The Ukraine List #486

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#1
The Illusion of “Terrorism” in Crimea

by Dominique Arel
ZOIS Splotlight (Berlin), 28 June 2017
http://bit.ly/2s1fCGp
http://bit.ly/2teZPa0 (German translation)

Dominique Arel is Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa in Canada

On 19 June, the European Union renewed for another year the sanctions it imposed after the annexation of Crimea. In its original resolution on 13 March 2014, the European Parliament did not mince its words, condemning Russia’s “act of aggression in invading Crimea.” The sanctions, announced four days later, targeted persons and organizations undermining the “territorial integrity” of Ukraine.

Contrary to the war in the Donbas, where Western official discourse is more ambiguous (“destabilisation” rather than “invasion” is the choice word in Donbas-related sanctions), the Western political-legal argument on Crimea has been clear: the unilateral change in the status of the border between Crimea and continental Ukraine is illegal, full stop. The International Criminal Court concurred, ruling that Crimea was de facto under a “state of occupation.”

In his triumphant annexation speech on 18 March 2014, Russian president Vladimir Putin argued that NATO expansion, seen after the 2013-14 Euromaidan protests as looming over Ukraine and the Black Sea Fleet, posed a security threat to Russia. In this view, the invasion of Crimea was a defensive reaction to an ill-advised policy initiated by the West.

In practice, however, Russia has resorted to a different alleged threat – the safety of its civilian kin – as the principle legitimizing its annexation of Crimea. Hours before the Russian Senate vote authorizing Putin to send the army into Ukraine on 1 March, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) issued a curious note claiming that “unknown armed people sent from Kiev” had attempted to storm the Crimean Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), causing casualties. Two days later, the Russian MID, while not acknowledging the presence of Russian troops outside of the Sevastopol base, nonetheless indicated that Russia would defend against “possible attacks by extremists and radical against our compatriots.”

The storming of the Crimean MVD was a pure fabrication. The “possible attacks” never occurred and probably had no chance whatsoever of ever occurring. And yet twenty-three Crimeans have been charged with “terrorism” since the annexation, the most famous being filmmaker Oleg Sentsov. As a disturbing new documentary makes apparent, Sentsov is meant to personify the grave threat that Crimea fell under with the collapse of the regime of former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych, the justification for the

annexation. The film, *The Trial: The State of Russia vs. Oleg Sentsov*, which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival, uses the calm, respectful and captivating voice of Sentsov himself in courtroom interventions, with effective statements by lawyers and his cousin Natalya Kaplan, to tell a harrowing story.

Sentsov, internationally known for a 2011 documentary on computer gaming, was a Euromaidan activist in Crimea who helped besieged Ukrainian troops to evacuate in March 2014. In April, three young men threw a Molotov cocktail in the middle of the night at an empty building housing pro-Russian organizations, causing minimal damage. All three and Sentsov were arrested a month later and subjected to terrible torture, that included chocking and electrocution, to imake them incriminate themselves and Sentsov (they had never met him). Two of them cracked, but Sentsov and self-described anarchist Oleksandr Kolchenko did not.

Based on the two testimonies obtained under duress, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) announced that it had uncovered a plot by the Ukrainian right wing group Right Sektor plot to blow up bridges in Simferopol, Sevastopol and Yalta. Arson, a much less serious charge in Russian law, became "terrorism." Following Soviet tradition, the FSB invented a conspiracy to prove the claim that the annexation preempted violence against Crimeans.

The fabrication follows a political logic. Acceptable changes in state borders have followed three principles since World War II. The first was decolonization, aimed at the overseas territories of France, England and Portugal, a measurable criterion. The second was political paralysis at the center, which sealed the fates of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The third was mass violence against civilians, the principle used to recognize Kosovo, which is far more subjective in its interpretation than the first two, and therefore vulnerable to political disputes.

Russia reactively invoked "genocide" to intervene in South Ossetia in 2008, when there was violence against civilians, and "terrorism" in Crimea in 2014, when there was none. With a better reading of history, Western powers in 2008 could have anticipated that authoritarian regimes are prone to detach subjective assessments of violence from verifiable facts. As for Russia, it could have anticipated that individuals like Sentsov will not break. Quoting Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov in his powerful final testimony, Sentsov stressed that "the greatest sin on earth is cowardice" and that what he wished for those Russians who do not believe state propaganda over Crimea and Ukraine "is that they learn not be afraid."

#2
Kule Doctoral Scholarships on Ukraine
Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa

Application Deadline: 1 February 2018 (International & Canadian Students)
https://www.chairukr.com/kule-doctoral-scholarships

The Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa, the only research unit outside of Ukraine predominantly devoted to the study of contemporary Ukraine, is announcing a new competition of the Drs. Peter and Doris Kule Doctoral Scholarships on Contemporary Ukraine. The Scholarships will consist of an annual award of $22,000, with all tuition waived, for four years (with the possibility of adding a fifth year).

The Scholarships were made possible by a generous donation of $500,000 by the Kule family, matched by the University of Ottawa. Drs. Peter and Doris Kule, from Edmonton, have endowed several chairs and research centres in Canada, and their exceptional contributions to education, predominantly in Ukrainian Studies, has recently been celebrated in the book Champions of Philanthrophy: Peter and Doris Kule and their Endowments.

Students with a primary interest in contemporary Ukraine applying to, or enrolled in, a doctoral program at the University of Ottawa in political science, sociology and anthropology, or in fields related with the research interests of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies, can apply for a Scholarship. The competition is open to international and Canadian students.

