep frustration with the proceeding of Nord Stream 2 project and Russian efforts to have influence in Europe through energy policy. Sanctions have remained in place through the EU for a long time. Even people like leader of Italian party Liga Matteo Salvini are beginning to see that the relationship with Russia is becoming a liability. We saw that in Austria, with the fall of the government after the scandal with the tapes. So people see Russia's role as a negative and I think the resistance to that is actually strengthening in Europe.

What is the reason of activation of some legal procedures by USA against Ukrainian oligarchs like Firtash or Kolomoisky?

— It is just straightforward rule of law. If we have evidence, that individuals have violated US law, whether it is fraud or money laundering or violation of sanctions, then we open an investigation, we try to gather materials, we pursue them. In the case of Mr.Firtash this has advanced to the extend, that we not only have an investigation, we have enough evidences and commitments, that we want to bring him to the US and face justice there. We have asked for the extradition of Mr.Firtash from Austria and the Austrian courts have ruled, that this is valid. Now we are waiting for the decision of the government of Austria, based on the advise of these courts.

Behind the party scenes

How the new parliament will be different from the previous one, and why the latest change is not a revolution

Maksym Vikhrov, Roman Malko, Hanna Chabarai

Everyone has seen the political portrait of the 9th Verkhovna Rada. It can be looked at from different angles. First of all, the new Rada has many more new faces and first-time MPs. The previous parliament had 51%, the current one has 79%. Most newcomers have got in with Volodymyr Zelenskiy's *Servant of the People* and Sviatoslav Vakarchuk's *Holos* — both have no "old" politicians whatsoever. Surprisingly, the *Opposition Platform — For Life* is second with 62% new faces. *Fatherland* and *European Solidarity* bring 21% new people each. History proves that a change of faces in parliament does not necessarily improve the quality of Ukrainian parliamentarism. Why this happens is an open secret.

An absolute majority of MPs get to the political peak via three lifts. One comes from business: some business owners enter the parliament through first-past-the-post constituencies while others buy places on party lists from political leaders. Many bring their puppets to par-

Age difference
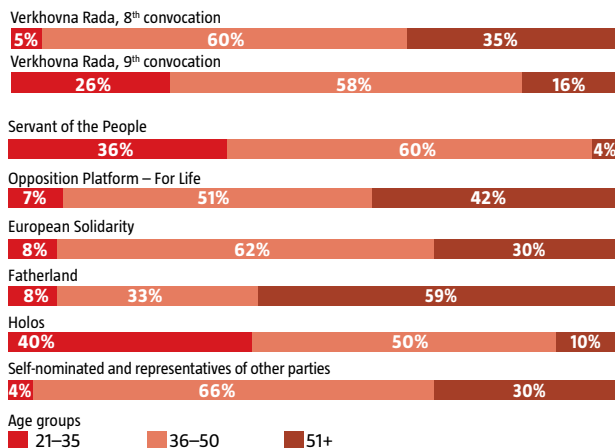
	21–35	36–50	51+
Verkhovna Rada, 8th convocation	5%	60%	35%
Verkhovna Rada, 9th convocation	26%	58%	16%
Servant of the People	36%	60%	4%
Opposition Platform – For Life	7%	51%	42%
European Solidarity	8%	62%	30%
Fatherland	8%	33%	59%
Holos	40%	50%	10%
Self-nominated and representatives of other parties	4%	66%	30%

Age groups
■ 21–35 ■ 36–50 ■ 51+

Source: authors' calculations based on the Central Election Commission data as of July 23, 2019

How the new parliament is different from the previous one

New faces*
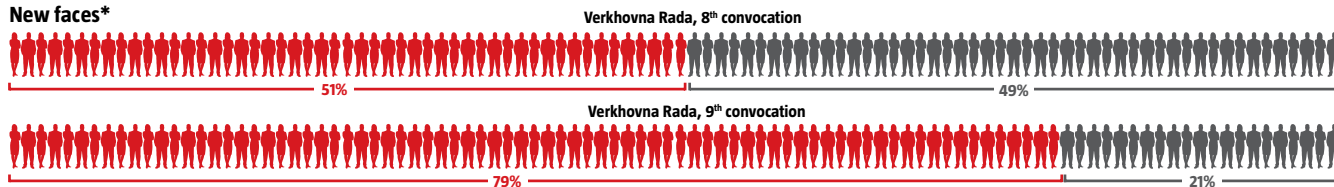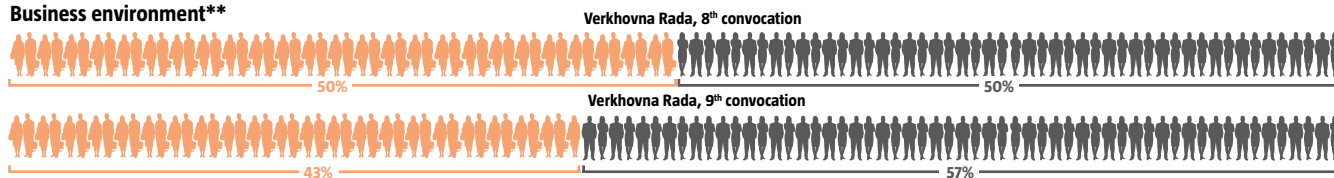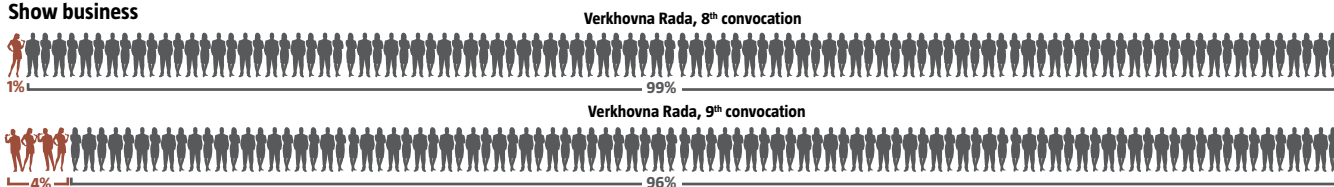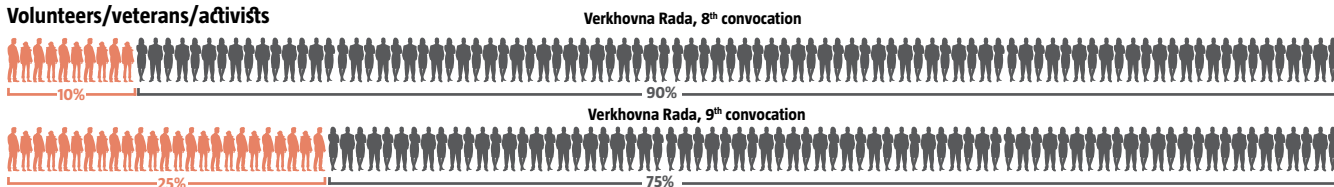
Verkhovna Rada, 8th convocation
51%   49%

Verkhovna Rada, 9th convocation
79%   21%

Business environment**

Verkhovna Rada, 8th convocation
50%   50%

Verkhovna Rada, 9th convocation
43%   57%

Show business

Verkhovna Rada, 8th convocation
1%   99%

Verkhovna Rada, 9th convocation
4%   96%

Volunteers/veterans/activists

Verkhovna Rada, 8th convocation
10%   90%

Verkhovna Rada, 9th convocation
25%   75%

*First-time MPs **Business owners and managers

Source: authors' calculations based on the Central Election Commission data as of July 23, 2019

Who comes to the Rada

Servant of the People

New faces*

100%

Business environment**

41%   59%

Show business

7%   93%

Volunteers, veterans, activists

5%   95%

Opposition Platform – For Life

New faces*

62%   38%

Business environment**

58%   42%

European Solidarity

New faces*

21%   79%

Business environment**

12%   88%

Volunteers, veterans, activists

12%   88%

Fatherland

New faces*

21%   79%

Business environment**

33%   67%

Holos

New faces*

100%

Business environment**

45%   55%

Show business

5%   95%

Volunteers, veterans, activists

35%   65%

Self-nominated and representatives of other parties

New faces*

34%   66%

Business environment**

58%   42%

Volunteers, veterans, activists

2%   98%

*First-time MPs **Business owners and managers
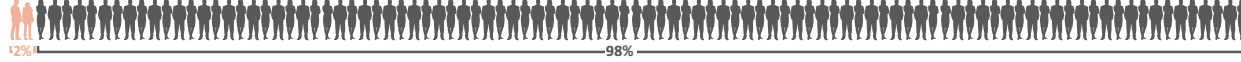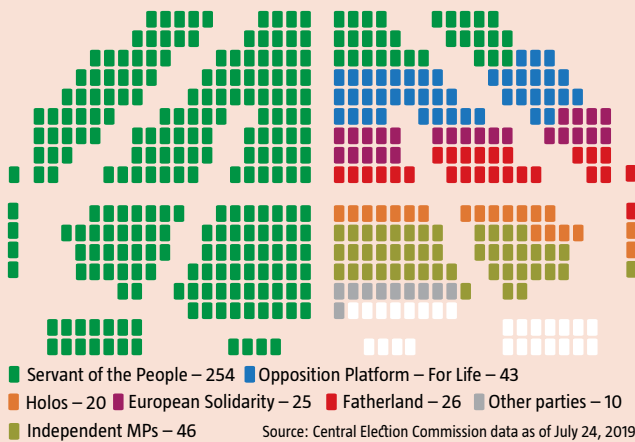
Source: authors' calculations based on the Central Election Commission data as of July 23, 2019

Approximate quantitative representation of parliamentary groups in the Verkhovna Rada, 9th convocation

- Servant of the People – 254
- Opposition Platform – For Life – 43
- Holos – 20
- European Solidarity – 25
- Fatherland – 26
- Other parties – 10
- Independent MPs – 46

Source: Central Election Commission data as of July 24, 2019

liament, including top managers, business partners and more. Another lift is regional power structure which is, too, mostly staffed by local business magnates. This reveals a grain of truth in the phrase about politics as the top league of business. The third lift is continuation of career for party functionaries, including assistants to MPs, advisors to influential politicians etc. Many "new faces" come from the lower layers of the old clan and oligarch system or have long wanted to enter into mutually beneficial cooperation with it. It is thus unsurprising that every new convocation of the Rada replicates the pathologies of the previous one.

Passengers from all these lifts were easily identifiable in the 8th Rada. MPs from the business environment made up 50% while civil society, from activists to volunteers and veterans, constituted 10%. This time, there will be fewer businessmen in parliament and far more representatives of civil society: 43% and 25% respectively. An MP's background is not the sole definer of his or her political conduct. But this reveals how Ukrainian parties still lack real contact with the citizens. At best, they are entities built around a permanent leader. At worst, they are franchise projects set up in a rush to fit into a specific electoral map. In this, the 8th and the 9th Radas are not very different. *The Servant of the People* undermined this notorious tradition to some extent. On one hand, it illustrates the controversial features of the old parties as an incarnation of the franchise approach to party building. When *the Servant of the People* was established, it did not create any real infrastructure on the ground or offer any ideology or a clear platform. On the other hand, the franchise was given to anyone because of the catastrophic rush and a deficit of good people to recruit. This de facto opened the window of opportunity to anyone. As a result, the Rada now has 254 new faces of which most are not just out-of-the-system, but candidates by accident. Will this lead to quality improvement of Ukraine's parliament is an open question. We will soon see how many people of those who got into the window are reformers from beyond the system, and how many turn into burglars in politics. The popular term "new faces" may well become a sarcastic meme by the end of the current Rada convocation.

Contrary to expectations, the influx of show business people was not huge. The 8th Rada had just 1% of

MPs with such background; the current one has 4%. But it does not necessarily take a professional performer to turn politics into a show. The good news is that Ukrainians respond to the show, rather than to the celebrities performing it. Volodymyr Zelenskiy and his team have staged a great performance with the subsequent results. *Holos* with its celebrity frontman Sviatoslav Vakarchuk and comedian Serhiy Prytula in the background barely crossed the 5% threshold because it offered neither show nor generous promises to the voters. The Agrarian Party came out even worse: the duo of Oleh Vinnyk, a pop star, and Mykhailo Poplavskiy, a long-time performer and president of the Culture and Arts University in Kyiv, ran with the party but failed to rescue it.

The bad news is that politicians are now following celebrities as role models, decorating their party lists with war veterans, well-known activists and volunteers. The presence of civil society in parliament is necessary and good. But there will hardly be any systemic change for as long as the political system simply recruits individual actors for its needs. Previous experience shows that they have little healing effect on the rest of MPs. And some succumb to the worst traditions of Ukrainian parliamentarism.

A CHANGE OF PARTY FLAGS AND FACES IN PARLIAMENT ARE SUPERFICIAL SHIFTS. THEY CAN NOT ALWAYS AFFECT DEEP PATHOLOGIES OF UKRAINIAN POLITICS. THE DEFEAT OF A NUMBER OF POLITICAL PROJECTS THAT HAVE LONG EXHAUSTED THEIR POTENTIAL IS A NORMAL PHENOMENON

The 9th Rada is much younger. MPs under 35 used to make just 5% of it in the past. This share has now grown to 26%, mostly thanks to *the Servant of the People*. The number of MPs aged between 35 and 50 has barely changed, while the share of 51+ has halved from 35% to 16%. Again, this will not necessarily improve the work of the Verkhovna Rada. The old national-democratic prophecy claiming that the young people born in the independent Ukraine will vote "for Ukraine" (implying national democrats) was crushed by the presidential election when the turnout of young people was the highest but the vote was different than expected. Obviously, the coming years will also crush the myth about "the young" being the most capable in running the country. This would not be a problem of individuals. Quality governance is shaped by quality decision-making procedures and reliable institutions, not some amazing qualities of specific individuals, such as untainted reputation, personal moral resilience, special socio-political origin, proper age and more. Therefore, claims of a "velvet electoral revolution" this year are premature.

A change of party flags and faces in parliament are superficial shifts. They can not always affect deep pathologies of Ukrainian politics. The defeat of a number of political projects that have long exhausted their potential is a normal phenomenon. The rotation of MPs is normal too. Despite all the media buzz, the new Verkhovna Rada might prove far more similar to the old one than many expect because the principles of formation have not changed. Hoping that the chaos brought about by *the Servant of the People* will also bring new quality of politics is tempting but naive.

Under the pressure of its weight

The only barrier to a long usurpation of power by the one-party propresident majority will be fragmentation of his faction in parliament amidst the lack of serious competition and temptations of power

Oleksandr Kramar

PHOTO: UNIAN

Autonomous drifting. ZeTeam will soon struggle to find scapegoats for failures beyond its one-party majority in parliament

The one-party majority of the *Servant of the People*, President Zelenskiy's party that is still an unknown, is a unique phenomenon in Ukraine's history and a source of huge challenges in terms of voluntarism from the new team in power. This situation, however, should not be seen as a tragedy. Instead, it could be perceived as a necessary lesson and the negative experience inevitable on the path of society towards political maturity.

For decades, Ukraine has lived with a popular myth claiming that its problems are caused by the unchanging political class that emerged in the 1990s and has since co-opted newcomers while filtering out the lifesaving "new faces." Whenever a team or messiah in power needed an excuse for failing to deliver a miracle, they blamed it on the need to work in coalition with other forces. Meanwhile, expectations of quick and easy steps to solve complex and entrenched problems have grown. This created an electoral environment increasingly ripe for populism. This has led to the unprecedented triumph of Volodymyr Zelenskiy and his *Servant of the People* party. Someone distant from governance or understanding of political processes became president with 73%, while his political force staffed with passers-by was handed one-party majority with almost 60% of the mandates available without the 26 vacant seats for single-member constituencies currently occupied by Russia. Now, Ukrainian society will learn that "full renewal of power" does not matter on its own. History illustrates this. When slaves rebelled against owners in ancient Egypt and won,

that did not change the essence of the system. The slaves became the owners while their former owners turned into slaves. Ukraine's hope is that most citizens will learn the right lessons from the current experience and will be more responsible about its choice in the future.

WHEN 20 STANDS FOR 60

The triumph of the *Servant of the People*, a party indifferent to Ukraine's national interests, is a result of massive distortion of electoral sentiments in Ukraine. It stems from the extremely low turnout (as was the intention with calling the election in late July, a vacation season) and the fragmentation of votes among various opponents. As a result, President Zelenskiy's party got the majority of 254 seats out of the 424 available for election thanks to the support of just a fifth of all registered voters.