The application for the Kule Scholarship must include a 1000 word research proposal, two letters of recommendation (sent separately by the referees), and a CV and be mailed to Dominique Arel, School of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences Building, Room, 7067, University of Ottawa, 120 University St., Ottawa ON K1N 6N5, Canada.
Applications will be considered only after the applicant has completed an application to the relevant doctoral program at the University of Ottawa. Consideration of applications will begin on **1 February 2018** and will continue until the award is announced.
The University of Ottawa is a bilingual university and applicants must have a certain oral and reading command of French. Specific requirements vary across departments.

Students interested in applying for the Scholarships beginning in the academic year 2017-2018 are invited to contact Dominique Arel (darel@uottawa.ca), Chairholder, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, and visit our web site www.chairukr.com.

#3

[The ASEEES Convention has a number of Ukraine papers and panels. The PDF of the program can be downloaded at http://bit.ly/2tl5bAk –UKL]

From: aseees@pitt.edu
Date: Wednesday, July 5, 2017 at 4:19 PM
Subject: [ASEEES] 2017 Convention Program in PDF Available; Board Elections

2017 ASEEES Convention PDF Version Preliminary Program Available

A PDF version of the preliminary program is available, along with the online program: http://aseees.org/convention/program.

Please note that the pdf version was produced on June 15 and will NOT be updated. Please check the online program for the most up-to-date info. Changes to participants or to panel/paper titles should be emailed to aseees.proposal@pitt.edu by no later than Sept. 5. The mobile app will be available in late summer.

#4

French Court Orders Journalist to Retract the Truth about Grossly Misleading Moreira Film on Ukraine

by Halya Coynash
Human Rights in Ukraine, 3 July 2017
http://bit.ly/2spTyVX

Paul Moreira, the author of a French film that falsely calls a tragic fire in Odesa a ‘massacre' and presents an equally distorted picture of Euromaidan and Russia's annexation of Crimea, has won a defamation suit against a freelance Ukrainian journalist. The French court's ruling is all the more baffling as Anna Chesanovska-Jaillard, who lives and works in France, pointed to the same manipulation of facts as many French journalists whose reports Moreira did not decide to claim were defamatory.

Moreira's ‘Masks of the Revolution' was first broadcast on France's popular Canal Plus cable television channel on Feb 1 this year, and prompted widespread criticism. Among those particularly appalled by the film was Chesanovska, as her name had appeared on the credits. She had been asked to translate two interviews, and was therefore uniquely placed to assess how Moreira used these interviews. They were interviews with two far-right politicians – Ihor Mosiychuk and Andriy Biletsky, the former commander of the

Azov Battalion. She was aware of what the men had said during the full interviews, and believes that Moreira created a different impression by cutting bits out.

Chesanovska told the Ukrainian publication Glavkom that it was this that prompted her to write the article, "after all I was the only person who saw the real images, saw the interview without cuts and could compare what there was and what it became".

This was exactly what she told the publication Liberation who posted her response 'Ukraine: "the Masks of the Revolution" or Manipulative Montage' In it, she asserts that Moreira took what he wanted, and omitted what did not fit the impression he was trying to create. For example, Mosiychuk is quoted as talking of the notion of nation, of what is Ukrainian being "like a bond of blood and spirit between the dead, the living and those who are not yet born". Moreira cut out the words where Mosiychuk specifically stated that you do not need to have been born in Ukraine or have 'Ukrainian blood' to be a true Ukrainian.

Since Mosiychuk and Biletsky are presented as representatives of the far-right who, in Moreira's rendition, were the main force of Euromaidan, such omissions are surely significant.

Moreira, however, saw sentences such as the following as defamatory: "Thanks to deft sleight of hand, with sentences cut, tragic music and images of violence, the two men whose interviews I had translated in their entirety, looked like savage creatures, obsessed by stupid and malignant nationalist ideas".

A second article, published in the French Huffington Post a week later, on Feb 9, was entitled 'French author of polemic film on Ukraine accused of plagiarism'. In fact here the author largely reported others' accusations. Ukrainian producer Yulya Serdyukova has indeed accused Moreira of using scenes from her film 'All things ablaze' without seeking permission.

It is unclear how Moreira dared file a suit over the second article. While the court accepted that accusations of plagiarism are defamatory, in this case it could hardly find Chesanovska guilty, and not merely because the journalist had only reported Serdyukova's allegations. It seems Moreira has himself acknowledged a 'mistake' and promised the shots will be removed in future showings of the film.

The court found that there had been defamation throughout the first article, for example, in the assertion that Moreira had consciously edited images and information to present his preconceived view about the supposedly leading role of the far right in Euromaidan and subsequent events.

Since the young journalist has not only been ordered to pay prohibitive damages (around 13 thousand Euro), but must also publicly retract her statements, it is imperative that journalists and human rights groups become involved. Chesanovska was exercising

her right to freedom of speech and expressing views about a film that very many of us consider highly manipulative and misleading. Are we to be forced into silence about gross inaccuracies and manipulative use of footage and interviews out of fear of being found guilty of defamation?

Moreira's film and freedom of expression

There are legitimate limits to freedom of speech. Defamation is certainly unacceptable, yet so too is misleading the public if no attempt is made to rectify incorrect information, nor even to obtain accurate information from the outset.

During the court hearing, Moreira stated that he had made his film after learning of what he called 'the massacre in Odesa on May 2, 2014. He said that he had been shocked at how this event had, in his words, been overlooked.

There was no massacre in Odesa on May 2, 2014.