In addition to that, over 2 million or 14.1% votes of the pro-Ukrainian electorate were wasted by the political forces that scored anywhere between 0.6% and 4%. This exceeds the cumulative result of Petro Poroshenko's *European Solidarity* and Sviatoslav Vakarchuk's *Holos*. The top wasters included Ihor Smeshko's *Force and Honor*, Oleh Liashko's *Radical Party*, Volodymyr Hroysman's *Ukrainian Strategy, Svoboda*, Anatoliy Hrytsenko's *Civic Position* and Andriy Sadoviy's *Samopomich*. If these votes were not wasted, the *Servant of the People* would end up with just 105 out of 225 seats under the party-list system (it now has 124), while Viktor Medvedchuk's *Opposition Platform – For Life*, an anti-Ukrainian force, would have 32, not 37 seats. All it would have taken was for the parties polling below the 5% threshold to withdraw from the race. This would have left the *Servant of the People* without one-party majority, forcing it to enter into blocs with other parties and creating more checks and balances against anti-Ukrainian initiatives in parliament.

Single-member constituencies saw stronger distortions of electoral sentiments. Volodymyr Zelenskiy's party gained 130 out of 199 seats with just 31% or 4.6 million votes for candidates in single-member constituencies. With a turnout of just 50%, the support of 15.6% of the voters was enough.

In many constituencies, the *Servant of the People* candidates had to gain just 15-25% to get into parliament. With a turnout of 50%, this is an equivalent of 8-12% of registered voters. For example, Volodymyr Tymofiychuk got into parliament in district 89 in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast with just under 11,900 votes out of 143,300 registered voters. This was possible thanks to the rivalry of *Svoboda, Civic Position, Batkivshchyna, European Solidarity* and Vitaliy Klitschko's *UDAR* that got anywhere between 3,000 and 10,000 votes each. Results were similar in Lviv Oblast: Yuriy Kamelchuk became MP with 12,200 out of 141,900 registered voters and Orest Salamakha won with 14,100 out of 168,800 registered voters. Both newly-elected MPs ran with the *Servant of the People*. Mykhailo Laba got a mandate in Zakarpattia with the votes of 18,500 out of 162,400 voters. Ihor Fris and Oleksandr Matusevych got in from Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast with 17,900 out of 161,800 and 17,100 out of 144,200 voters respectively.

Such examples are plenty in every region. *Servant of the People's* Ihor Vasyliv became MP in Ternopil Oblast thanks to the votes of 18,500 out of 164,300 registered voters. Heorhiy Mazurashu won in Bukovyna with 18,400 out of 175,500 voters. Mykhailo Koliukh got a mandate in Kyiv Oblast with 18,700 out of 148,100 voters. Anton Poliakov won in Chernihiv Oblast with 16,100 out of 140,300 voters. Oleksiy Kuznetsov in Luhansk Oblast got into parliament with 10,100 out of 98,700 voters in the constituency, and Anastasia Liashenko got in with a mere 18,200 out of 149,800 voters in Poltava Oblast.

Even in Kyiv, *Servant of the People's* Anna Purtova became MP with 17,900 out of 174,800 voters, or just 10% of the voters registered in the constituency. This was enough to beat experienced politicians, such as Roman Bezsmertniy or Leonid Yemets. This happened because three candidates oriented at the pro-Ukrainian electorate ran, eventually receiving 9,000-13,000 votes each. Maksym Buzhanskiy, a blogger known for his anti-Ukrainian views, won in Dnipro Oblast, a core one for the *Servant of the People*, with just 18,900 out of 139,000 registered voters. Oleksandr Dubinskiy, a notorious media killer, got into parliament in Kyiv Oblast with the support of 27,900 out of 150,900 registered voters.

> **DIFFERENT GROUPS WITHIN THE ONE-PARTY MAJORITY WILL LOOK FOR SUPPORT IN TRADITIONAL IDENTIFICATION NICHES: THE NOMINALLY PRO-WESTERN AND PRO-RUSSIAN ONES, DEMOCRATIC OR AUTHORITARIAN, MARKET OR COMMAND, OLIGARCHIC OR ANTI-OLIGARCHIC**

Single-member constituencies have again tilted the result towards politicians that are hostile or indifferent to Ukraine's interests. This is because of the disproportionate map of electoral districts. Lviv and Donetsk oblasts have 12 each, even if Lviv Oblast has the population of 2.5 million people while the Kyiv-controlled Donetsk Oblast has 1.85 million people. Kharkiv Oblast has as many residents as Lviv Oblast does, yet the number of single-member constituencies there is 14. Luhansk Oblast has 6 and just 700,000 residents in its Kyiv-controlled part. Volyn, Ternopil or Rivne oblasts have just 5 constituencies each and 1-1.1 million people. Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast has 7 and around 1.4 million residents. Zaporizhzhia Oblast has 9 constituencies and 1.7 million residents while Kyiv Oblast has 8 and 1.8 million people. Dnipro Oblast has 17 single-member constituencies and 3.2 million people while Kyiv has just 13 with its population of 2.9 million (even Kharkiv Oblast has more with its 2.65 million people). This list is not complete.

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS AND DEFEAT

The fact that the *Servant of the People* has triumphed thanks to the fragmentation and mutual destruction between its opponents amplified by low voter turnout is key to understanding the weakness of the new conglomerate in power which may currently look like an absolute favorite of Ukrainians. The range between 5.7 million votes or 30% in the first round of the presidential election and 6.3 million or 43% in the early parliamentary election thanks to the low turnout is the electoral ceiling of Zelenskiy's party. As the voters get disappointed with his and his team's failure to deliver on the obviously inflated expectations, the support for *the Servant of the People* will continue to fall. The question is whether his opponents learn their lessons by the local elections which the President's Office will want to conduct as soon as possible. This fall is the likely timeframe.

An agreement to withdraw between the parties polling below the threshold and to nominate one most popular candidate in single-member constituencies between all parties competing for the pro-Ukrainian electorate, even if highly unlikely, can deal an unexpected blow to *the Servant of the People* in local elections in most regions. This would also minimize chances for the President's Office to place its peo- ❯❯

ple at the helm of the key cities. A defeat of the *Servant of the People* in local elections could drive a change of the Verkhovna Rada amidst growing voter frustration with Zelenskiy and the *Servant of the People*. As a result, a more adequate composition of the parliament and the team in power could become a possibility by the fall of 2020.

There will be no real counterweight to the one-party majority of *the Servant of the People* in the newly-elected Verkhovna Rada. At the very best, the opposition will have enough mandates to prevent Zelenskiy's administration from gaining constitutional majority. In all other aspects, the *European Solidarity*, *Fatherland*, the *Opposition Platform – For Life* and the fragmented self-nominated MPs are too few and diverse to counter *the Servant of the People*. Paradoxically, though, concerns about Zelenskiy's regime cementing itself are overplayed. The nature of his party's triumph creates the ground for the crumbling of this populist conglomerate under its own weight. How fast this happens depends on the mistakes of those in power and the ability of their political opponents to learn their lessons from the crushing defeat, or on the emergence of a new alternative project.

The *Servant of the People* will grow more fragmented as a result of three emerging factors. One is the diversity of people in the party list. Many of them have gotten into politics by accident, especially in a number of single-member constituencies. The other factor is the crystalizing competing centers in Zelenskiy's team. The third factor is inevitable frustration with the new government because of diverging, inflated and often unrealistic expectations from the voters. More factors can emerge with time as the one-party majority splits into interest groups or new conflicts spark within the team in power.

Still, the three factors listed above are enough to gradually dilute *the Servant of the People's* one-party majority from the early days of the new Verkhovna Rada. The more the party's voters are frustrated with the real politics of Zelenskiy and his "economic gurus" in government, the more obvious internal fractures will become. For the sake of their political survival, the "servants" will look for someone to blame in the eyes of frustrated voters and seek alternative identifiers for themselves in politics. Different groups within the one-party majority will look for support in traditional identification niches: the nominally pro-Western and pro-Russian ones, democratic or authoritarian, market or command, oligarchic or anti-oligarchic.

As a result of all this, fracture lines will grow more obvious in the monomajority. It may remain nominally consolidated for some time, including with an effort of the President's Office in passing key decisions, but divides will be increasingly palpable. The ground for this is ripe thanks to the composition of the *Servant of the People* faction. The presence of many MPs elected in single-member constituencies will play against the president's party. The party's nominees won in virtually all regions of Ukraine; but they lost where strong self-nominated alternative candidates ran or the number of competitors from many different parties was not high enough to push the victory threshold too low. For example, Zelenskiy's party got no mandates in the Ukraine-controlled part of Donetsk Oblast and got just one seat in Luhansk Oblast, Volyn and Zakarpattia. But servants won all or virtually all single-member constituencies in Southern and Central Ukraine. Their results in Bukovyna (all four constituencies), Rivne Oblast (four out of five), Ivano-Frankivsk (five out of seven) or Ternopil Oblast (three out of five) are higher compared to Vinnytsia (three out of eight constituencies), Chernihiv Oblast (four out of six) or Khmelnytsky Oblast (four out of seven).

The party obviously did not expect its nominees to get into the Rada in many parts of the country , so they did not pass proper vetting or harmonization of political views. The *Servant of the People* brand served as a banner for people with the most diverse backgrounds and political views. As single-member constituency MPs, they were "directly elected by people" in their districts and will feel minimally dependent on their faction discipline and will be the first to respond to any change in electoral moods, including in their constituencies. ⵜ

A war of sensations

How the 2019 elections were different from all the previous ones in the Donbas

Denys Kazanskiy

The Central Election Committee counted 99% of the ballots in single-member districts of the Donbas by midweek following the election. The result was not as surprising or sensational as it was in other oblasts where candidates from Volodymyr Zelenskiy's *Servant of the People* swept their rivals away. Still, even the Donbas delivered some unexpected results.

In the pre-war period, single-member districts in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were mostly distributed between the Party of Regions candidates before the actual vote – the winners were appointed rather than elected. This time, competition was harsh between two or three, even four candidates. As a result, representatives of five single-member districts out of six changed in Luhansk Oblast, and nine out of twelve in Donetsk Oblast. The major sensation of this election in the Donbas was the crushing defeat of Yuriy Boyko's team in his base Luhansk Oblast. While his *Opposition Platform – For Life* party gained nearly 50% in the oblast, its candidate won just one single-member district out of six despite the fact that Yuriy Boyko personally came to rally for the party nominees.

LUHANSK OBLAST: YURIY BOYKO'S DEFEAT AND SERHIY SHAKHOV'S TRIUMPH

Most surprisingly, the *Opposition Platform – For Life* candidates lost the towns of Severodonetsk, Lysychansk and Rubizhne where they were expected to win. This is where the main assets of Yuriy Boyko and Dmytro Firtash, an oligarch close to him, are located. This is also where the pro-Russian electorate is concentrated. This virtually cements single-member constituencies for Boyko. But something unbelievable happened this time.

All of a sudden, *Servant of the People's* Oleksiy Kuznetsov won in district 106 in Severodonetsk. His victory was funny enough to inspire an episode for a TV show. The battle was to unfold between self-nominated Yuriy Furman, a candidate loyal to Serhiy Shakhov, and the *Opposition Platform's* Valeriy Chernysh endorsed by Boyko. Furman was seen as a favorite of the race. In order to beat him, Chernysh's team registered Andriy Furman as a dupe candidate to confuse the voters. The fake Furman worked, stealing 3.5%, while the real Furman was 2% short of winning. Ironically, it was Oleksiy Kuznetsov, an unknown *Servant of the People* without a proper election campaign, that won in the end. *The Opposition Platform's* Chernysh came third. This was the only constituency in the Donbas where a candidate from Zelenskiy won thanks entirely to the stupidity of Boyko's team who played into his hands unwillingly.

The Opposition Platform's candidate came third in district 107 in Lysychansk, losing to yet another man of Shakhov, Oleksandr Sukhov. Oleksandr Sorokin from the *Servant of the People* came second. Serhiy Rybalka from the Radical Party came fourth – he tried to bribe the constituency and flooded it with money. But his concerts with pop celebrities and road repairs for a show failed to give him a decent result. This proved yet again that money alone is not enough to guarantee victory in a single-member district.

Constituency 112 in Rubizhne brought a crushing defeat to the *Opposition Platform – For Life*. This is where Yuriy Boyko controls Zoria, the major chemical plant, and the local government. Oleksandr Chernetsov, director of Zoria, ran here. Boyko personally came to endorse him; so did Yuliy Ioffe, an MP from this constituency who ended up on *the Opposition Platform's* party list this time. Eventually, something unfathomable happened. Boyko's manager lost against Serhiy Velmozhny, a self-nominated candidate from Serhiy Shakhov's team.

In district 105 – a large part of it is occupied – Viktoria Hryb, an employee with Rinat Akhmetov's DTEK, won as a candidate from the Opposition Bloc. Her secret was fairly simple: the center of the district is in Shchastia, a town where a DTEK-owned power plant operates. Only six polling stations were open in the district and Hryb became MP with some 1,852 votes.

The Opposition Platform's Serhiy Medvedchuk (brother to Viktor Medvedchuk) fought a long battle but came second.

The only successful candidate from the Opposition Platform in Luhansk Oblast, Oleksandr Lukashev, ran in constituency 113 mostly comprised of Ukrainian-speaking farming districts. He used to work at Serhiy Shakhov's foundation. *Servant of the People's* Vita Slipets came second, and Volodymyr Struk, a notorious separatist known for his open support for the "LNR" militants in 2014, came third. The incumbent single-member representative came fourth after winning the election in district 113 five years ago.

Election hotspot. The election fight in district 50 in Pokrovsk has escalated into real street action: the opponents of Ruslan Trebushkin, the town's notorious mayor, brought a coffin to the oblast election commission

In district 114, Serhiy Shakhov won by a large margin like he did in the previous election. He has been competing for the leadership positions in the region since the pre-war time when Yefremov and Boyko clans dominated in Luhansk Oblast. At the time, their hegemony seemed unshakable. Now, Yefremov's clan is gone while Boyko has lost the oblast to Shakhov in the latest election.

THE UNEXPECTEDLY POOR PERFORMANCE OF THE OPPOSITION BLOC CONTROLLED BY AKHMETOV WAS THE MAIN TAKEAWAY OF THE ELECTION IN DONETSK OBLAST. HE HOPELESSLY LOST THE ELECTION TO HIS RIVALS FROM THE OPPOSITION PLATFORM – FOR LIFE LED BY BOYKO AND MEDVEDCHUK

DONETSK OBLAST: AKHMETOV IS LOSING GROUND

The unexpectedly poor performance of the Opposition Bloc controlled by Akhmetov was the main takeaway of the election in Donetsk Oblast. He hopelessly lost the election to his rivals from the Opposition Platform – For Life led by Boyko and Medvedchuk, including in the districts where the Opposition Bloc's candidates won in single-member constituencies.

This seriously undermined the position of Akhmetov who was traditionally seen as the master of Donetsk Oblast. The Opposition Bloc candidates won just four out of twelve districts. Borys Kolesnikov, a major heavyweight in the Donbas and a long-time ally and friend of Akhmetov, lost to an Opposition Platform candidate.

Musa Mahomedov, director general of the Avdiyivka Coke Plant, won in district 45. Most of this constituency is in the occupied territory. Avdiyivka is the only town remaining on the Kyiv-controlled side. The coke plant is the main enterprise in the town so Mahomedov's competitors barely had any chance against him. Akhmetov's MetInvest owns the plant, so Mehomedov ran with the Opposition

Bloc becoming one of Akhmetov's few MPs in the upcoming parliament.

There were no surprises in Mariupol. MetInvest co-owner Vadym Novinsky won the race in district 57 and Serhiy Mahera, regional development director with the city's Illich Steel Plant, won in district 58. They ran as single-member candidates. The results in the party-list component was completely different. Akhmetov's Opposition Bloc came third in both constituencies. The *Opposition Platform – For Life* came first with over 30%, followed by the Servant of the People with 26% and 28% in the two constituencies of Mariupol.

The Opposition Platform's Fedir Khrystenko won in district 46 with a center in Bakhmut, followed by a *Servant of the People* candidate. The Opposition Bloc's Dmytro Reva, the son of the local mayor, came third. In district 47 centered in Sloviansk, Yuriy Solod, an incumbent MP and the husband of Natalia Korolevska, won with the *Opposition Platform – For Life*. Another MP Oleh Nedava invested a lot more work into the constituency in recent years, but the voters in Sloviansk opted for Solod again. Nedava came third, taken over by a *Servant of the People* candidate. Sloviansk mayor Vadym Liakh ran with the Opposition Bloc, but he came fourth. Maksym Yefimov, an MP with the Petro Poroshenko Bloc faction, won in the Kramatorsk constituency 48. He controls several machine-building plants in Kramatorsk and invested into his campaign generously, so he had no problem running for parliament again. 54.8% voted for him by contrast to 19% for his competitor.
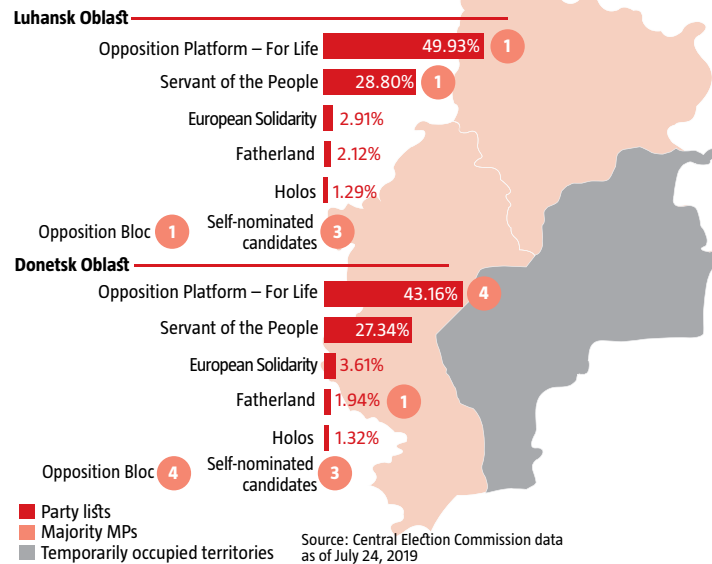
District 49 saw a thriller battle of three popular candidates for one mandate. Druzhkivka mayor Valeriy Hnatenko ran with the *Opposition Platform – For Life*. He is known for having openly supported the "DNR" militants in 2014 and having conducted an illegal referendum in the town. His rivals were Borys Kolesnikov, a Party of Regions veteran, and Serhiy Syvokho, a popular TV host with *the Servant of the People*. Kolesnikov was seen as a favorite in the constituency but Hnatenko won in the end. One reason may have been a scandal with Kolesnikov: he insulted a man asking for his help in cutting trees in town at a meeting with voters. Someone recorded that and posted the video on the Internet.

The fight continues in district 50 in Pokrovsk: Dobropillia mayor Andriy Aksionov is competing for a seat with Pokrovsk mayor Ruslan Trebushkin. Aksionov is known for having supported "DNR" militants in 2014 and having Russian citizenship. He is running for parliament as a single-member candidate. Trebushkin is running with the Opposition Bloc and is winning over Aksionov by 1%, but the counting has not finished yet.

District 51 was yet another shameful page in the history of elections in Ukraine. Makiyivka-born Oleksandr Kovaliov won here. He is the leader of the Nobody But Us organization and known for his Ukrainophobic views. Prosecutor General's Office claimed in 2016 that Kovaliov had helped members of the Black Unit of the Berkut special police who shot the Maidan protesters get out of Kyiv in February 2014. Kovaliov was declared suspect, Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko pledged to complete the case and Petro Poroshenko Bloc's MP Volodymyr Ariev happily reported the identification of a dangerous criminal. Three years later, Kovaliov is in parliament.

How he got there is the most interesting story. Constituency 51 is a fiction. A great part of it is occupied by the "DNR". Just two semi-ruined frontline villages remain on the Kyiv-

Results of snap election to the Verkhovna Rada in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts

Luhansk Oblast
- Opposition Platform – For Life — 49.93% — 1
- Servant of the People — 28.80% — 1
- European Solidarity — 2.91%
- Fatherland — 2.12%
- Holos — 1.29%
- Opposition Bloc — 1 — Self-nominated candidates — 3

Donetsk Oblast
- Opposition Platform – For Life — 43.16% — 4
- Servant of the People — 27.34%
- European Solidarity — 3.61%
- Fatherland — 1.94% — 1
- Holos — 1.32%
- Opposition Bloc — 4 — Self-nominated candidates — 3

■ Party lists
■ Majority MPs
■ Temporarily occupied territories

Source: Central Election Commission data as of July 24, 2019

controlled territory. Nearly 2,000 people live there, according to official statistics. In reality, 700 people came to vote. According to **The Ukrainian Week**'s sources, the Central Election Commission decided to hold the election in this district under an agreement with the *Opposition Platform – For Life's* Andriy Aliosha. He was hoping to bribe voters into electing him but that was a miscalculation.

Aliosha placed his bets on bussing voters from the occupied territory. In a district with just 700 voters, he just needed to bring 300 people from the occupied Horlivka to get the necessary result. Aliosha was the only candidate who could bus voters from the occupied territory based on a deal between Viktor Medvedchuk and the "DNR" militants. That turned him into a favorite candidate as his rivals had no chance to do the same thing. But something went wrong on election day. Someone – Kovaliov's people apparently – reported that the Mayorsk checkpoint on the contact line was mined. It was closed. Aliosha failed to bring voters from the "DNR" and lost to Kovaliov. According to Volodymyr Vesiolkin, head of the regional Military Civil Administration, Kovaliov simply gave $100 to the voters. 220 votes was all it took him to win.

In district 52 in Toretsk, *Batkivshchyna's* Yevhen Yakovenko coming up as an unexpected winner followed by the *Opposition Platform – For Life's* rival. The risk of fraud was extremely high in this district.

District 59 delivered no surprises: an *Opposition Platform's* candidate won there. Self-nominated Dmytro Lubenets, an incumbent MP, won in district 60 for the second time in a row (he won the 2014 election, too). Lubenets stayed with the Petro Poroshenko Bloc faction for the past five years, and the voters still supported him – he defeated his Opposition Platform rival by a serious margin.

The main takeaway from the 2019 parliamentary election in the Donbas is that real politics has finally reached the region. For the first time in its history, a relatively fair and competitive election took place in the region. The monopoly of one political force in Eastern Ukraine is over. Replacing it is the era of political pluralism and intense rivalry. ∎

Fear and loathing in the banking sector

The aftertaste of banking sector reform

Liubomyr Shavaliuk

Five years have passed since the start of reforms in the banking sector. Most Ukrainians remember this as a time of mass bankruptcies, financial losses that affected both individuals and businesses, and huge public scandals that included protests outside the NBU offices. Reforms changed friends into enemies, offered public figures an opportunity to siphon off political capital, and clever individuals to catch some financial fish in muddy water. More than anything, however, it made a major contribution to a tectonic shift in the political landscape that led to a completely unpredictable election outcome.

At this point, passions have died down somewhat. Most of the transformations the banking system needed are completed and early results are in. Some changes are still in process or planned down the line, but the reforms are no longer leading to screaming headlines. The only exception is the waves still being made over the nationalization of PrivatBank. But the press and the politicians have largely lost interest in the banking system. With no one to blow on the informational bonfire, the rustle around the NBU and the country's commercial banks has noticeably died down. And so this seems like the right time to take an in-depth look at whether the game was worth the candle.

THE BANKING SECTOR HAS ONCE AGAIN STARTED LENDING TO CONSUMERS. THIS IS A DEFINITE ACHIEVEMENT BECAUSE THIS SEGMENT WAS FROZEN AFTER THE 2008-2009 CRISIS BECAUSE OF THE TENDENCY TO UNSECURED LENDING PRIOR TO THE CRISIS

But before going on, we have to keep in mind that bank reform is a complicated process cannot be looked at unidimensionally. It involved a mass of components and restrictions. Some aspects worked out, others did not; some changes were effective, but some led to too many negative side effects.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

Analysis should start with a simple question: Did the reform reach its goals? More so than not. The main purpose was to ensure that the banking system carried out its own functions properly. Looking at the situation from different angles, there are three functions: one business-related and two related to macroeconomics. For the banks themselves, the main function is to turn a profit. Here, the results are very impressive: according to the NBU, in H1 2019, the system's return on equity or ROE was nearly 38%. This is an unprecedented record and one that is unlikely to be repeated in the future. Its weight was increased by three factors: a fair surplus of capital – without which profitability would be even higher, as the denominator in the ROE formula would be even lower; a substantial surplus of liquidity that represents relatively low interest earnings – money that would have earned far more if it had worked in the economy – and an economy that is far from its peak of performance, where the profitability of financial institutions is at its highest.

Profitability is the fair reward received by bankers who trusted in reform, conscientiously followed the requirements of the NBU, and accepted their responsibility before their customers, regulators and society during difficult times. Banks now have a right to be satisfied with themselves. For five years, they invested resources, both financial and human, in order to meet the conditions of reform. Now they are being repaid, lost capital is coming back, and they can compensate for the opportunities during the crisis period.

What testifies to this record profitability? Either the financial institutions that survived have gained a monopoly and are using this to their advantage and not that of their customers, or they have optimized their business model and become a lot more efficient. The first hypothesis is unlikely: the remaining 76 banks offer more than enough competition today, even if the four state-owned banks account for more than half of the sector according to many indicators. Interest rates offer another strong against monopoly: at 18-19%, business hryvnia lending rates are far closer to the prime rate, 17%, than they were prior to the 2008-2009 financial crisis, when money was relatively cheap, with the prime rate 7-10% and commercial loans 13-16%, while commercial hard currency loans are currently the cheapest they have been since independence. Other rates paint a similar picture.

The second hypothesis is closer to the truth. The cost: income ratio (CIR) shows that Ukraine's banks have become more efficient, as do a number of other indicators. In short, the high profits are more likely a sign of greater efficiency across the banking system, that is, the result of reforms that have benefitted everybody.

MACROECONOMIC BENEFITS

The other two functions of the banking sector are macroeconomic. Firstly is arranging payments among economic agents. Ukraine's banking system was able to perform this function even during the most difficult times. It's hard to imagine what problems might prevent it from doing so, and so that this is one area where reforms did not have any fundamental impact, other than perhaps to develop and diversify the payment system. The second function, transforming savings into investments, is complicated and needs to be broken down into its components. Here, again, a number of basic questions arise.

First question: Has it become safer to keep money in a deposit? Definitely yes. People remember well the last few months of the Yanukovych regime, how depositors were unable to get their money out prior to the collapse of banks. Deposits were simply not returned as the situation was completely ignored by the NBU under Arbuzov's governorship. Such cases were not rare and led to huge scandals. Today, the situation is the op-

posite: customers can easily withdraw their deposits, trust in banks is on the rise, and the deposit base has been expanding. Of course, no one is protected against a new crisis or a panic among depositors. But the real level of capital and liquidity in Ukraine's banking system is at a record high. This ensures that the banks are ready to return money to customers, even if a crisis arises.

The list of arguments continues. The Physical Persons' Deposit Guarantee Fund was able to cover all deposits guaranteed by the state under extremely difficult circumstances. And so it will probably manage just fine in the future as well. The mechanisms have proved themselves. To ensure reliably high liquidity among Ukraine's banks, the NBU has instituted new norms, including for the liquidity coverage ratio or LCR. In this way, it will control the readiness of financial institutions for a high rate of payouts to depositors during a crisis. This adds to the stability of the system.

The government guarantees all deposits in the state-owned banks that dominate the system today. This offers a choice to even the most untrusting customers. The discussion now is to raise the guaranteed sum of UAH 200,000 to European levels, which is a six-figure sum in euros. In short, this part of its macroeconomic functions Ukraine's banking system is now performing immeasurably better than in the past and the risks to depositors have gone down considerably.

GETTING BACK TO THE BUSINESS OF LENDING

Next question: Have its banks started to finance Ukraine's economy better? Well, yes and no. Mainly, the banking sector has once again started lending to consumers. This is a definite achievement because this segment was frozen after the 2008-2009 crisis because of the tendency to unsecured lending prior to the crisis. Reform has led to significant shifts, but the situation remains far from ideal. Although consumer lending is growing quickly, it's still at a very low level. Considering the very high interest rates – over 30% per annum – demand for such loans is considerable, but banks are in no rush to satisfy it.

Meanwhile, the mortgage sector remains dormant. Whether this is good or bad is hard to say. On one hand, growing personal loans would spur business activity and that's good, but it would also increase imports, which is not so good. On the other, the weakness of Ukraine's economy means that there is considerable alternate credit available that would contribute to the country's development more than living on borrowed money. Given this, the inclination towards consumer lending is not the best or most desirable macroeconomically.

Nor is the situation in the corporate sector any less unambiguous. After the 2008-2009 crisis, many of the loans went bad as debtors refused to pay them back. But banks were not keen to show this in order not to show losses and engaged in a slew of paper machinations to avoid it. Still, having been burned once, they began to select potential borrowers far more carefully. The result was that the lion's share of loans began to go to companies whose owners were the same as the bank's, what is called "interested parties." Even without this, the economy didn't have enough capital in savings accounts, while the level of concentration in oligarchic hands complicated the situation even further. There simply wasn't enough cash for a normal, market-oriented business, and if the banks did decide to lend it money, the interest rate was huge even by today's standards.

In short, reforms have changed things, but the picture is far from ideal yet. Paper manipulations at banks have largely disappeared, while transparency and accountability have grown immensely. The NBU forced banks to show the actual state of corporate lending, as a result of which banks were forced to declare more than half of their corporate loans non-performing. To prevent a repeat of the mistakes of the past, financial institutions raised their requirements of borrowers significantly, including accounting and transparency.

Banking reforms rouse strong popular reaction. And a not entirely deserved wave of hatred towards its authors

It turned out that not that many companies could meet the new requirements. And so Ukraine's banks are ready to lend to business and have the necessary resources, but the market doesn't have enough quality borrowers. Meanwhile, a real competition for the business of those borrowers who are creditworthy is taking place, leading to interest rates that are so low, they sometimes are even below the prime rate. The bottom line is that corporate lending is only slowly recovering, but it's structurally sound because the bias towards oligarchic business has disappeared, giving SMEs access to financial resources. Down the line, quality should lead to quantity, but this will take both time and the introduction of a few key changes.

INTEREST: WHY SO HIGH?

The main accusation from critics of the reforms is the high cost of borrowing. There are two components at work here. First of all, strict financial and crediting policy. It's not a direct result of banking reform but more a wisely chosen ornament for the period that the economy is undergoing transformation. Better to secure the economy than to chase after unreliable growth. Ukraine's experience has convincingly shown the wisdom of this: the country would have been far better off growing slowly but steadily, rather than losing a decade to overcome consequences of the crashes that came after every growth spurt.

Secondly, credit risks. A big portion of interest rates today is a premium on the lenders' risks – fear has big teeth. That's also why the requirements for borrowing are also high. On one hand, few meet the high standards, so they may have to be lowered somewhat to adapt to reality. On the other, this approach by the NBU, as the inspiration behind the reforms, carries out an important function: teaching business to work according to international standards of publicity, transparency and efficiency – all of which makes it more competitive on global markets. It's a matter of choosing between cheaper credits today and the long-term capacity of Ukrainian business to compete down the line.

Of course, the reform can be looked at from yet another angle: has the banking system become more reliable? So far the system has not been tested for durability, so this is also not easy to answer. The next crisis will show. But it's already clear that Ukraine's banks have gotten rid of many bad habits thanks to the reforms, habits that contributed to risk factors over 2014-2016. Restricting lending to interested parties and raising the requirements for borrowing reduced the threat of loan defaults. With the issue of collateral now regulated, the risk of loss because of a poor decision on the part of the courts and the unscrupulous behavior of borrowers was also reduced.

The institution of a credit register stopped the practice of parallel lending in several banks at once, often with no intention of paying any of them back. New rules, regular stress-tests, and active engagement between the NBU and the banks has made them more transparent and more trustworthy by reducing illegal actions on the part of bankers. The list can be extended. But the essence of all these changes is the same: where there are no bad habits, there won't be problems. This logic is good for individuals, so it's probably fair for financial institutions as well.

THE COST OF REFORMING

Prior to the crisis, Ukraine had 180 banks; today there are 76. Critics say that some of the liquidated banks could have been saved. But the new conditions were really tough and so it was natural that many did not make it. It wasn't just those that

were unable to give up their various underhanded schemes and begin to engage in proper banking, but also those who, in very lean times, simply could not find the financing to increase their statutory capital from UAH 120mn in mid-2016 to UAH 450mn by the beginning of 2019. Possibly it was overkill, but from the point of view of Ukraine's experience, facing extremely tough conditions has been better at mobilizing and persuading people that they have to do things differently from now on. Now there is no question that those banks that made it through the gauntlet of reform are far more stable and really do deserve the profits they are earning.

The reality is that Ukraine's business environment remains quite toxic, overloaded with artificial restrictions, the interference of bureaucrats and enforcers, a shortage of entrepreneurial knack and capital poor. This raises another set of questions: Should they have reformed the banking system from the bottom up and drive out everyone who did not fit the new format even just a bit? Or would it have been better, after all, to approach the issue a bit more softly, overlooking non-critical violations, and giving more time to meet the new requirements? It's hard to say. In Ukraine, any kind of softening is seen as either a sign of weakness or a sign of corruption – with all that that entails. Perhaps if the reformers had managed to save a dozen or two more banks, they would have been branded even more harshly, as no one would have been able to properly evaluate all the exceptions.