Disturbances initiated by an attack on a peaceful pro-Ukrainian procession by the Odesa Druzhyna, an anti-Maidan, pro-Russian movement whose members appear to have been paid from Moscow got out of hand. In the street riots that followed, both sides used weapons, including the firearms that killed six people. While it is undisputed that pro-Ukrainian activists then set off for Kulikovo Pole to burn the anti-Maidan tents set up there, and that anti-Maidan activists barricaded themselves into the Trade Union building, the largely Russian-sponsored version of a 'massacre' has been rejected by the non-partisan 2 May Group, the UN Monitoring Mission, and by the Council of Europe's International Advisory Panel [IAP]. All have agreed that with Molotov cocktails being thrown at and from the building, there is no way of ascertaining who caused the fire, which caused the death of 42 anti-Maidan activists. All died either directly from the fire / smoke inhalation, or fell to their death jumping from the windows. Details about Russia's ongoing efforts to push its 'massacre narrative' can be found here.

This is only one of three topics which Moreira gives misleading information about in his film, but it is a telling one, especially given the court's acceptance that there was no proof that Moreira had intentionally manipulated information.

Moreira was aware of the existence of the 2 May Group which began investigating the tragedy within days and whose findings have been cited by the IAP and other international bodies. Moreira's assistant contacted the Group and arranged a meeting. Group member Tetyana Gerasimova recalls that she was startled when Moreira only sought commentary on scenes with members of Right Sector or of police inaction, and showed no interest in learning of the unprovoked attack on a peaceful procession on which many people had come with their children.

The Group members were, like Chesanovska, appalled when they saw the result of Moreira's highly specific 'investigation'. This claimed that "45 Ukrainians of Russian descent died in the fire" with this having been caused by Ukrainian nationalists' Molotov cocktails. It seems that in his debate with two French critics - Ioulia Shukan and Anna Colin Lebedev – he asserted that there had been silence because "the victims were Russian".

Gerasimova rejects this and notes that the only person whose 'Russian descent' is certain was, in fact, Ihor Ivanov, the first person killed that day and a member of the Right Sector Self-Defence unit whom Moreira paints as villains of the story.

Claiming a massacre where there was none is a very serious matter. Where a film director has avoided speaking with those who refute his version, despite their international recognition as experts, and instead interviews people from one side of a conflict, are we really expected to consider this legitimate journalism? This is especially dangerous given that his audience are unlikely to have any background knowledge on the subject.

The court on June 29 concerned itself only with two specific texts. It was, however, aware that the film had elicited strong criticism, and that makes the ruling even more baffling. It may be difficult to prove, as Chesanovska felt, that Moreira had deliberately twisted the interviews she was familiar with. It is not hard to understand why a very large number of French and Ukrainian journalists, civic activists and others have viewed the film in exactly the same light, and here the criticism from Moreira's French colleagues is telling.

Sébastien Gobert, in a blog entitled On "The masks of the Revolution" – and on the ethics of journalism, wrote that he felt "insulted as a French journalist", and pointed to obvious manipulation of information and inaccuracies. Gobert was one of 18 journalists working in Ukraine who signed an open letter criticizing the film. A second, published in Le Monde, was endorsed by writers, intellectuals and one former ambassador. The journalists' letter points to "a series of factual errors", editing manipulation and cuts. Some of these certainly appear deliberate deception of the viewers, for example, the use of unrelated video footage about a far-right torch procession presented as part of Euromaidan.

They were not alone in feeling outraged by the omission of any reference to Russia's invasion of Crimea and Moreira's claim that "after the revolution, Crimeans overwhelmingly voted in a referendum to unite with Russia".

Moreira may not have known that even Russian President Vladimir Putin's own Human Rights Council found that the supposed results had been falsified. It was, however, impossible not to understand that the presence of armed Russian soldiers and paramilitaries might have a direct bearing on the course of such a 'referendum'. This, together with the lack of any possibility of voting for the status quo, the illegality of the whole event and the absence of any observers except politicians from the far-right

or extreme left known for their pro-Kremlin position, was all assiduously ignored by Moreira.

Anna Chesanovska-Jaillard is planning to lodge an appeal, and her lawyer believes that it would be helpful if lawyers from other countries expressed their position on the dangerous precedent set by this court ruling. It would also seem appropriate for journalists and human rights groups to give their assessment of this film, honestly, fairly and without intimidation.

#5
Who Is The Russian Soldier Captured in the Eastern Ukraine

by Evhen Spirin, Serhiy Pyvovarov
Hromadske, 29 June 2017
http://bit.ly/2tnaPk1

The Ukrainian Armed Forces recently neutralized a sabotage-reconnaissance group and captured four people, one of whom was a resident of the Altai region of Russia. He was a member of the "4th separate motorized brigade of the People's Militia of the Luhansk People's Republic." However, according to his social media profiles, he served in the city of Bataysk, in the Rostov region. After military service, he signed a new contract on March 17, 2017 and went to the occupied area of the Luhansk region.

His name is Viktor Ageev.

However, the Russian Ministry of Defence denies this contract soldier's involvement in their military.

With the help of information from open sources, Hromadske has investigated how this soldier came from the Russian region of Altai to the Ukrainian village of Zholobok.

Viktor Ageev, who is now 22 years old, grew up in the village of Parfonovo in the Altai region of the Russian Federation, not far from the Kazakh border.

After school, he graduated from Altai state college having specialized in gas welding, and then went to serve in the army.