Ukraine's bank reforms killed more than 113,000 jobs in the system. On one hand, this indicates growing efficiency. On the other, it left many households devastated. The reforms also led to massive losses on the part of the customers of banks that were declared insolvent, both individuals and businesses. According to the Deposit Guarantee Fund, by June 1, 2019, more than UAH 89bn had been paid out to the depositors of bankrupt financial institutions within the established caps. But only a quarter of that was covered by the sale of assets belonging to the liquidated banks. The rest, nearly UAH 60bn, came from taxpayer money in the form of government bonds lent to the Fund by the government. This means that every Ukrainian will pay around UAH 1,500 for these reforms down the line if the banks don't return this money to the Fund through their own contributions. Was this price fair? Only time will tell.

At this point, the creditors of bankrupt financial institutions have presented a bill for UAH 242bn, of which only UAH 34bn have been returned. The Deposit Guarantee Fund is disposing of UAH 531bn worth of assets belonging to insolvent banks, but has assessed them as worth only UAH 94bn. Whether or not it will be possible to get even this sum out of the Fund is a big question, because various dealers are trying to get their hands on these assets for peanuts. For instance, it was revealed not long ago that a company belonging to agri-business tycoon Andriy Verevskiy wanted to pick up the assets of Delta Bank at a 96% discount. Examples like this are far from rare, and it's no surprise. The situation today makes it a buyer's market for the assets of bankrupted financial institutions: distressed assets are plenty and capital is scarce.

Still, there's no point in saying that the bankruptcy of banks means thousands of criminal cases and tens of thousands of litigations tied to those who drove these banks into the ground and afterwards over their assets. In this context, Ukrainians are paying a high price, but not for reform but for the business practices that led to the process being so tough. And had it not taken place, the price would undoubtedly have been much higher.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT

Something like bank reform also has its socio-political aspect. On one hand, the number of physical entities who lost

more than the state was prepared to compensate was not so huge. According to the Deposit Guarantee Fund, the deposits of 99% of the customers of working financial institutions did not exceed the sum guaranteed by the state. This covered almost 42% of all personal deposits. Prior to the crisis, the ratio was just a bit lower because many depositors did not expect mass bankruptcies and had not spread their savings in UAH 200,000 shares in different banks, the way depositors do now. Altogether, those who lost amount to about a few hundred thousand, but this is still just 1-2% of the entire population.

What's more important is that not just ordinary Ukrainians lost, but businesses as well, especially the former owners of bankrupted banks, including about a dozen well-known oligarchs. In short, reform affected various socio-economic groups both directly and indirectly. Some lost money, but were given the equivalent in compensation from the state. Others only lost the exchange rate difference because the bankrupted bank was initially placed under administration at a set currency rate, while the sum guaranteed by the state was paid later, when the dollar had a very different value. And there were those who lost their bank, money on commercial accounts in it, and personal savings as well. Many influential people also suffered, which is why this reform had such a high profile – and also why the reformers felt the full brunt of public outrage and distrust over it.

> AT ONE POINT, THERE WERE THOSE WHO MADE SOME POLITICAL CAPITAL LEADING PROTESTS UNDER THE NBU. INDEED, POLITICIANS ALL TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION. AS SOON AS UKRAINIANS STOPPED REACTING TO THIS TOPIC, POLITICIANS ALSO LOST INTEREST IN REFORMING THE BANKING SECTOR

Time will put everything in its proper place. At one point, there were those who made some political capital leading protests under the NBU. Indeed, politicians all took advantage of the situation. As soon as Ukrainians stopped reacting to this topic, politicians also lost interest in reforming the banking sector. Interestingly, in the latest elections, not one platform included a plank proposing undoing the reforms although many candidates and parties proposed cancelling another unpopular change – the rise in household natural gas rates. The grandest "defender of deceived depositors," Yulia Tymoshenko, limited herself to vague formulations about "restoring trust in the banking system… justice for those who lost their deposits… changing the ineffective policies of the NBU…," while Ihor Smeshko proposed investigating the NBU's actions over the last five years without any explanation or alternative propositions. And that was it. The rest seemed satisfied with the reforms – which only goes to show just how exaggerated the scandal around this process was.

Interestingly, external assessments of this reform have been unanimously positive. Most western economists praised both the reform and the reformers. Of course, they have no interest in Ukrainian politics…

Ukraine's bank reform was an avalanche that covered the entire country. Probably every aware Ukrainian knows about it and its consequences. As many people as there are, that many assessments and interpretations there will be of the correctness and effectiveness of these changes. The one thing that does not raise any doubts is that this reform has been a true milestone in Ukraine's young history, an example of how, even in the country's economic, legal and regulatory murk something this big can be carried out.

Who's ticking the boxes

A portrait of voters by party in Verkhovna Rada elections over the last 20 years

Hanna Chabarai

In 1998, the first exit poll was taken in a Ukrainian election. It was organized then and continues to be organized to this day by the Democratic Initiatives Fund (DIF) in collaboration with well-known pollsters. The 1998 vote was done under a mixed system and the threshold for parties to sit in the legislature was 4%. Turnout was 70%. For the last time, the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) gained the most seats in the Rada that year. Exit polls showed that voters who hadn't finished public school were most likely to support the CPU. Moreover, the party had more support among Russians and other ethnicities than among ethnic Ukrainians. Half of Crimea's voters and one third of voters in the east, north and south of Ukraine supported it, while only 16% of Kyivites and 6% of western Ukrainians voted for the communists. That

year, the Regional Revival Party of Ukraine, formed just a year earlier, participated in an election for the first time – and got only 0.9% of the vote. It was to go on to become Party of the Regions.

In the Rada elections of March 31, 2002, turnout was down to 65%. The CPU was squeezed out of first place by the newly-established *Nasha Ukraina* Bloc headed by Viktor Yushchenko. *Nasha Ukraina* included *Narodniy Rukh* and seven other political forces that were in opposition to President Leonid Kuchma. The exit poll revealed that the communists had lost support among the youngest voters, who cast their ballots for Yushchenko's bloc. The now-renamed Party of the Regions entered the Rada as part of the pro-Kuchma *Za Yedynu Ukrainu!* [For a United Ukraine, echoing *United Russia*, which had been founded just three

Portrait of the typical voter for the last 20 years

VR Election 1998

Communist Party of Ukraine 25%
over age 56
education incomplete secondary
residence urban areas in the south and east

National Democratic Party 5%
age 18–25
education post-secondary
residence rural areas in the center

Narodniy Rukh **9%**
age 30–55
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the west

Hromada **Union 5%**
age 30–55
education secondary
residence urban areas in the center

Bloc of Socialist and Peasant Parties 9%
age over 56
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the center

Vitrenko's Progressive Socialist Party 4%
over age 56
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the south

Green Party of Ukraine 5%
age 18–25
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the south

Medvedchuk's Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (o) 4%
age 18–25
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the west

months earlier]. This bloc came in third in the proportional voting party lists.

The Orange Revolution and Viktor Yanukovych's loss in the 2004 presidential race mobilized the Party of the Regions electorate. In the 2006 election, the Regionals came in first and were able to form the largest faction in the Rada. Most of their votes came from eastern oblasts and urban voters over the age of 60 who had completed vocational school – blue-collar workers. The Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko came in second, while *Nasha Ukraina* fell to third place with its predominantly rural electorate in western Ukraine. The CPU this time barely met the threshold requirement. When *Nasha Ukraina* failed to find common ground with Party of the Regions, President Yushchenko decided to dismiss the Rada in April 2007. A snap Rada election took place that fall, but the outcome was not very different.

The 2012 VR elections took place under a new set of rules: President Yanukovych and his parliamentary majority raised the threshold to 5% and prohibited blocs from participating in the election in order to prevent the opposition from joining forces. At the same time, Yanukovych refused to join the Customs Union with Russia, which was not in line with his electorate's vision of friendship with Ukraine's northern neighbor. The result was predictable: Party of the Regions lost voters in the south and east in favor of the communists. Still, it came in first in the proportional round, with 30% of the vote, while the CPU picked up 13%, a strik-

ing contrast to the 3-5% it had in 2006 and 2007. This was also the year Svoboda had a breakthrough with more than 10% of the vote and sat in the Rada for the first time, although surveys had shown that it was hovering on the edge of the 5% threshold.

SINCE PARTY OF THE REGIONS HAD COLLAPSED AFTER YANUKOVYCH LEFT THE COUNTRY AND MUCH OF ITS ELECTORATE WAS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY, THE RUMP PARTY REORGANIZED AS THE OPPOSITION BLOC, WITH THE SAME IDEOLOGY AND BLUE-AND-WHITE COLORS. IT RECEIVED JUST 9.4% OF THE VOTE, MOSTLY FROM THE EASTERN REGIONS AND THOSE OVER 60 WITH JUST A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

In 2014, VR elections took place in the shadow of an undeclared war: all of Crimea, nine districts in Donetsk Oblast and six in Luhansk Oblast did not participate. Turnout was 52%. Arseniy Yatseniuk's *Narodniy Front* came first with 22% of the vote. Just before the election, Yatseniuk and Oleksandr Turchynov had both left *Batkivshchyna*, Tymoshenko's stand-alone party. The Bloc of Petro Poroshenko, then president, came second with almost the same share of the vote. Third place went to Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadoviy's *Samopomich* [Self Reliance] with 11%, with most of its support in the western oblasts. Since Party of the Regions had collapsed after Yanukovych left the coun- »

VR Election 2002

Yushchenko's *Nasha Ukraina* Bloc **24%**
age 30–39
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the west

CPU **20%**
over age 60
education incomplete secondary
residence urban areas in the east and south

Lytvyn's *Za Yedynu Ukrainu!* **12%**
age 30–39
education technical and post-secondary
residence the east

Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko **7%**
age 18–29
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the west and center

Moroz's Socialist Party of Ukraine **7%**
age 50–59
education secondary
residence rural areas in the center

SDPU (o) **6%**
age 18–29
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the east and south

VR Election 2006

Party of the Regions **32%**
Over age 60
education technical
residence urban areas in the east

BYT **22%**
age 40–49
education secondary and post-secondary
residence rural areas in the center

Nasha Ukraina Bloc **14%**
age 30–39
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the west

SPU **6%**
age over 60
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the center

CPU **4%**
age over 60
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the east and south

VR Election 2007

PoR 34%
age over 60
education incomplete and complete secondary
residence urban areas in the east

BYT 31%
age 30–39
education technical
residence rural areas in the west

Nasha Ukraina-Samooborona 14%
age 30–39
education incomplete and complete post-secondary
residence rural areas in the west

CPU 5%
over age 60
education incomplete and complete post-secondary
residence urban areas in the east and south

Lytvyn Bloc 4%
age 40–49
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the center

VR Election 2012

PoR 30%
over age 60
education technical and post-secondary
residence rural areas in the east

Batkivshchyna
(with united opposition) 26%
age 50–59
education technical and post-secondary
residence rural areas in the center and west

Klitschko's UDAR 14%
age 18–29
education incomplete secondary
residence urban areas in the center and west

CPU 13%
over age 60
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the east and south

Svoboda **10,5%**
age 30–39
education secondary
residence urban areas in the west

VR Election 2014

Narodniy Front **22%**
over age 60
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the west

Bloc of Petro Poroshenko 21%
over age 50
education technical
residence rural areas in the center and south

Samopomich **11%**
age 18–29
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the west

Opposition Bloc 9%
over age 60
education secondary
residence urban areas in the east

Liashko's Radical Party 7%
age 18–29
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the center

Batkivshchyna **6%**
over age 60
education incomplete secondary
residence rural areas in the center

VR Election 2019

Sluha Narodu **43%**
age 18–29
education incomplete post-secondary
residence urban and rural areas in the south

Opposition Platform Za Zhyttia **13%**
over age 60
education technical and incomplete secondary
residence urban areas in the east

Batkivshchyna **8%**
over age 60
education incomplete and complete secondary
residence rural areas in the center and west

Poroshenko's *European solidarity* **8%**
age 40–49
education post-secondary
residence urban areas in the west

Vakarchuk's *Holos* **5,8%**
age 18–39
education incomplete and complete post-secondary
residence urban areas in the west

Source: National Exit Poll 1998–2019 data

try and much of its electorate was in occupied territory, the rump party reorganized as the Opposition Bloc, with the same ideology and blue-and-white colors. It received just 9.4% of the vote, mostly from the eastern regions and those over 60 with just a high school education.

The political technology of the current president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy might be said to have hacked Ukraine's democracy, delivering him unprecedented support in the presidential election. He very logically decided to take advantage of the immense wave of support to also ensure himself a majority in the Rada by calling a snap election as soon as he was inaugurated. It worked, and his party, *Sluha Narodu* [Servant of the People], won 43% of the proportional vote, and collected more MPs in the FPTP districts, about many of whom there is literally no information available. Although turnout for this latest election was the lowest ever at 49%, the new faces from *Sluha Narodu* reshaped the political map of Ukraine even in the Donbas, where those who won were historically tightly rooted in Party of the Regions.

Meanwhile, the Opposition Bloc broke up. Led by Yevhen Murayev and backed by Rinat Akhmetov, it failed to meet the threshold requirement to sit in the Rada, while Viktor Medvedchuk's breakaway *Opposition Platform Za Zhyttia* (For Life) to which the former OppoBloc leader Yuriy Boyko had moved, came in second with 13% of the vote. The result could, of course, have been even higher because OPZZ saw its electorate split with other pro-Russian parties. Still, in the east and south, the Opposition Bloc picked up 8% and 5.5% of the vote.

Anatoliy Sharia's Party also failed to make it but will get budget funding thanks to its 6.5% share in the east and 4.8% in the south. Interestingly, the anti-Ukrainian blogger enjoys strong support from those with a higher education and students.

Petro Poroshenko's *European Solidarity* and Yulia Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchyna* both got around 8% of the vote. European Solidarity was supported by voters who remained supporters of Poroshenko: middle-aged individuals with a higher education, and urbanites in western Ukraine. *Batkivshchyna*'s voters were typically from the west and center, lived in rural areas, generally over 60 years of age and mostly with a basic secondary education. The final sensation in the election was Sviatoslav Vakarchuk's *Holos* (Voice). Although it was starting from scratch, the party managed to get 5.8% of the vote, taking away support from Poroshenko among more educated voters in western Ukraine.

> **ALTHOUGH TURNOUT FOR THIS LATEST ELECTION WAS THE LOWEST EVER AT 49%, THE NEW FACES FROM SLUHA NARODU RESHAPED THE POLITICAL MAP OF UKRAINE EVEN IN THE DONBAS, WHERE THOSE WHO WON WERE HISTORICALLY TIGHTLY ROOTED IN PARTY OF THE REGIONS**

Based on exit polls, more than half of Ukraine's voters have supported their chosen parties for a long time: *European Solidarity, Batkivshchyna, Svoboda, Opposition Platform Za Zhyttia* and the Opposition Bloc. Voters who made up their minds at the last moment tended to vote for PM Volodymyr Groisman's *Ukrainian Strategy*, Oleh Liashko's Radical Party, Anatoliy Hrytsenko's *Civic Position*, and *Holos*.

Dangerous road through the "best intentions"

The hidden danger of "peace at any cost" made us realise that ending the war and reintegration of the occupied territories are two separate, unrelated issues

Oleksandr Kramar

It became clear that regardless of whether the new Ukrainian president's party wins majority of seats in Ukrainian parliament or not, its key priority will be the war on the east of Ukraine. The issue of war also tops the list of expectations for Zelenskiy's voters. According to a public survey conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating", 65% of Ukrainian voters claimed that ending the war must be made new president's priority number one. Only a third of those, who answered the questionary, are concerned about economic situation or levels of corruption in Ukraine. Problems on the job market and low salaries only worried 15 to 20% of respondents. At the same time, 70% of the Servant of the People's voters expects the new president to end the war, while only 18-22% are worried about various social issues such as low salaries and lack of jobs.
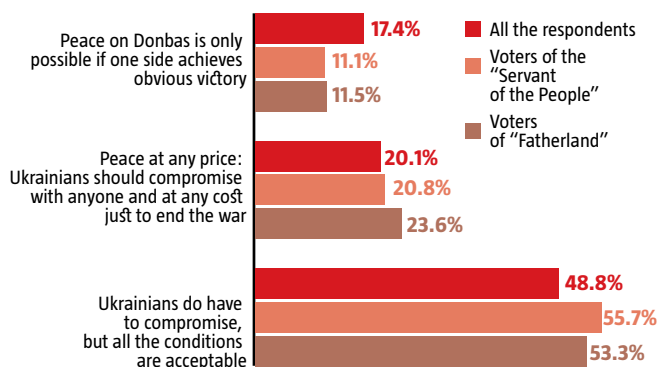
However, the problem is that, according to the signals given recently by the government circles, in its race to fulfil impossible promises it has given to its voters, the new government may fall into the classical Russian trap and place Ukraine into a very dangerous situation. Furthermore – they may even push Ukraine on the edge that would threaten its very existence. Every dangerous step made by the government is always excused by the "best intentions", and responsibility for such devastating steps may easily be placed into the citizens' shoulders via the so called "consultative referendums". It is not a secret that nowadays it is easy to receive the right results by manipulating the public opinion, as well as taking advantage of Ukrainians' inability to see the long-term consequences of their decisions.

For instance, in one of his interviews, Oleksandr Danylyuk, a newly-appointed secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine (NSDC) stated that "We want to fully implement the Minsk [Minsk agreements] – it certainly suits our interests. We want to reintegrate temporarily occupied territories and I consider us fully ready for such a process. If we did this in 2014 that would be suicidal – as a country we would not be able to handle it." Danylyuk criticised Poroshenko's government, who have continuously insisted that the political element of the Minsk agreements is impossible to implement until the war in Donbas is in its active phase. Surprisingly, Danylyuk has demonstrated a strange readiness to unilaterally compromise in this issue, claiming that "Ukraine cannot just stubbornly stand there and resist a dialogue". However, it is clear that compromising at times when enemy is actively advancing into Ukrainian territory simply means surrendering Ukrainian territories. Such stance is explained, inevitably, by the "best intentions" – to finish the war and get things moving. Andriy Bohdan, the Head of the Presidential Administration (which, by the way was renamed into "Office" in order to bypass Ukrainian lustration laws) also cited these "best intentions" in one of his interviews and claimed that "we may even consider allowing Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts to speak in Russian, providing such step will help to bring us a peace." There is no alternative to unilateral compromise, as he sarcastically asks "or shall we just kill another 15,000 of Ukrainian soldiers? [...]We have to go there and see what soldiers are saying on the frontline an then we will make a decision."

SHIFTS IN THE DEFINITION

Attempts to equal the "peace" and the "reintegration of the occupied territories" (which is also close to the Medvedchuk's formula of "return Donbas to Ukraine and Ukraine to Donbas") either brings any discussion regarding the end of Russian aggression in Ukraine to a stalemate, or dangerously leans towards the Kremlin's scenario. In the current geopolitical environment and the balance of power between Kyiv and Moscow, there is no alternative way out. Reintegration of the occupied territories and especially return of Crimea and Sevastopol are only hypothetically possible provided the geopolitical situation in the world, as well as the balance of power be-

Dangerous tendencies
Respondents, who support various scenarios to end the war on Donbas

Peace on Donbas is only possible if one side achieves obvious victory
- 17.4%
- 11.1%
- 11.5%

Peace at any price: Ukrainians should compromise with anyone and at any cost just to end the war
- 20.1%
- 20.8%
- 23.6%

Ukrainians do have to compromise, but all the conditions are acceptable
- 48.8%
- 55.7%
- 53.3%

Legend:
- All the respondents
- Voters of the "Servant of the People"
- Voters of "Fatherland"

Source: The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) and Razumkov Centre data (June 2019)

tween Kyiv, its Western allies and Moscow will change. Last but not least, one should remember that potential dramatic changes in Russia, such as sudden turbulent events or change of Russia's current borders or its political structure will also play an important role.

At the same time, political elites become more and more dependent on the public opinion in Ukraine – and many Ukrainians demand to end the war. Should the current government fail to deliver its promises and end the war, the public will inevitably lean towards potential new, dangerously populist political parties, which will give lucrative promises to end the war. It is not impossible that the so called fifth column in Ukraine will be speculating on this topic in order to enhance its influence. This will create tensions and will put additional pressure on Ukrainian political elites.

Kremlin understands this logic way too well – thus Viktor Medvedchuk and other members of the fifth column in Ukraine have been pushing this scenario through since 2014. Intentional blend and confusion of "peace process" and "reintegration" allowed Russians and their political proxies in Ukraine to brilliantly manipulate the natural desire of many Ukrainians for the war to be over. Russians, and their proxies presented the need to negotiate with the separatists or Russia's militia commanders in Donbas as the precondition to end the war. However, there is absolutely no logical connection between those two issues.

Despite the fact that generally sociologists do not really distinguish between the issue of ending the war and reintegration of the occupied territories, some interim research studies show that the ordinary citizens are interested primarily in the war to be finished as soon as possible. For example, according to the afore-mentioned survey conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating", in the list of key priorities for Ukraine for the next 10 years the issue of Ukraine's territorial integrity has been only named third. It came after the economic prosperity and the fight against corruption. Only 10% of those who answered the questionnaire expect the president to return Crimea. At the same time, Ukrainians' wish for a peace comes together with rather limited intentions to compromise. In fact, according to the June's survey, conducted by Democratic Initiatives Fund and Razumkov Centre, Ukrainians are not willing to agree on most of the Kremlin's and terrorists' demands in order to compromise.

According to the survey, for Ukrainians the most unacceptable is the demand to hold elections on Russia's terms (66% were strongly against it, while 13% noted they thought it was acceptable); 61% firmly dismissed full amnesty for terrorists (against 15% who deemed it acceptable); 58% also dismissed the possibility to form future municipal authorities out of militants – 18% thought it was possible. Additionally, 54% disagreed with Russian language being granted a state status in the occupied territory (30% stated they thought it was acceptable); 53% claimed they were against special political and economic relations between Russia and the occupied territories (while 23% noted they would not mind that); 43% were against a legislations, that would affirm Ukraine's neutral political status (34% would support such law). Only 32% supported an idea to end the blockade of occupied territories and renew the trade between Ukraine and the so-called "DPR" and "LPR" – 43% noted they were against it. Majority of Ukrainians support return of the occupied territories on pre-war terms (54%). Needless to say, now it is impossible. But is it really necessary?

Results of various sociological surveys prove that Ukrainians do not want reintegration of the occupied territories at any cost. They want to end the war. Ukrainians are tired of war and they see it as the main obstacle on the way to prosperity of their nation and economic development. Thus the idea to station UN Peacekeeping forces in Ukraine received a 55.5% of support, while only 25% were against it. Majority of those who supported this idea lived in the western or central regions of Ukraine (74% and 62%).

How much longer do we have to wait for Ukraine's political elite and the government to understand that the frozen conflict in Donbas in the current geopolitical circumstances is actually more beneficial for Ukraine, rather than Russia? Such development would most probably receive a firm support among Ukrainians, as opposed to absolute dismissal of Putin-Medvedchuk scenario of "peace". The very discussion of the combined "end the war + reintegrate the territories" package only harms and destabilises Ukraine. Moreover, if the war is not over without the reintegration of the occupied territories on the enemy's conditions, many Ukrainians may be manipulated into believing that this is the only possible scenario.

That is why Kremlin is being so stubborn against any peace process, which does not include Russia's reintegra- ›

tion scenario. Moreover, not without Kremlin's help, various initiatives began to emerge on the occupied Donbas calling for the return of the region into Ukraine as an autonomous region. One of the evidences of such strategy is a recent sudden flash mob organised in Donbas. Residents of the occupied territories (frequently public sector workers and students) were forced into recording and sharing videos on social media, where they ask Volodymyr Zelenskiy to integrate "DPR" and "LPR" into Ukraine and grant them autonomy. They also ask not only grant amnesty to terrorists, but to absorb militants as local police regiments. Unsurprisingly, they also demand that Ukrainian government restores its financial support to various social programs in the Russian-destroyed Donbas.

The problem is that Moscow is aided by Ukrainians' reluctance to officially acknowledge that "war end" and reintegration must been seen as two completely separate issues. Recent signals on international arena proved that Ukraine's western allies will not increase pressure on Russia within the current "end of the war + reintegration" project. Most probably, we will witness further attempts to ease pressure on Russia, and instead to increase pressure on Ukraine. West is also tired and just wants to get rid of a troubled country on its eastern borders. Those tendencies will most likely intensify, and so will the calls for "peace at any price" in Ukraine. At the same time, if Ukraine pushed

IF THE WAR IS NOT OVER WITHOUT THE REINTEGRATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ON THE ENEMY'S CONDITIONS, MANY UKRAINIANS MAY BE MANIPULATED INTO BELIEVING THAT THIS IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE SCENARIO

hard to stop the war without any pre-conditions, and, as a result, exercised more pressure on Russia to freeze the conflict and provide an international control over the border, this would gain it more support among the international community – especially considering the West's desire to finally "get rid of the problem".

Therefore, the idea of peace, or, perhaps the ceasefire, similar to the 1953 Korean scenario, and the issue of reintegration should be immediately separated in Ukraine's political discourse. The ceasefire may be achieved relatively soon, reintegration, however, will remain a sensitive issue, easily becoming a source of another internal political tension. Alternatively, this issue of reintegration will turn into concealed capitulation scenario, which will not only destabilise Ukraine, but may also provoke a civil war.

THE BIGGER THREATS

Reintegration intentions of the new government, nevertheless, come together with a certain partial understanding of the hidden dangers of this process. Oleksandr Danylyuk, the NSDC secretary, acknowledged that "this [the occupied territories] is a business territory, that has been militarised by Russia. But is it our territory, our citizens. We have a moral duty to them. Reintegration will not be easy, but if you manage to go through this path and solve this problem, we will come out much stronger." However, he fails to answer one important question – what if we fail and we cannot go through? What if "solving the problem" will endanger the very existence of Ukraine as a state, as well bring down its national security and stability?

One needs to acknowledge, that the best intentions to "stop the war or return the occupied territories" may pave

the path to devastative misfortunes for the whole country. The war, death and devastation, which until now have been contained within the borders of occupied territories, will spread into the rest of Ukraine. There are more than few reasons to be worried about such scenario, should the reintegration happen on Russian terms. Despite the fact, the Kyiv-controlled Ukraine is ten times bigger than the occupied territories of Donbas, there is no certainty in what is going to happen – will the occupied territories join Ukraine or Ukraine will join the occupied territories? Ukraine itself is not entirely consistent in its political preferences. It is not unlikely that Russia will try to infiltrate its proxies into Ukrainian society in order to destabilise the situation, especially trying to spread the instability from the occupied territories to the south and east. Additionally, it is not impossible that Russia would try to create a civil war in Ukraine following to the Syrian scenario.

In 2014 Russians hoped for their so-called "Novorossiya" project, to announce secession from Ukraine. However, such strategy of annexing the Russian-speaking regions has proven to be an evident failure. Russia was forced to keep the occupied territories as an irritating factor to Ukraine. Moreover, after Crimea further annexations would have almost certainly provoked an immediate reaction from the West. Therefore, the replication of the Syrian scenario in Ukraine looks currently more beneficial for Russia. Civil war in Ukraine will doubtlessly aid Russia if not to fully invade Ukraine, then at least neutralise its successful development as an "Anti-Russia" and the subsequent integration int the EU and NATO. Furthermore, potential Russian support to "one of the sides in the civil conflict" is not equal to supporting separatist secessionist militants, who are trying to annex Ukrainian territories with the clear aim of adding it to Russia. One way or another, but the Syrian case happened to be more successful for Russian, than Ukrainian. In Syria the key to Russian success was its ability to fuel the civil conflict, rather than annex territories.

Therefore, there is certain rationality behind the need to reintegrate the territories; it is, however, possibly only providing it happens on Ukrainian terms. Additionally, reintegration will require a long and painful process of clearing the territories off the many anti-Ukrainian elements, and removing numerous consequences of pre-war and recent ideological and psychological information wars staged by Russians against the local population. Russians have successfully conducted their imperial and soviet propaganda in the occupied territories. Ukraine will have to not only de-Sovietise these territories, but to take a step further and de-Russify and subsequently Ukrainise them. Those residents, who will not agree with such policies, must be given an opportunity to freely leave the country and be able to settle in Russia – as was the case with Polish Germans after the Second World War.

This seems to be the only scenario, when reintegration will be beneficial or at least have neutral impact on Ukrainian state. All the other options will inevitably bring nothing, but harm and will threaten the very existence of Ukraine as an independent state. Should Ukraine fail to fulfil this integration on its terms right now, it must be postponed – as long as necessary. Similar scenarios have earlier worked out in Germany after the Second World War or in (still) divided Korea. However, under no circumstances should Ukraine give up its territorial integrity as well as its control over the occupied territories and Crimea. Things should be done later, but throughly, rather than sooner but carelessly.

Making history or historical mistake?

Mridula Ghosh

No green men without insignia like in Crimea, no UN Peacekeepers in blue helmets; increased number of boots hitting the grounds of Kashmir are those of regular soldiers of the Indian Army. No communication and internet access. Schools and colleges shut, control is all-pervasive. Local leaders Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah are under house arrest. People with grim faces in fear are insecure. On August 5, the upper house of the Indian parliament Rajya Sabha recommends the President to revoke Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The next day, August 6, the lower house Lok Sabha approves the scrapping of Article 370, with a record number of 370 votes. The Presidential decree № 272 immediately comes into effect.

Less than a month ago, on July 22, 2019, US President Donald Trump while meeting Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, remarked that the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi requested his mediation in Kashmir. Outraged Indian authorities referred it as a faux pas since Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan. US State Department mitigated the situation with diplomatic statements. Some Indian politicians questioned, did President Trump know anything? The issue died soon. Now, the Kashmir issue is alive again. Now it is about the revoking of Article 370, which was crucial for Kashmir's inclusion into India after independence. Along with this, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was reorganized, by bifurcation into two union territories to be ruled by Governors – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. While Jammu and Kashmir will have a legislature, Ladakh will not.

For the past 70 years, Article 370 allowed Jammu and Kashmir to have their own Constitution and autonomy in decision-making in all areas, except foreign affairs, defense and communication. Clause 35-A in this Article enabled the state to determine its permanent residents, and only entitle them to government jobs and own property. Women, married to non-residents of the state, were deprived of property succession rights. Also, provisions prevailing in all states of India like the right to protection of minorities, right to information were not available. Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly had a 6-year term, not 5, as that of other Indian states. Common people in India always questioned such special provisions for Kashmir. Obviously, discrepancies of Article 370, contained in the section of the Provisional, Transitional and Special Provisions of the Constitution of India, called for its review. In 1949, the Jammu and Kashmir Constitutional Assembly was to request removal of Article 370, once the Constitution of the state was adopted, but this was not done. The Assembly was dissolved, Article 370 remained and became "permanent". Each time, Presidential orders were used to amend the article and cater to emerging needs. Today, the Indian government believes, Article 370 did not address Kashmir's development and integration into India. Therefore, the present Government used the existing legal and political means to abolish this Article. The means used on the grassroots generated an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty and alienation. Lack of dialog led to loss of trust. The void created may unleash unforeseen developments in the volatile region, neighbored by two nuclear powers. Arguments over the historical, legal expediency and correctness of using these methods will not end soon. To Kashmir based politicians, this move was a betrayal of the Kashmiri people and will have far-reaching consequences. Mehbooba Mufti accused India of its "sinister plan" to change the demography of the only Muslim majority state in India, implying that right to property for all Indians after revoking of Article 370 will stimulate influx of other Indians. Opposition politicians such as the Indian National Congress leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi and Shashi Tharoor criticized the "modus operandi" – lack of political consensus, as well as the absence of concurrence of the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly. But such concurrence was not possible, because Jammu and Kashmir at present is without a legislative assembly and is under president's rule exercised by a Governor. The government obtaining the Governor's consent, who is a nominated, not elected official was seen as utterly undemocratic manufacture of consent. Interestingly, eight leaders of the Indian National Congress, as well as politicians from other parties supported the revoking of Article 370. Before adopting the decision, Home minister Amit Shah con-

> ON AUGUST 5, THE UPPER HOUSE OF THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT RAJYA SABHA RECOMMENDS THE PRESIDENT TO REVOKE ARTICLE 370 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA, WHICH GAVE SPECIAL STATUS TO JAMMU AND KASHMIR. THE NEXT DAY, AUGUST 6, THE LOWER HOUSE LOK SABHA APPROVES THE SCRAPPING OF ARTICLE 370, WITH A RECORD NUMBER OF 370 VOTES

fidently said, "We are not about to make an historical mistake. We are correcting a historical mistake." With a constitutional majority, the ruling coalition did not build multi-party alliances in favor of its decision. Performance on the external front was better, informing in advance all permanent UN Security Council members of these constitutional changes. Severe criticism came from Imran Khan, Pakistani Prime Minister, who said, India will face new terrorist attacks, similar to the one in Pulwama in February 2019, because the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party with its "racist ideology" acts against the Muslims of Kashmir. He called for a special session of the UN Security Council on this issue. So far, US, Great Britain and others have made careful statements. The case of China was different but in its statement of concern on border disputes with India the words, "Jammu and Kashmir" or "Ladakh" were absent. Interesting were the observations by UAE and Sri Lanka. UAE representative said the reorganization of states is India's internal matter. Sri Lanka, a Buddhist majority country, welcomed the creation of Ladakh, the first Buddhist majority state in India. China's border concern becomes understandable. A new element is added to the historical discourse on Kashmir valley – protecting the Buddhist heritage of Ladakh, voiced by Jamyang Namgyal, an MP from Ladakh.