During his time in military service in 2015, Viktor Ageev went to the city of Novocherkassk in the Rostov region, where he served in military unit 6542 in the communications regiment.

After finishing military service, he went home to Altai where he arrived on 12 May 2016. However, at the start of March 2017, he signed a contract and went to serve in the reconnaissance group at the base of the 22nd special forces brigade in Bataysk, a city in the Rostov region of Russia.

For a while he would call his mother but on 30 May, the calls stopped. This is the same date he last logged on to his social media profile on the Russian site Odnoklassniki, almost two months ago.

How did he appear in the so-called "LPR" military groupings?

In her comments to the BBC, the mother of the Russian soldier, Svetlana Ageeva, explained that she suspected that her son had gone to fight in Ukraine.

In response to the question of whether her son talked about carrying out military missions in Ukraine, Svetlana Ageeva told BBC: "He implied it. But I was overwhelmed. It seemed that once he was near the border, everything was bad. He said: we learn and learn, work and work."
Those who served with Viktor Ageev also knew that he was in Ukraine. In his letters he said, "Yes, I'm in Ukraine. They pay enough."

In April, Viktor Ageev went to the "4th motorised brigade of the People's Militia of the Luhansk People's Republic." This group is located in the occupied city of Krasnyi Luch in the Luhansk region.

The unit was created from a number of battallions, including the so-called "Batman," "Rusich sabotage-reconnaissance group," "Odesa," "Vityaz," and "Lyeshyy" batallions, amongst others. The leader of the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic,'" Igor Plotnitsky, wanted to bring all the separate battalions under his control. So, they killed everybody who refused to join the "people's militsiya" (police). For example, Oleksiy Byednov, who was the head of the "Batman" rapid action team, was killed on January 1, 2015. Now the brigade consists of three motor rifle battalions, a tank battalion, brigade artillery group and reconnaissance officers. It is now the second battle-ready brigade in so-called "LPR" militants.

So he went from Krasnyi Luch to the contact line near the village of Zholobok (also in Luhansk region) to carry out "a task."

From there he posted several photos in April, where he was holding a sniper rifle and a Russian intelligence flag. However, at that time he was already wearing a "LPR" uniform.

What happened to him and other militants?

As a result of a fight near Zholobok, in the Luhansk region, several militants of the so-called republic from Ageev's unit were killed. A Russian captain, Oleksandr Sherbak, appeared to be the head of the unit.

This is according to the colonel of the 93rd Mechanized Brigade (Ukraine), Vladyslav Klochkov.

Ageev, along with a machine gunner, a combat engineer and a sniper were taken prisoner.

Right after that, the so-called spokesperson for the "LPR milityiya" (police) Andriy Marochko made a statement calling Ageev and three other prisoners "cadets of the Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs (Ukraine)." When Ageev's military registration card, which confirmed his Russian affiliation, went public, the so-callled "LPR" made a new statement.

"Ukrainian soldiers circumvented and killed four people, who were delivering groceries. They also kidnapped four other people. Now they are pressuring them to confess that they are Russian soldiers," claimed Marochko.

He also stated that none of the militants are Russian citizens, and the documents "are counterfeit."

According to the spokesperson for 93rd Mechanized Brigade (Ukraine), which took part in the operation, three of the four captured were locals.

"The most interesting person is Ageev, he's from Altai Krai, the others are locals. They had documents: passports and tickets. I don't know where are they now - apparently in Kyiv," he told Hromadske.

"The case will be opened. We've done our job, we don't know the rest. We handed the prisoners over to SBU and Military Prosecutor's Office, we have drawn up reports," he added.

According to him, they didn't take the bodies of those killed, but left them there. "We didn't take the dead bodies from the place where we captured those four. We left their bodies there," Sytnyk said.

The militants of the so-called republic also published photos of killed members of Ageev's unit and stated that "they were tortured."

At the same time, the spokesperson for 93rd Mechanized Brigade (Ukraine) disproved this information.

"I saw those photos. They could be stab wounds, but if they were inflicted on a living person, there would be much more blood. And also, you saw that people were wearing

bulletproof vests, they had weapon - an automatic weapon, recoilless gun - how could somebody have touched them alive? Do you really think they would have let Ukrainian soldiers near them? Why did they have hematomas? The bullets hit their bulletproof vests, so the protection plates would have left the hematomas," he told Hromadske.

After Ageev's mother received this information, she appealed to the military base, but they did not comment.

And, on June 28, the Russian Ministry of Defense denied Ageev's affiliation with the Russian army.

The Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia called the statement of Russian Ministry of Defense "a dirty trick."

"The meanest thing Russia's doing now via its Ministry of Defense is rejecting its own soldiers. We've been working for 29 years, but we have never experienced such behaviour during any of the wars - in Afghanistan or in the former Soviet Union. Now it happens quite often," the head of the Committees, Valentyna Melnykova,told news agency Echo of Moscow.

#6

Marta Havryshko: In the ATO Zone, Women are Often Sexually Abused by Soldiers, but Refuse to Speak Out

by Iryna Slavinska and Viktoriya Yermolayeva
Euromaidan Press, 5 July 2017
http://bit.ly/2uuaOWN

Ukraine ranks 55th out of 159 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII). And since the outbreak of the war in the East things have only changed for the worse as violence and sexual abuse against women has flourished over recent years.

Marta Havryshko, Candidate of History, Junior Researcher at the Krypyakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies. Studies the history of women and gender issues in the historical context of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the 1940-1950s and their resistance to Soviet authority. Her sphere of interests: gender aspects in OUN and UPA, nationalism and feminism, gender-based violence, everyday life in history, oral history, and sexual violence during the Second World War.