We hear a lot about special status or autonomy of Donbas in Ukraine. Redrawing internal borders in a democracy require winning hearts and minds of people. Means are as important as the end. In this context, it is worth studying the 70 years of experience – positive and negative – of the making and unmaking of Article 370 of the Constitution of post-colonial India.

Putin's Internationale

Why is the Kremlin financing right-wing political ventures in Europe?

Yuriy Lapayev

It's been quite clear for some years now that the leadership of the Russian Federation dreams of reviving the Soviet Union. Moreover, it's not just a matter of extending geographic boundaries, but also about its influence around the globe. And so the Kremlin is sparing no effort, cost or soldiers to restore the illusory glory of its one-time empire. This includes several simultaneous objectives: dependencies are being established with individual politicians and even governments in order to protect and promote its interests abroad; the unity of the western world is being undermined in order to weaken its capacity to counter Moscow politically, economically and militarily.

LOGICALLY, RUSSIA IS TRYING TO EXPLOIT THE MORE RIGHT-WING AND AUTHORITARIAN SEGMENT OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE LARGELY LIBERAL ESTABLISHED DEMOCRACIES OF EUROPE. THIS MEANS COUNTERING A UNIFIED EUROPE, NATO, MULTICULTURALISM, GLOBALIZATION, GEORGE SOROS, AND MARKET ECONOMICS

What's more, the methods have hardly changed since soviet times. Odious African dictators are offered protection against colored revolutions that are supposedly inspired by the CIA, the Pentagon or Mossad. Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad keeps his seat in exchange for oil and Russian military bases. Meanwhile, the fate of "military advisors" or of local residents who suffer from "humanitarian" bombardment means nothing at all. Nor does distance: "Russkiy Mir" can appear wherever the military transports of the Russian Federation can fly.

But some games are far more sophisticated. For more civilized European countries, time-tested methods of bribery and blackmail or killer combinations of the two are used. For example, a particular politician can be semi-officially "bought" by offering an interesting post or business deals. One-time German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder lobbied Russian interests in Germany and the EU: his reward was being appointed chair of the shareholders' committee of Nord Stream AG as soon as he left office and joining the board of directors of Gazprom.

Or a group of pliable MPs from the EU is offered a fully-paid junket to occupied Crimea – undoubtedly with a small "honorarium" of freely convertible Russian hospitality in exchange for keeping their eyes wide closed, saying nice things on television, and acting as though the "Russian" peninsula had official status. There's no question that every step by these politicians on Russian territory is carefully recorded by the FSB, to be used, when necessary, for blackmail in Moscow's interests. For a mere €70 million, Russia was recently indulged for its aggression in Ukraine and its delegation returned to PACE without any conditions or sanctions. Nor is money the only form of influence. Often we see convenient contracts, especially in the fuel and energy sector.
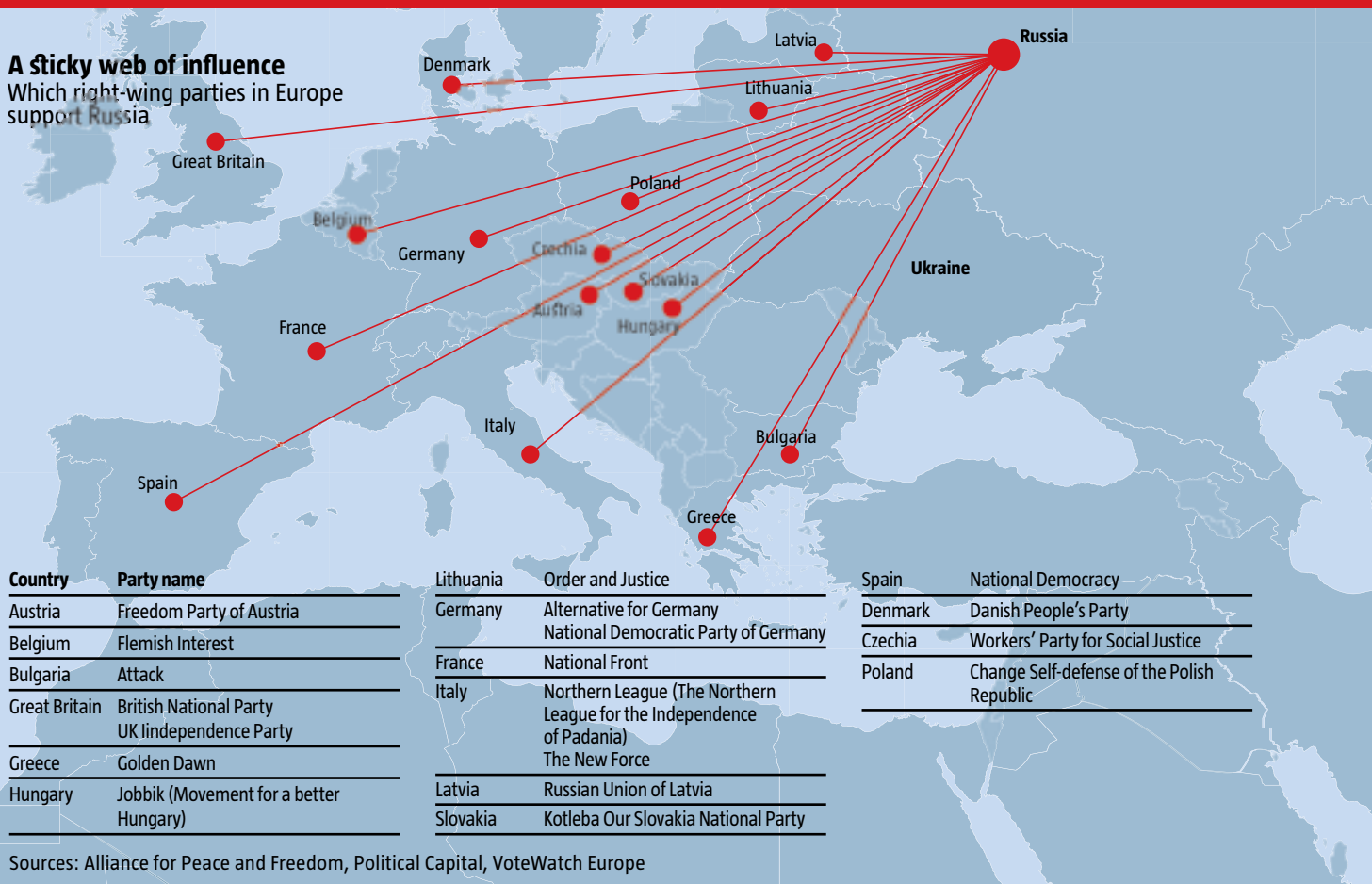
And when the need arises for a strong strike from within, Russia can always use its petrodollars to finance political parties that are willing to promote the right ideas among their domestic voters. Logically, Russia is trying to exploit the more right-wing and authoritarian segment of the political spectrum as a counterweight to the largely liberal established democracies of Europe. This means countering a unified Europe, NATO, multiculturalism, globalization, George Soros, and market economics. Some of these links were established back in soviet times, such as friendly relations with Austria, and some are based on the theory of pan Slavism, which are more typical of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. A 2014 report by the Hungarian think-tank Political Capital Institute, which came out at the beginning of the open phase of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, 15 right-wing parties in 13 EU countries reported a positive attitude towards the Russian Federation and only 3 were negative. One of the popular excuses of right-wingers in EU countries is the desire to restore former glory (see **A sticky web of influence**).

Following the principle of keeping its eggs in several baskets, Moscow simultaneously supports both right-wing and left-wing parties and extreme entities. In Germany, these include the Linke and AfD. The same happened in Greece. When the e-mails of one-time secretary of the Russian Embassy Georgiy Gavrysh were hacked, his efforts to set up a network of influence in that country under the tutelage of Russian chauvinist ideologist Aleksandr Dugin. Over 2008-2013, he established friendly relations with Greek intellectuals and business owners who supported opposite sides at the time – the right-wing Independent Greeks Party and the left-wing Syriza – while also provided support to ultra-right extremists in the Golden Dawn movement who have basically called for a military junta in Greece. In the 2019 election, this party was unable to meet the threshold, but until that time it had boasted nearly 20 seats in the national legislature. In addition, Greek neo-nazis managed to get two seats in the European Parliament. One of the two representatives of the party, Yannis Lagos, cannot leave Greek territory, as he is one of the suspects in the 2013 murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas.

In the run-up to the 2017 presidential election in France, Moscow nearly officially provided a loan for the campaign of Marine Le Pen's National Front. While there are no exact figures for the amount involved, most sources quote €40mn, even though Le Pen herself only admitted to €9mn. At the time, she was having serious financial problems because French banks were rejecting her loan applications, while the European Parliament required her to return nearly €340,000 that she had appropriated by claiming wages for fictive workers at her campaign headquarters. At this critical juncture, Russia came to her assistance and immediately Le Pen's rhetoric began to promise to acknowledge Crimea as Russian and to lift sanctions if she were to win. During the recent Gilets Jaunes protests in France, well-trained men with Russian accents were noticed among the crowds.

A sticky web of influence
Which right-wing parties in Europe support Russia

Map labels: Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Great Britain, Poland, Belgium, Germany, Czechia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece

Country	Party name
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria
Belgium	Flemish Interest
Bulgaria	Attack
Great Britain	British National Party
	UK Iindependence Party
Greece	Golden Dawn
Hungary	Jobbik (Movement for a better Hungary)
Lithuania	Order and Justice
Germany	Alternative for Germany
	National Democratic Party of Germany
France	National Front
Italy	Northern League (The Northern League for the Independence of Padania)
	The New Force
Latvia	Russian Union of Latvia
Slovakia	Kotleba Our Slovakia National Party
Spain	National Democracy
Denmark	Danish People's Party
Czechia	Workers' Party for Social Justice
Poland	Change Self-defense of the Polish Republic

Sources: Alliance for Peace and Freedom, Political Capital, VoteWatch Europe

Russia's relations with Hungary's Jobbik party are equally warm. Jobbik politicians both recognized the March 2014 pseudo-referendum in Crimea and travelled to ORDiLO as observers in equally-fake elections there. Under the leadership of this party, Hungary has continually played the minorities card in relations with Ukraine and used this to block Kyiv's cooperation with NATO. Prime Minister Victor Orban boasts about his friendship with Vladimir Putin and was famously quoted as saying that sanctions against Russia were simply "shooting yourself in the foot." Meanwhile, news has come out that Hungary was planning to buy gas bypassing Ukraine, the number of Russian joint ventures keeps growing, such as the building of the Paks NPP in central Hungary, as are investments and spies. Russia's military intelligence arm, the GRU, has been linked to Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal or the Hungarian National Front, an ultra-rightwing neo-nazi paramilitary organization.

Moscow has been equally active in Italy. Not long ago, Buzzfeed, an American online source, announced that it has recordings of negotiations between Russian businessmen and members of the radical right-wing Lega Nord or Northern League party that took place at the Metropole Hotel. Italy was represented by Gianluca Savoini, close ally and advisor to PM Matteo Salvini. "We want to change Europe," was how Savoini began the meeting. "The new Europe should be closer to Russia, like it was in the past." The Russians, in return, proposed a deal where money from the accounts of oil companies would go through a series of intermediary banks to the accounts of Italy's right wing. The amount of financing was nearly US $65mn. The veracity of the exposure can be assessed variously, given Buzzfeed's reputation, but the close relations between Salvini and his Lega and Moscow cannot be denied. His anti-European rhetoric com-

pletely coincides with the Kremlin narrative about "the end of a unified Europe" or the need to return to cooperation with the Russian Federation. The practical application of these policies can be see in the Italian government's behavior at the international level in its vote to let Russia back into PACE and at the national level with the recent 24-year sentence handed down against National Guardsman Vitaliy Markiv. But unlike Austria, where the revelation of negotiations raised a wave of protests and led to the resignation of the chancellor and Government, Rome remained unmoved. Lega Nord denies that it has received money from Moscow, while Italy's law enforcement agencies restricted themselves to calls for Savoini to be questioned.

In other countries, Moscow's fingerprints can also be found. For instance, one of the main Brexit sponsors, Aaron Banks of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) offered an explanation for the real source of £8mn. Apparently, he was offered a number of lucrative deals for trading in gold and diamonds through the Russian embassy. According to Bild, a German weekly, the right-wing AfD was also paid to sell Russian gold, although the party denies this. Leaders of the Austrian radical right Freedom Party and Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache were forced to resign after a recent scandal involving a video in which he was supposedly discussing with the niece of a Russian oligarch possible government contracts in exchange for Moscow's support. Links to Russian businesses have been found between MPs in the ultra-right Bulgarian party Attack, the Slovak ultra-right National Party–Our Slovakia and the pro-Russian but central-left Harmony party. One way or another, humans have weaknesses and someone can always be found to take advantage of them. In the end, this is also just one dimension of Russia's hybrid war against the West.

Russian nationalism and Ukraine

Roots of Moscow's imperialist policy in Ukraine and Ukrainians' participation in the creation of imperial Russia

Andriy Chutkiy

Participation in the conquest of Siberia. Tobolsk metropolis was headed by Ukrainian thought nearly the whole of the 18th century

The first ever empire in human history emerged in Mesopotamia in 2270 BC. It happened after the highly developed as well as economically and culturally more advanced Sumer civilisation of the South Mesopotamia has been invaded by much backward and less developed Akkadian tribes coming from the north of Mesopotamia. This invasion was further facilitated by an evident internal divide and numerous differences among the Sumers. Founder of this first empire, Sargon the Ancient, had claimed all of the achievements and inventions of the Sumer civilisation as his own in order to strengthen his empire – he has even resorted to including many former Sumer governors or religious authorities into his imperial state structure.

Mesopotamian case has become a classic example for the many upcoming generations of masterminds of global empires. Unsurprisingly so, hence every empire is in a way a cancerous body, a tumour, that can only be kept alive by using the resources and human potential of subjugated units. In other words, this so-called tumour is absorbing and utilising financial, human and cultural resources of the invaded nations, because the invader's strength lies exclusively in its aggression. In this case, not only is aggressor using the human sources of the invaded territories to satisfy its labour needs or build up its army, but it is also actively extracting talented and skilful individuals, who are then trained to strengthen and defend the empire.

Another feature, common for imperial states is the way they emerge, namely when the northern nations migrated to invade nations on the south. In the pre-modern times, when agricultural civilisations were at its peak, the south had more resources and proved to be economically more advanced than the north. We would not be far from the truth if we claimed that the impoverishment of the north has been a consolidating factor for its inhabitants and has prompted those northern nations to invade wealthier and more developed lands of the south. For instance, the last empire of China or the Frankish Empire in early medieval Europe, when the northern frank tribes invaded Gallia and other southern territories, may serve an excellent example of such invasions.

Additionally, it is important to note that in every case of invasion, emergence of empires was followed by a total absorption of the conquered nations' human and financial resources. Therefore, empires essentially became a tool of exploitation of one nation by the other – and later on such practice has been proudly made an official imperial state policy. Therefore every empire, as an exploitative body, is doomed to vanish and they rarely meet its end peacefully or painlessly. In its last days empires are smitten by the desperate war against the ruling nation, waves of violence and liberation struggle at the hands of formerly obedient, conquered states and nations.

UKRAINIANS AS A PART OF IMPERIALIST EXPANSION

Similarly, in case of Eastern Europe, establishment of Russian Empire has been the product of a ruthless invasion by the less advanced and backward northern nations (Muscovites) of the developed south (Rus'). This has become the turning point when Muscovy became an empire, and the conquest and absorption of southern lands of Ukraine-Rus' became crucially vital for survival of Imperial Russia. In Russia's case, the process of its establishment as an empire has been rather long — it started in the second half of the 12th century (after Kyiv was plundered by the armies of the northern Vladimir-Suzdal duke Andrey Bogolubsky in 1169) and culminated in the early 18th century (when Ukraine has lost in its 1709 battle fought by Ivan Mazepa against the Moscow's control of Ukraine).

In fact, it is from this point (even before the Treaty of Nystad with Sweden in 1721) that Peter the Great becomes an emperor. Since then Muscovite Russia has been throwing all of its power and military resources in order to absorb Ukraine – from this time Ukraine becomes of a vital value for the Russian empire.

Ukraine's importance for the Russian empire has been vividly demonstrated by the way the pattern of Russian conquests in Eastern Europe has changed – in 18th century immediate victims of Moscow's territorial expansion included South and Eastern Baltic, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Crimean Khanate, Northern Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Far East and even the far away Alaska.

Unsurprisingly, Ukrainians have also contributed greatly to the establishment of this imperial state. Moreover, Moscow's territorial appetite has grown right after the conquest of Ukrainian territories. One should keep in mind the simple fact that as soon as Ukrainian territories have been integrated into Muscovy (namely, after the diplomatic game orchestrated by Bohdan Khmelnytskiy in the middle of the 17th century), Moscow begins its rapid expansion into Siberia – which, by the way, was explored by the Ukrainian Cossacks.

During second half of the 17th century, the period which is also known as Ruyina (The Ruin) in Ukrainian historical narrative, Moscow carried out its conquests and established its authority in the newly acquired territories with the help of Ukrainians Cossacks, who, ironically, had previously held a strong anti-Moscow stance. This phenomenon should not be immediately judged as a betrayal or collaborationism. Ukrainians, being at that time a deeply religious nation, were thrown into an unknown environment and left out alone thousands of kilometres away from their native lands. In those circumstances, having had no practical ways to keep the ties with their homeland, Ukrainians have quickly embraced the new reality. Now, they thought, it was their duty to protect the interests of Moscow, which, despite their initial disagreements was nevertheless a Christian and an Orthodox state, as opposed to what they saw at that time as the local "barbaric pagan nations". Therefore, former enemies of Moscow such as Ukrainian families of Samoylovychs or the former Ukrainian hetman Petro Doroshenko, as well as hundreds of other Ukrainian leaders, who were forcibly moved to Siberia

Builders of the empire. Sons of the Ukrainian hetman Kyrylo Rozumovskiy Oleksiy and Andriy laded Russian education and diplomatic services

by Moscow, suddenly became vigorous protectors of the interests of the invader.

Absurdly enough, it was Ukrainian religious thinkers, who have not only instituted and imposed Moscow's authority in Siberia, but have also become instrumental in converting native Siberian nations into Orthodox Christianity, and, as a result, automatically strengthening Moscow's domination on those territories. Thought the 18th century Ukrainians chaired Tobolsk metropolis, which included nearly the whole of Siberia. For instance, in 1701 the metropolis was headed by Dmytro Rostovskiy (also known as Danylo Tuptalo), and in 1702 by another Ukrainian – Philophei (Rafayil Boguslavovych Leshchynskiy). Later in 1741 this role has been taken by Arseniy (born in Ukrainian Volyn as Oleksandr Ivanovych Matsiyevych, one of the very few clerics who openly criticised secular policies of Catherine II, and was eventually punished for this). Later this position was held by another Ukrainian, Pavlo (born in Galicia as Petro Kanyuchkevych). All those religious hierarchs convinced many Ukrainian monks to move to Siberia. Their initial intention was to convert local pagan nations into Orthodox Christianity, however, sadly, in reality their efforts resulted only in cementing Russian stronghold in Siberia.

NATURE OF COLLABORATION

There are two important factors that should be mentioned while analysing Ukrainians' collaboration with the imperial authorities. First of all, Ukrainians absolutely were not an exception when it comes to serving an invader – historically, in imperial context described above, this has been a rather

common practice. There were more than few Jewish advisors at the court of Babylonian kings – we can even perhaps even mention the case of Joseph in ancient Egypt. Empires lived as long as this collaboration thrived. It is not a secret that the real potential of imperial centre is always weaker than the accumulative resources of conquered nations – thus the centre lasts as long as those subordinated territories are contributing in order to keep the centre alive. It is only when the conquered nations realise how detrimental the situation is and begin their resistance (and, what's more important, when the amount of collaborators reaches its minimum), empires crack down and disappear, not being able to exist on its own without exploiting the others. This is particularly common for the so-called oriental empires. These empires have been particularly implacable and uncompromising in their fight to retain control over the conquered and any tool to secure their aim was deemed acceptable – harsh repressions, tortures, oppressive policies aimed at wiping off national languages and cultures. They went as far as attempting, and frequently not without success, to modify nations' historic memory and self-identification.

Therefore, Russia's fierce fight over Ukraine is understandable and easily explainable. Moreover, the sole fact that Russia had to stage this fight only proves that, firstly, Russia has been and remains an empire – an oriental, despotic and oppressive empire. Secondly, Russia, as an empire, is not able to exist without Ukraine. The latter statement has been widely acknowledged and supported by the various Russian national ⟩⟩

leaders throughout the history. One must surely remember Lenin's speech, given to the Bolshevik army, heading to conquer Ukraine in 1918. Back then, Lenin claimed that "without Ukrainians wheat, coal and sugar Russian revolution will suffocate".

Secondly, every empire feels the constant need to recruit as many collaborators as possible. Imperial centre does not long for average collaborates – they pick talented, skilful and unique individuals, who are either very well known to the general public or those who wish to become so. They selected the best and they convert them into the servants of an empire. Success of this imperial reached via any available means – bribery, lucrative promises, or the simple manipulation of primitive human instincts, emotions or feelings, such as jealousy, hatred, revenge or even sexual preferences. Empire blatantly promises to fulfil any of collaborates' desires – as long as the best mem-

> EVERY EMPIRE FEELS THE CONSTANT NEED TO RECRUIT AS MANY COLLABORATORS AS POSSIBLE. IMPERIAL CENTRE DOES NOT LONG FOR AVERAGE COLLABORATES – THEY PICK TALENTED, SKILFUL AND UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS, WHO ARE EITHER VERY WELL KNOWN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC OR THOSE WHO WISH TO BECOME SO

bers of the conquered nations agree to loyally serve their new masters.

It is undeniably true that Ukrainians have been eager to do so and turned out to be especially cooperative. They have also assimilated rather quickly, however this can be explained by the long stateless period as a nation – and Ukrainians have fought perhaps one of the longest struggle against the imperial centre in human history - when anyone, who has actively resisted imperial centre was exterminated.

Additionally, Russian authorities have practically bought off Ukrainian political elite in the late 18th century, generously granting them the rights and privileges of the Russian ruling elite. Sometime earlier Russia has seduced Ukrainian Orthodox clergy with promises of protection against "infidels". Orthodox church has become a Trojan horse, that has tragically opened up a door to Russian imperial conquest of Ukraine. This has facilitated practically bloodless extermination of the remaining Ukrainian political autonomy in the second half of 18th century and supplied Russia with a great number of talented military men, governors, diplomats, scientists and artists. Oleksiy

Rozumovsky, the son of the last Ukrainian hetman, Kyrylo Rozumovsky, became the first minster of education of Russian empire. His brother Andriy became a well-known Russian diplomat, one of the key negotiators at on Viennese Congress, an event that have decided on the fate of Europe in 19th century.

MASTERMINDS OF THE IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY
By the second half of the 18th and early 19th century many of those, who were orchestrating the Russian imperialist policies happened to be Ukrainians. These included a well-known diplomat Oleksiy Bezborodko, as well as a high ranking statesman Dmytro Troshchynskiy and many others. Taras Shevchenko, Ukrainian poet, has vividly described Ukrainians' participation in the Russian state machine in his famous poem *The Dream*.

Ironically, the fate has turned Ukrainians into masterminds of the nationalistic and chauvinistic Russian imperial ideology. Feofan Prokopovych, a well-established Ukrainian cleric, who began his career as a fervent supporter of Ivan Mazepa, has quickly switched sides and became a close aide of Peter the Great. Prokopovych, despite being just a cleric and a religious authority, has nevertheless formulated principles of Peter's imperial policies and even rationalised the need to bring the Orthodox Church under the domination of the Russian emperor. Another Ukrainian cleric, Stefan Yavorskiy, has later continued with Prokopovych's policies, which resulted in the creation of a new imperial ideology. It lasted until Russian ideological doctrine was revised in 1917. The fundamental base of this policy included an absolute power of the Russian monarch, who, it was claimed, has divine origin and has been considered the only true Christian monarch on earth. Additionally, Russian Orthodox Church was thought to be the only recognised and legitimate church, subordinated to the emperor. Another key point was creation of the so called "united Russian nation", which, according to the ideologists of Russian imperial doctrine, included all of the Slavic nations conquered by the empire. Later on, Soviet ideologists have gone a step further and included all the nations conquered by Russia into this mythical "united Russian nation".

Therefore the famous imperial doctrine, announced by Valuyev in the 19th century, Russian statesman and propagandist included all the three simplified elements: Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality. Ironically, it was Ukrainians, a conquered, subordinated and defeated nation, who gave life to this nationalistic Russian imperial doctrine. This doctrine would evolve with time, but has nevertheless kept its unique Ukrainian philosophical approach. Russian ideological doctrine received its modern day framework from number of German state advisors deployed by Russian monarchs. Owing to the German influence, Russian empire has absorbed and actively exploited a number of political doctrines that would justify invasions and territorial annexations – hereby the 19th century has become the turning point in this case. One one hand, the turbulent 19th century became an era when colonial powers have been dividing the world, turning smaller and weaker nations into their colonies and creating empires. In order to secure and retain their power, imperial masterminds had to devise an appropriate ideology – quite frequently with heavily nationalistic or even racist implications. On the other hand, the second half of the 19th century became an era of national liberation and anti-imperial struggle undertaken by the oppressed nations. This has pushed empires to look for a way to counterattack and preserve the power.

Therefore, owing to the aforementioned global tendencies, dominant imperial ideology in Russia was transformed into heavily nationalistic doctrine. Russian nationalistic vector was projected into every national and ethnic group of the empire. Such unification became vitally important bearing in mind the fact that even Russians themselves were a conglomerate of various smaller ethnic groups, who only shared common language, religion and territory. The former had triggered numerous assumptions made by academics, that Russians do not exist as a separate ethnic category; others would deny their ethnic origins – for instance, some academics would deny that Russian had any Slavic origins whatsoever. As a result empire desperately felt an indispensable need for the utterly nationalistic ideology.

ATTACK ON THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS
By the first half of the 19th century Russian Empire was shaken by several national liberation movements

Taras Shevchenko and Mykola Gogol. The nature of their dialog with imperial centre has decided on their fate and professional career

and in the early 20th century their intensity has only increased. Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian subjects of the empire have become the most dangerous category for the imperial authorities. Now empire's only way of survival was to create a new, aggressive, overwhelming imperial ideology with a heavily Russian nationalistic aftertaste and recruit as many followers among its subordinates as possible. Additionally, it was hoped that the ideology would also target national liberation movements in the provinces. Therefore, in addition to the traditional propaganda and ideological indoctrination, empire started also recruiting loyal followers who would adopt and preach this new vision of empire.

This strategy has been widely implemented in Ukraine, where imperial interests imminently clashed with the national aspirations of Ukrainians, Poles and Jews. First of all, while many Ukrainians belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church, Poles, who were Catholic, and Jews managed to preserve their national identity. Religious factor has been closely tied to a national self-identification and one should not dismiss this factor even in the 21st century. Secondly, success of the Russian propaganda in Ukraine could be explained by the prolonged Russian presence on the territory of Ukraine and, as well as the fact that Ukrainians have not managed to preserve its statehood on ethnic Ukrainian territories. The former factor have not only aided in exterminating the vigorous defend-

ers of Ukrainian identity and state aspirations, but also eased an access to Russian ideologist who kept recruiting imperial disciples.

Taras Shevcheno and Mykola Gogol are an eye-opening example of such ideological policies. Both were offered various perks and advantages by the Russian imperial authorities, such as well-respected social position, working opportunities and state support for their literal talent – but only on one condition – to serve the empire. Gogol has agreed to those terms, even though later on he has regretted the decision and died early after long period of regret. Shevchenko, on the contrary has dismissed the offer and was cynically punished and forced into exile to Kazakhstan as an ordinary soldier with a specific prohibition "to write or paint", that also caused Shevchenko's early death.

COMPLEX OF DUAL LOYALTY

One needs to mention that Ukrainian intellectual elite has developed a unique complex of double loyalty. Those people have preserved their culture on a local level, they kept their endearment and love for Ukrainian culture, while on the official level they kept speaking in Russian and cooperating with Russian officials. By the mid-19th this complex of dual loyalty became so widespread, that it was described in a novel by Ivan Nechuy-Levytskiy *The Clouds*. It is worth noting that this complex was also common for other, stateless nations in Europe, for instance for various Slavic

nations (including Ukrainians) of Austrian empire, so called austroslavism.

Such a difficult combination was not accepted by imperial Russia, who yearned for an absolute domination over its conquered nations. It was much easier to manipulate people's primitive instincts in return for perks and favours, and as a result Russian imperial authorities earned an army of loyal supporters, who were prepared to preach imperial ideals among masses in provinces. Frequently those supporters were recruited among young people, who were particularly easy to manipulate by means of educations or the military services and had a rather vague moral values or priorities.

Russians, who settled in Ukraine, have naturally become the key players in sharing imperialist ideology. It is important to mention that frequently those individuals, who live outside of their ethnic territory and are being exposed to a different ethnic culture, start acutely feeling their own national belonging. Naturally, many Russians living in Ukraine have not only become aggressively nationalistic but even chauvinistic. This became especially evident, when Russian colonists openly expressed their dislike to Ukrainian culture, mind-set, language and Ukrainians in general.

All this combined has led to constant attacks by the Russian colonisers on Ukrainians. Russians have also imposed their language and culture on Ukrainians. Appearance of the Ukrainian word "moskal" reflects the way Russians were viewed among Ukrainians at that time – as arrogant imperial occupants. Rarely, there were highly educated people among Russians who came to Ukraine as colonisers – their role was specifically designed to increase assimilating policies in Ukraine. Such assimilation was achieved via Russians' access to influential positions in the Ukrainian Church, as well as in education and state administration. At the same time, Russian state gave special preferences and many perks to the Russians willing to move to Western Ukraine and settle there – interestingly, those who were willing to teach Russian for local communities were given special state pension.

However, imperial Russia's task number one was to involve Ukrainians and manipulate them into voluntarily spreading and installing imperial nationalistic Russian ideology in Ukraine. ⬛

Myroslav Skoryk: "I wanted to discover my own unique style. I guess it is a natural thing to do for a composer"

Interviewed by **Yuliya Oliynyk, Hanna Tregub**

In his interview with **The Ukrainian Week**, Ukrainian composer told us about elements of the classical musical piece, about Ukrainian school of composers, as well as connection between public's musical preferences and their erudition.

They say you do not really like composing the symphonies, despite the fact that you yourself is the author of a number of symphonic pieces. How did this happen?

— Once I was interviewed by a magazine. They had to come up with a title — and I jokingly offered them one: "This will be a symphony". I haven't written a single symphony since that time. Not because I couldn't. It was rather because I felt that a large piece, comprising of four large parts, lasting at least 35-45 minutes each does not really relate to the modern understanding of music. Therefore, I decided to try out concertos — a solo with orchestra. I've written ten concertos for violin, three concertos for piano, another two concertos for cello, one concerto for viola and oboe, as well as one concerto for the whole orchestra. Most of these concertos last about 15 minutes, some are slightly longer. I was trying to grant these pieces the same range of emotions that we've earlier had in classic symphonies. When I give out interviews, I am often asked what I do at the moment. I really would not want to answer such questions. Somehow it every time when I slip out some particulars of my work, it either becomes suddenly difficult to work on that specific piece or I just fail to complete it. That is exactly what happened to my promise that "this will be a symphony".

How do you measure success of a large symphonic piece, or let me put it this way — is it even possible to measure such thing at all?

— Success largely depends on the skills and talents of the composer. I am trying to produce quality work; I transform my ideas into feelings, emotions, tensions, worries or distress. It is

hardly possible to fully predict the result of your hard work. Frequently success of the piece is dependent on a number of external factors, such as the orchestra, conductor, acoustics of that exact specific performance hall, mood of the public, you wouldn't believe — even the weather matters.

How well do you know your audience? Would you be able to foretell that some pieces will be well received while other wouldn't? Or do you think your public is unpredictable?

— Yes, I would say sometimes they may be rather unpredictable. On one occasion my piece wars performed at certain concert and it had a very warm reception. After just three days the same piece was performed by the same soloist, the same orchestra, and, surprisingly — it was performed for nearly identical audience. I was expecting a triumph, and instead i failed miserably. From that time onwards, when I sit in a hall and listen to my music, I subconsciously prepare myself for a failure — and it is always a pleasant surprise to have been wrong in that.

If you cannot really foresee what makes the piece a hit, then who are those listeners, who come to listen to your less known pieces? For instance, what about the symphony which you wanted to create. Could you describe us the personality of those people?

— Some of my very serious creations, which I expected to be an absolute hit, did not really have much of a success, and vice versa — the pieces which I dreaded to be intolerable for my audience, turned out be a sensation. They'd ask for an encore — I certainly haven't expected that. The audience may be very diverse, with a very complex mood.