Ms. Havryshko recently presented a report on "Violence in the ATO Zone", in particular "Violence against Women".

Iryna Slavinska: Is there gender-based violence in the ATO zone?

Marta Havryshko: It's very difficult to study and properly investigate this subject. When we started our research project, it concerned a wide range of roles that women have played in the war in Eastern Ukraine. I refer specifically to women soldiers and volunteers, internally displaced women, women who deliver assistance, nurses and medics, women who transport prisoners and the wounded...

Last and this summer, we recorded 38 interviews with various women of different ages representing different regions of Ukraine. One of the problems that we tried to investigate more thoroughly was the question of gender-based violence.

Iryna Slavinska: Do women speak openly about sexual abuse and violence?

Marta Havryshko: No, women usually keep silent. We're trying to create a safe space for them, that is, we don't record the interviews directly in the ATO zone where their units are deployed as in most cases, women are sexually abused by different-level commanders, as well as their colleagues... both men and women.

When we talk about violence, there's often a third party involved. One woman told me about the time she had to sleep in the dugout... a drunken soldier came to her near midnight, and tried to force her. She managed to push him out of the dugout, but three hours later he returned, grabbed her leg with one hand, closed her mouth with the other and tried to rape her. She managed to get loose, and got help from the guys who were nearby.

But, I'd like to point out that other soldiers will help only if the offender doesn't occupy a high position, that is, the men are afraid to act against or accuse their superior officers.

I can cite very many cases... For example, we have the story of a woman who managed to escape from the clutches of the commanding officer, but the girls who had already been abused by the same man decided to take revenge on her, so they beat her so terribly that she lost the child she was carrying. Moreover, the woman who reported this incident and provided that poor woman with medical assistance was punished by her commanding officer... she was deployed for a month to the front lines without food. She told us that it's very difficult to resist this kind of violence because it's taboo and no one wants to talk about it.

In addition, during war, human rights and personal integrity play a minor role in comparison with feelings of solidarity, brotherhood and everyday human losses. This taboo carries negative and compromising information about their "brothers", so women often refuse to report it. Moreover, women who want to pursue a military career understand that such a report may endanger promotion and their future in the army.

Viktoriya Yermolayeva: Have you seen any official reports?

Marta Havryshko: Yes, I saw a report about a woman who was violently raped. It should be noted that this woman has been under a lot of pressure. Many people knew about this matter, because she immediately submitted a report so it was impossible to conceal this matter, despite the fact that the rapist tried hard to hide the facts. After raping and abusing her, he simply washed her body so that there would be no trace. But, he beat her a lot, and the stark bruises on her face testified to the fact that she had resisted. She filed a claim; she was supported by a close male friend, who was then beaten by some strangers, and she was forced to suspend her claim. That case became public and hit mainstream media; several deputies knew about it. But, a year has gone by, and nothing's happened. The guilty party hasn't been punished... as a matter of fact, the case hasn't even been filed yet.

Of course, gender-based violence is committed by both warring sides and we have reports confirming such facts from people residing in border villages and along the contact line. The victims are afraid of publicity, so all our interviews are done in secret.

It's very important that such women get psychological assistance, which is sorely lacking in our country. This woman can't sleep, takes antidepressants that won't help her at all, she thinks going to see a psychologist is completely useless, her husband left her and she's in the middle of a divorce. So, I firmly believe that such things should be discussed more openly. We need to talk more...

After all, the women who are in the war zone are highly motivated, so, in addition to crazy official obstacles, insurmountable bureaucracy and gender discrimination, why should they have to face other forms of violence?

#7
Brothers in Arms

by Leonid Ragozin
Coda, 29 June 2017
http://bit.ly/2tRBlFn

Leonid Ragozin is freelance journalist based in Riga, Latvia

Why Russian ultranationalists confronted their own government on the battlefields of Ukraine

On a snowy January day in 2016, a small crowd assembled in central Kiev to honor the fight against the far right. The gathering of diehard anti-fascists was commemorating the 2009 murder of the Russian lawyer Stanislav Markelov, who'd defended activists and victims of the Russian military, and the Ukrainian journalist Anastasia Baburova, who'd investigated neo-Nazi gangs.

As they unfurled banners in memory of the pair, a group of young men confronted them. In footage posted online, the men, many of them masked, identify themselves as members of the Azov Civic Corps, a Ukrainian ultra-nationalist movement linked to a regiment fighting Russian-backed rebels in the east.

An unmasked Azov member, sporting a strap-like beard across his chin, begins arguing with the crowd. Like most people in Kiev, he speaks in Russian — but his accent is distinctly Muscovite. He refers to the murdered lawyer as one of the "scumbags" responsible for imprisoning his friends. Someone in the crowd responds: "But is it OK to kill people because of their political views?"

"Of course it is OK," the bearded man says. "If these views contradict the interests of the nation, they should be uprooted." Although he does not mention any nation in particular, he refers to Russian soldiers as his "blood brothers" and condemns the murdered lawyer Markelov as a "Russophobe."

The left-wing activists appear puzzled. Their public assemblies had always risked clashes with their homegrown opponents, the Ukrainian ultranationalists. Yet here they were in their capital, Kiev, amid a war with Russian-backed forces, quarreling with a Russian agitator somehow aligned with the Ukrainian far-right.

Internationalist Ultranationalism

The man's name is Roman Zheleznov, and he is indeed a Russian citizen. He is also an ultranationalist who idolizes the neo-Nazi gang-leader convicted of murdering the lawyer and the journalist. Many of his fellow ultranationalists from Russia have, predictably enough, backed the pro-Russian rebels in their war with Ukraine.

But Zheleznov is part of a Russian contingent that has wound up on the opposite side, joining the Ukrainians fighting against the rebels. Their exact number is hard to confirm, as they keep a low profile. Zheleznov puts it at 200, while others speak of several dozen. These Russians are, in effect, battling a proxy military force that is sustained by their own government and that includes their former comrades from the far right. But their brand of nationalism cuts across national borders. In this sense, they are paradoxical figures — "internationalist" ultranationalists.

Their journey can be traced to the Russian far right's complex relationship with their country's institutions and with similar groups in Ukraine. Most of the Russians who champion the Ukrainian cause began their careers with ultranationalist gangs back home. These gangs had powerful sympathizers and at times enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with officialdom, advancing its aims and battering its opponents. In return, they seemed to receive immunity from prosecution and access to resources.

While individual gangs have periodically supported official causes, the Russian far right as a whole has remained independent of the state. Perhaps inevitably, gangs that have served

the authorities have, at other points, run afoul of them. Their involvement in violence and criminality has made them easy targets for prosecution when this relationship goes sour.

During crackdowns at home, many gang members have sought shelter in neighboring countries, including Ukraine. In doing so, they have exploited — and strengthened — existing links between the region's various far-right groups. These are ties that have typically been forged online and on foreign visits, with like-minded individuals mingling at skinhead concerts, summer camps and soccer matches.

When the war broke out in Ukraine in 2014, Russian ultra-nationalist gangs constituted a powerful and unruly street movement.

They enjoyed contacts with a network of similar groups abroad, and while many had served the Russian government's aims, their collective loyalty to that government could not be taken for granted. Their role in the Ukraine conflict would therefore be far from straightforward.

The war gave a huge boost to President Vladimir Putin's domestic popularity — and sent fissures through the far right. Many ultranationalists expressed their support for Putin and the pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine. Others supported these separatists but would turn against Putin. Most notable among them was an ultranationalist former security officer, Igor Girkin, known as Strelkov. He had ignited the uprising in eastern Ukraine but swiftly fell out with the Kremlin and has recently called Putin a "prostitute who can't choose between her American and Chinese client."

Other ultranationalists, like Zheleznov, would defy Putin as well. They looked to the Ukrainian far right as their true comrades and to Ukraine itself as a platform for challenging the Kremlin.

Since 2014, the Russian authorities have prosecuted hundreds of ultranationalists, suspecting that they sympathize with the Ukrainian enemy. "Nationalists are the best organized opposition group in Russia," says Aleksandr Verkhovsky, an expert on political extremism at Moscow's Sova think tank. "So I'm not surprised the authorities are clamping down on them." He says the latest crackdown has been "harsher than on any other political force in Russia," except the Islamists of the banned Central Asian Hizb ut-Tahrir group.

Under pressure, Russian ultranationalists have continued taking sides. For those who oppose the Kremlin, Ukraine occupies a place like the one once held by Syria in the jihadist imagination. It represents a test of loyalties, a revolutionary ideal, an escape from troubles at home, and a chance to gain battlefield experience with one's comrades.

If any of this is a surprise, it is because of the way the war has been reported in both the West and Russia. For many in Europe and the U.S., the conflict in Ukraine has shown Putin to be the very embodiment of Russian nationalism. The president's actions in

Ukraine have indeed boosted his standing among many nationalists at home. He does not, however, have their universal support. This Western understanding of Putin fails to explain how the conflict in Ukraine can pit his opponents, such as Zheleznov and Strelkov, against each other.

Meanwhile, Russia's propaganda has portrayed the country's adversaries in Ukraine as neo-Nazis, striving to avenge historic defeat by the Soviet Union. The conflict has emboldened Ukrainian groups with fascist tendencies, catapulting their leaders into military and political roles. Yet they have fared poorly in elections, and depend on oligarchs and mainstream politicians for support. The Russian view, too, is unable to explain how Ukrainian nationalism has ended up attracting Russian ultranationalists, such as Zheleznov.

Both the Russian and Western narratives are incomplete. If figures like Zheleznov appear self-contradictory, it is because they do not fit into either of them.

"A Racist"

The Kiev confrontation ended abruptly. The ultranationalists heard a quick speech from their Ukrainian leader, joined him in a chant of "Sieg Heil," and marched off into the snow.

The online footage captures the curious mood of the encounter — the bemusement of the left-wingers and the bravado of their antagonists. At one point, Zheleznov is filmed teasingly pulling an anti-fascist activist's hat over his eyes. Seconds later, smiling, he cocks his fingers and mimes shooting the activist in the head.

As a teenage neo-Nazi in Moscow, he did it for real. During a routine street fight with anti-fascists, he fired a shotgun at the back of another man's head, earning his first prison sentence. His victim, struck by rubber pellets at close range, was lucky to have survived. "He's got a solid skull so he wasn't even crippled," Zheleznov recalls with a smile when we meet in Kiev, three weeks after the filmed encounter with the left-wingers.

Born into Moscow intelligentsia, Zheleznov proved to be a bright student, skipping a grade at secondary school. He took a keen interest in history and classical Russian literature, and says he entered the nationalist subculture through heavy metal and punk music, rather than through the well-trodden route of soccer hooliganism.