Has your audience ever disappointed you? Have you ever been upset with your listeners? Despite modern turbulent times, the number of people coming to listen to your music does not drop.

— I've been always writing my music for my listeners. I always want to how

PHOTO: YURIY TOTSKIY /@UKR ARTISTS

do they react and how do they feel about my work. I am frequently present at recitals or concerts, and I love to observe conductors and their work, I try to take a closer look at the audience's face expressions. It is not a secret that every composer dreams to see his audience being moved by his music. For an artist it is the highest appraisal and satisfaction.

If we talk about the foreign audience, which of your pieces were received the best? Emotionally, perhaps?

— I try to never distinguish between Ukrainian and foreign public. Sometimes, the impact of my music may be different. Once I held a recital in the Ukrainian embassy in Washington — and a strict, picky and demanding musical critic was present at this recital. He was dreaded by more than few artists and musicians. The next day after the this recital, he published his review in Washington Post, where he admitted that he was swapped off his feet by my music, and despite that it was his first contact with Ukrainian music, he will do his best in order to learn more about it. Needless to say, I was really flattered.

What about the "Spanish dance"?

— This piece was composed as a part of a play called "Stone Lord", written by [Ukrainian writer] Lesya Ukrayinka. Spanish simply adored the play. Additionally, Valeriy Sokolov, a very talented violinist recorded a video, that has received many views on YouTube.

You've frequently written music for theatre and cinema. Was this your shortest way to reach your audience? How did it happen, that your masterpieces became popularised via theatre and cinema, rather then at live recitals?

— This is not entirely true. I've earned my fame after I scored music for the movie shot by Sergiy Paradzhanov, "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors". However, my scoring for "High Pass", a theme which I called "Melody", has been previously performed a lot with various orchestras. During this time "Melody" became very popular and was loved by the public. One of the greatest composers in human history, Giuseppe Verdi, once said that he felt truly popular when his music was performed by a street musician. Not in the slightest am I trying to share some of Verdi's fame, but my "Melody" has been performed in at least 50 different variations. I sometimes hear it be-

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Myroslav Skoryk was born on 13 July 1938 in Lviv. He is Ukrainian composer and musicologist, he has been granted an order of Hero of Ukraine, an honorary title of People's Artist of Ukraine. He is the winner of Taras Shevchenko prize. Myroslav Skoryk has been the co-chair of National Union of Composers of Ukraine in 2006-2010. From 2011 to 2016 he has be the art director of Kyiv Opera House. He is the nephew of Solomiya Krushelnytska and graduate of Lviv Conservatory. He has been teaching in Kyiv Conservatory since 1960s. Skoryk is the author of a number of music masterpieces, including "Moses", an opera, "Carpathian", concerto for spy phonic orchestra, "Melody" for violin and orchestra. He scored music for many plays and nearly 40 movies, including "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" by Sergiy Pazaradzhanov and "High Pass" by Volodymyr Denysenko.

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ing played on the tube. Sometimes, orchestras perform "Melody" as an encore, without even announcing its author.

You've personally witnessed several generations of listeners with different musical preferences. Musical researchers have split your professional career into several periods: neo-folklore, neo-romanticism, neo-classical and so on. Is there anything that surprises you in this pattern? Tell us about the music circles, that you've involved with the most?

— It is true that musical preferences tend to change with time — sometimes very drastically. This surely does have its impact on composer, however, I do believe that composers are ought to have enough backbone and develop their own unique style. This is exactly what i long for. I have to say, I did experience a period in my musical career, when I did not really like romantic music. Tchaikovsky, Chopin and other composer were labelled as the art of "bourgeoisie", which was not seen very well in Soviet Union. Additionally, their music wasn't viewed well on the West either — critics claimed their music was too sentimental, too backward, too boring. We are talking about the time preceding the Second World War. In the early 20th century composers had their heart set on complicating the music harmony. One could clearly notice this from the works of Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartok, Prokofyev, Shostakovich, and Lyatoshynskiy. They were followed by a generation of avant-garde, and then public's preferences changed again. It is almost like it had gone in circles — nowadays Chopin and Tchaikovsky are one of the most popular composers.

Borys Lyatoshynskyy, Ukrainian composer of the first half of the 20th century, has not been known too in Europe. Even today today his name does not always

ring a bell in professional musical circles. Would you say that Myroslav Skoryk, Ukrainian composer of the second half of the 20th century is known better?

— I wouldn't know, you see. We have lived in different times, and as you can imagine it was related to the Soviet Union. As I said earlier, there was a tendency to spice up the musical harmony, in order to make the music more intense. These tendencies were not received well in the Soviet Union. In 1948, Soviet government passed a legislation that would punish composers, who would dare to play around the style. Many people were in danger, many have lost their jobs. I am talking about Shostakovich, Prokofyev, and Lyatoshynskyy. Today Shostakovich and Prokofyev are known better than Lyatoshynskyy. Until certain point those Russian composers were already famous in Europe, but Ukrainian weren't. If we talk about modern musical expression, at that time Ukraine has been suffering some sort of a musical stagnation. Local composers have really criticised Borys Lyatkoshynskyy. Soviet government would not let him travel abroad. His creations were marginalised and pushed away into the furthest corners of Soviet musical scene. Nowadays his music is being revived, appreciated and recognised. In the times of global expressionism Lyatoshynskyy's music was too melodic, while in Soviet Union he was accused of being way too expressionist. It is difficult to grasp this today, but would you believe it — a person was jailed just because he used wrong accords?!

When I've been schooled in Lviv, I studied with Professor Roman Simovych, who himself studied in Vienna and Prague, where he certainly had more freedom in his interpretations. Several Lviv composers were also educated in Vienna or Prague. Their music was interesting, but not too expressionist. When 1948 came, Roman Simovych also had difficulties with »

his work — he was so scared that the Soviet government may find out about his earlier works, which he, it seems, has burnt all of his music sheets, worried that he may be thrown into prison. He was right in his worries — many Ukrainian composers were indeed thrown into prison.

When I studied with him, we fell out at some point, because I had a different understanding and perception of music. I've used several accords which he didn't consider appropriate

COMPOSING IS A TECHNIQUE, WHICH IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE AESTHETIC SELF-EXPRESSION. IF PIANIST CANNOT MOVE HIS FINGERS, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY. HE HAS TO PERCEIVE EVERYTHING AESTHETICALLY. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN TEACHING COMPOSITION IS TO TEACH YOUR STUDENT THE COMBINATION OF TECHNIQUE AND AESTHETICS

for that piece and he has kicked me out of his class. You have to understand — that was how much people were afraid of the 1948 legislation. Soon those times have passed. It seems like public's fear of expressionism is also a matter of the past. Today music of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern will be received differently. Each musical era has its own thing, its charisma, but I am trying to follow my own style. I "fluctuate along with the party line", as they used to joke in the old days.

Your art and emotional perception were, perhaps, influenced by the Lviv musical circles, as well as your subsequent residency in Kemerovo? Did it influence your worldview, as a young artist?
— Sure it did. I commenced my studies in a post-war period, when people still had a fresh memory of Poland and Austria. Lviv had raised a magnificent piano and theory music school. I had a great teacher of solfeggio — Gregory Terletskiy. He is the one, who had practically made me composer, he is the person I owe my interest in melodic phrases to. Before I started my school, I was composing on some short verses from Bukvar [Ukrainian alphabet book]. When i went to school, my relative, Solomiya Krushelnytska, noticed that I had a perfect pitch and she's sent me to a music school. Terletskyy has ordered all the primary school students to compose melodies, on some verse or a play. I have to say, I've mastered this very well. Moreover, he has turned me into a "music ward", who would walk around the room to see if

anyone was singing out of tune. This is how it has all started. When I ended up in Siberia, I had decent teachers over there. One of my teachers was from Moscow, she was convicted and sent into exile in Siberia. Another teacher, from Lviv, was also convicted and exiled. But even there the music culture has been kept at an adequate level. My father had a great interest in music, he looked after me. I remember how once we had an opera troupe visiting us from Ulan-Ude.

They held plays for ten days in a row. My father insisted that i attend every single one of them — it was a way or learning in that environment, and I made a perfect use of it.

Have you ever returned to Siberia, a place where life brought you in your childhood years?
— Yes, indeed — I returned in 1970s. There was an event held in Kemerovo by the Composers Union. At that point I was secretary of the USSR Composers Union in Moscow, so I've inquired if I could come along — and I did. They provided us with a car, and along with several other composers, we've left for Siberia. Kemerovo has had a lot of convicted and exiled artists, but in the school were I studied we only had a class of bayan [Russian accordion] and some ethnic instruments. As far as I remember, we did not even have a piano back then.

What helped you not only to preserve your cultural and aesthetic identity, despite your exile and then your triumph, but to also solidly adhere to your own principles in music?
— You see, there is a problem. It depends on a character. I don't want to praise myself. I was not an easy or

well-behaved child, from an early age I was telling people what I had in mind, I expressed my own opinions. My parents had certain problems because of my character. At the same time, I have never been the person, who regularly gets involved in serious conflicts. I have rarely created idols. It is true, that I do love many different composers, but I have never been fully devoted to any of them. I liked different composers in different periods of my life. I was looking for my own style — I guess for a composer it is a normal thing to do.

Is there anyone, who you would say belongs to your own composing school?
— When I finished my studies in Moscow, I came to Lviv. I've been working there for three years and I've written my "Sonata for violin and piano". Later, in 1963 I was admitted to the Composers Society. At one event I played this sonata with a violinist, Olha Parkhomenko — it was a great success. Rector of Kyiv Conservatory was amazed by this performance and he offered me a job in the capital. In 1966 I became a professor in the department of composition in Kyiv and from that time I've always been active in pedagogy. I did educate a lot of composers: Osvaldas Jonas Balakauskas, Yevhen Stankovych, Ivan Karabytsya, Oleh Kiva, Yaroslav Vereshchahin, Vadym Ilyin, Volodymyr Zubytskiy, Viktor Stepurko, Hanna Gavrylets, Bohdana Frolyak, Volodymyr Kozarenko, Ihor Kornilevych, Mykhaylo Shved, Viktor Telychko, Lesya Horova, Oksana Herasymenko. Many of them became well-known and accomplished musicians.

Since the 1960s you've interacted with and taught many generations of students, who came to you with different sets of skills, taught to them by musical

Spanish Dance
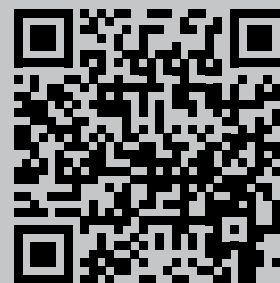
Melody

secondary schools. Has this level evolved somehow? Is there anything that a modern musical education lacks?

— Composing has its own methods, which are followed by nearly everyone. The science of composition is based on a gradual learning of various forms (songs, melodies) and then moving onto more complicated pieces (sonatas, symphonies). I am trying not to influence my students' style, I've never imposed my vision on them and I've never tried to modify their ways of self-expression. I am trying to be more technical. Maybe it is not the right thing to do, but at least all of my students have their own unique self. Composing is a technique, which is closely tied to the aesthetic self-expression. If pianist cannot move his fingers, he won't be able to play. He has to perceive everything aesthetically. The most important thing in teaching composition is to teach your student the combination of technique and aesthetics. Things do not always come easily. Sometimes there are tensions — you wouldn't do without those, would you? Sometimes I am happy about someone's work, and sometimes I am not, because i think they could achieve more. I cannot magically turn those people into geniuses. But I can be a trigger, I can give them an incentive and they have to follow — everything is in their own hands though.

Throughout our conversation today you mentioned several times that at certain historical periods Ukrainian composers were deprived of many ways to express themselves. They were not free to use techniques, which were common elsewhere around the world. Has this isolationism had any impact on Ukrainian music?

— Nowadays everything is open. There are many genres; composers are free to choose whichever they like. Today everything is much simpler — previously everything was difficult, there was only one approved style and everyone had to adhere to it. In Ukraine, during the Soviet times, we had interesting composers who choose a unique route — Lyatoshynskiy, Revutskiy. Today their masterpieces are being brought back to life.

Considering the fact that the overall cultural level in Ukraine remain relatively low and the Ministry of Culture does not always have adequate policies, are you an optimist or pessimist when it comes to the state of culture and art in our country?

— It is fifty-fifty. Yes and no. I'm an optimist, because if composer is talented, he will get through despite all the obstacles. They can go abroad in order to fulfil their ambitions, and not necessarily only to earn some money. But it is hard to be Ukrainian composer, while living abroad. Our diaspora hasn't produced many talented composers.

Do you listen to the modern music? Rap, for instance?

— Sometimes I do, but as it happens I haven't developed much of an interest in it. I did listen to rap though. It seems like a by-product top me or maybe it's my age talking. ⨅

August 15, 20:00

Tal Babitzky (Israel)
Caribbean Club
(vul. S. Petliury 4, Kyiv)

The capital continues to enjoy musical surprise after musical surprise. For the first time, renowned Israeli composer and pianist Tal Babitzky will be performing. One of the world's most active contemporary composers, he has produced seven albums, music for film and television, and large numbers of compositions and arrangements for many artists. Babitzky's personal style set him apart in the music industry. His "Cosmic fusion" is a mix of jazz and pop-rock, beautifully combining romantic melodies and Latin rhythms.
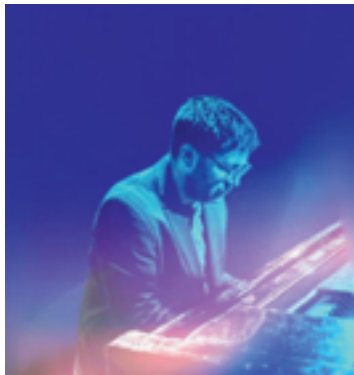
August 17, 19:00

Ukrainian Song Project
Lviv Arena
(vul. Striyska 199, Lviv)

This global music project is not called the "Ukrainian Eurovision" for nothing. This year, it comes to Lviv for the third time. The event gathers the most renowned ambassadors of Ukrainian music in the world: Pianoboy, Antitila, Tartak, Skryabin, Tayanna, Vopli Vidopliassova (VV), and more. The list of this year's headliners promises to be every bit as impressive: just come and see for yourself. The Ukrainian Song Project offers a unique opportunity for visitors to discover new talents and new favorite Ukrainian bands.

August 24, 19:00

Onuka
!FEST REPUBLIC
(vul. Staroznesenska 24-26, Lviv)

Celebrating Independence Day with Onuka will be remembered by Lvivians and their guests for a long time to come. An organic mix of electronic, contemporary pop and Ukrainian ethno-rock brings that quality of sound that you want to hear over and over again. Ukraine's electric bands are known and loved, not just in Ukraine but far beyond is borders, which is one of the reasons why Onuka's concerts always have full houses, leaving fans keen to hear her perform the next time. It's less than two weeks to this concert, so stay tuned!

August 24, 20:00

Okean Elzy
Dnipro Arena
(vul. Khersonska 7, Dnipro)

An ocean of positive energy, favorite songs and rich lyrics will cover the Dnipro with a musical wave. This year, this is the city where this rock band's traditional Independence Day magnum concert takes place. Whether you're a fan or a newcomer to Okean Elzy, this is the event to be at, as it's been nearly a year since the band performed anywhere. All the old and new favorites will be heard in the familiar rock format that fans everywhere have been missing so much. This is the place for a cloudburst of emotions and an enormous, electric charge!

August 28, 20:00

TNMK Sympho Hip-Hop
Platforma Art Factory
(vul. Bilomorska 1, Kyiv)

The idea of a new musical combination—symphonic hip-hop—appeared in Tanok Na Maidani Kongo some 6 years ago. They didn't know then that combining the two would prove so enchanting and become so popular among Ukrainian audiences. Together with the Slobozhanskiy Young Academic Symphony Orchestra of Kharkiv, the band brings listeners an evening of amazing sound and unbelievable energy. Favorites from TNMK's more than 20 years of albums take on a new flavor, so don't miss this last symphonic event, after which TNMK plans to take a long break.

until August 31

"Clothes, people and art"
Folk Architecture
and Lifestyle Museum
(vul. Chernecha Hora 1, Lviv)

Shevchenkivskiy Hai or Shevchenko's Grove is the perfect outdoor-indoor locale for an exhibition of traditional clothing from one of the most colorful parts of Hutsul country that continues until the end of summer. The exhibit includes unique photographs from the family albums of natives of the Kosiv region over the 1930s through the 1950s. Illustrating residents of Verbovets, Stariy Kosiv, Smodna, and Sherhanivka, these photos acquaint visitors with the folk costumes of the area around Kosiv. One of the unique aspects of this exhibition is that the items can be seen by individuals with visual handicaps. "We have arranged for Braille texts identifying items and tactile samples for such visitors," say the organizers.