In 2009, the year he first went to jail, he also graduated with a bachelor's degree from Moscow's elite High School of Economics. As he approaches 30, he has a boyish smile and narrow eyes. He pays close attention to his clothes, revealing a penchant for tweed caps and Harrington jackets, popularized by British mods and skinheads.

Asked to spell out his politics, Zheleznov says that he is, "first and foremost, a racist." But he adds that out of all political systems, he prefers democracy.

Confused, I ask him what he thinks of Adolf Hitler, whom he has praised in online posts. "Hitler was a great man, and I would be proud if I could at least partly follow in his historic path," he says.

Zheleznov's updates on the Russian VKontakte social network include quotes from Mein Kampf and references to National Socialism.

One post is laced with dark sarcasm about Babi Yar, a prominent Holocaust site in Kiev that is being revamped by Jewish groups following years of neglect. The occupying Nazi army massacred some 34,000 Ukrainian Jews at the woodland location over the course of two days in 1941.

During the entire occupation, some 100,000 people would be killed at Babi Yar, including Jews, Roma Gypsies, and Soviet soldiers. "If not for World War II and the German occupation of Kiev, Jewish organizations would never have gentrified the park," Zheleznov writes. "Which is another way of saying: Thank you to everyone involved."

From Russia with Azov

Our meeting place is a quiet café near Kiev's Independence Square, better known as the Maidan, the scene of the 2014 protests against President Viktor Yanukovych that precipitated the conflict with Russia. The protests were triggered by the president's decision to abandon an agreement with the EU in favor of closer ties to Russia.

When the unrest broke out, Zheleznov was serving a second term in a Russian jail, this one for shoplifting. By the time he was released, the protests had become a revolution. He tried to enter Ukraine, succeeding on his second attempt after receiving the support of powerful figures that were assembling a volunteer force to defend the eastern port city of Mariupol from the Russian-backed rebels. The force was named the Azov Battalion, after the nearby Sea of Azov, and it would soon grow to the size of a regiment.

The Azov Battalion was cobbled together in desperation to step in for Ukrainian military units that had been wrong-footed by the rebels. Its core members were known to the authorities for their capacity for violence. They were plucked from a thriving ultranationalist milieu, comprised of gangs of soccer hooligans, or ultras, as well as a large far-right organization, Patriot of Ukraine.

Along with Right Sector, another volunteer force run by Ukrainian ultranationalists, the Azov Battalion would become a magnet for fighters from neighboring countries. Best known among those was the regiment's head of reconnaissance, Sergey Korotkikh, nicknamed Malyuta after a murderous henchman of Ivan the Terrible. In his native Belarus, Korotkikh had been a member of Russian National Unity, an organization that sought to restore the Russian empire to its old borders. He would later move to Moscow and launch a neo-Nazi organization there, only to flee in 2007 after being implicated in a bombing near the Kremlin. No one was hurt in the attack.

Korotkikh was granted citizenship by the Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, in December 2014. The televised ceremony caused some embarrassment to the Ukrainian authorities, who appeared unaware of their newest citizen's colorful past.

"When you are defending your country, you welcome everyone who can help," says Olexiy Kovzhun, a PR consultant who has been steering Azov toward the mainstream. "The last thing you'd ask is whether they have good relations with their families, whether they love their mothers and treat their pets well." He wears a Star of David prominently around his neck, a mark of his Jewish identity that also serves as a symbolic riposte to the claims of intolerance and anti-Semitism swirling around the Azov regiment.

Kovzhun says the Russians on the Ukrainian side were also valued for the role they could play in the information war between the two countries. "We needed to create an alternative perspective for the Russian audience," he says. "We needed a few Russian pairs of eyes on our side."

Over time, the Azov regiment's battle-field victories, backed by a slick PR operation, have attracted a cult following beyond its far-right base. Its ranks today include fighters from all over Ukraine as well as the U.S., Western Europe, and the former Soviet Union, not all of whom necessarily share the ultranationalists' convictions.

Racial Nationalism

Zheleznov presents his journey to the Ukrainian side as a rebellion against the Kremlin. He describes the nationalism of his Ukrainian comrades as a model for Russia because it's ideologically purer.

Zheleznov's views are echoed by other ultranationalists who have sided with Ukraine. They oppose the migration from Central Asia that has propped up the Russian economy with cheap labor. They dispute the nationalist credentials of a Putin administration that has encouraged that migration. And they view Ukraine as a lever for changing the administration.

Verkhovsky, the expert on extremism, says Putin is a nationalist in the imperial sense — he invokes an idealized Russian past. However, he says, many on the far right are nationalists in the racial sense — they invoke an idealized Russian ethnicity. Where Putin views Ukraine as part of Russia's historic domain, many ultranationalists regard Russians and Ukrainians as ethnic kin — especially compared to migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia. "Blood means more to them than empire," Verkhovsky says.

Zheleznov's past shines a light on the ultranationalists' murky dealings with the Russian authorities and their links to Ukraine. His contact list is a who's who of the far right in Russia, including many individuals who are currently incarcerated.

While still in his teens, Zheleznov began compiling a database of anti-fascist activists, hoping this would make it easier to ambush them where they lived. He says this database attracted the interest of the aides to a pro-Kremlin legislator, and he eventually gave them some of the information he had collected.

According to Zheleznov, his contact with the aides had been brokered by Ilya Goryachev, the co-founder of Born, a notorious Moscow ultranationalist gang. Goryachev was believed to have friends in high places. In media interviews, he claimed he was trying to build a broad nationalist movement curated by the government. Born's political wing, Russky Obraz, staged joint actions with pro-Kremlin youth groups, helping to marginalize and suppress the liberal opposition. At subsequent trials involving Born members, witnesses and suspects said Goryachev had been in frequent contact with senior figures in the Russian parliament, the presidential administration, and pro-Kremlin movements. These statements correspond with other accounts of official dealings with the far right, in which employees and associates of the Kremlin seem to act with autonomy, providing their bosses with a degree of deniability.

The gang's name — thought to have been inspired by the Matt Damon character in the Bourne spy films — is an acronym for Combat Organization of Russian Nationalists. The gang was co-founded by Nikita Tikhonov, who would eventually be convicted of the murders of the lawyer, Markelov, and the journalist, Baburova. The gang was also responsible for killing anti-fascist activists, foreign migrants, a federal judge, and a boxing champion from the North Caucasus. They beheaded one of their victims, a Tajik laborer, and sent the photos to news organizations, hoping to sow fear among Central Asian migrants. Both Goryachev and Tikhonov have been jailed for life in Russia, while other members of the gang are serving long prison sentences.

The trial of the Born members also revealed their links with Ukraine. Tikhonov turned out to have been living there to avoid murder charges in Russia, before returning to kill Markelov and Baburova. The two gang members accused of beheading the Tajik migrant also fled to Ukraine.

Zheleznov emerged from his first prison term after two years, a rising star of the far right. He was recruited by perhaps the most prominent Russian neo-Nazi of the time, Maksim Martsinkevich. Also known by his nickname, Tesak, meaning "The Hatchet," Martsinkevich was as much a showman as a militant. He was even featured on Russian TV shows and on the British documentary series, Ross Kemp on Gangs. He appointed Zheleznov as PR man for his new organization, Restruct, which became known for harassing people whom it claimed were pedophiles — though most of them, Zheleznov now admits, were just "regular gays."

In a typical operation, Restruct would use teenage recruits, posing online as male prostitutes, to lure its victims. Once a meeting had been arranged, Restruct members would arrive at the scene and subject the victim to a prolonged and humiliating ordeal, bordering on torture.

The attacks were filmed and uploaded to sites such as YouTube. One episode features Martsinkevich using a stun gun to threaten a naked man seated in a bathtub. His victim is forced to drink from a bottle containing what appears to be urine, before being ordered to empty its contents onto his own head. Restruct carried out a similar campaign against alleged drug dealers.

Although these attacks were clearly illegal and widely publicized, they did not invite immediate prosecution. They were instead believed to enjoy the tacit support of the authorities, coinciding as they did with the rightward swing in the Russian administration.

Thus Martsinkevich appeared on government-controlled TV stations as an expert on pedophilia, and was interviewed by presenters who seemed supportive of his views. For his part, Martsinkevich helped reinforce the government's propaganda against its critics by linking them to the alleged pedophiles. In the bathtub episode, he forced his victim to greet the leaders of Russia's liberal opposition by name.

The law eventually caught up with Restruct in one of the periodic crackdowns on the far right. Martsinkevich fled to Cuba but was extradited to Russia in January 2014 and sentenced to five years for the "pedophile" attacks.

By this point, Zheleznov had fallen out with Restruct over tactical issues. In May 2013, he was arrested and jailed once again, this time for stealing a piece of beef from a supermarket. He claimed he was framed by the police, but Restruct was known to advocate shoplifting as a sideline to the homophobic attacks that formed its core mission.

What Next?

For both parties in the Ukraine conflict, the ultranationalists have played a dual role, serving in the trenches and starring in the propaganda. They have been portrayed as valiant patriots and as murderous fanatics, depending on which side they were facing. Yet some of this propaganda has also spun out of control, inadvertently undermining its original purpose.

In early 2014, the Kremlin exaggerated the role of Ukrainian neo-Nazis in the Maidan protests, hoping to discredit the uprising. The reports helped polarize the Russian far right by casting the looming conflict as a turf war between ultranationalists. As the war got underway, some of the Russians joined the Right Sector and Azov, hoping to confront their own government. Others joined the rebels, hoping to defend it.

Both groups pose problems for their masters. The Russian neo-Nazis fighting alongside the rebels have undercut Russian propaganda that sought to identify the Ukrainians exclusively with the neo-Nazis.

The Azov Battalion has also tried to play down its early reputation as an international brigade for ultranationalists. While that image attracted recruits, it also brought scrutiny from Ukraine's allies. In 2014, after a series of critical reports in the international press, the U.S. Congress explicitly banned Azov from acquiring any of the funds it had allocated for the Ukrainian military. The ban would be quietly lifted a year later as the regiment was incorporated into the Ukrainian military and its ultranationalist leaders began to be replaced by regular officers.

While the Azov regiment retains its original logo and many of its original personnel, its ultranationalist commanders have shed their uniforms to enter the upper echelons of politics and administration. Its founder, Andriy Biletsky, has resigned to become a member of parliament. His former deputy, Vadim Troyan, has become the head of the Ukrainian police. The Azov Civic Corps — whose members confronted the anti-fascist gathering in Kiev last January — has become a political party, calling for Ukraine to develop its own nuclear weapons and replace prison terms with hard labor or capital punishment. The party, led by Biletsky, also wants Ukraine to reject the EU in favor of a regional union with Belarus and the Baltic States.

The far right's entry into national politics has divided Ukrainian liberals. Can institutions rein in the extremists even as they use these groups as a check against other dangerous forces? Or is this part of a normalization process, whereby extremist views become mainstream?

Many Ukrainians who would not describe themselves as ultranationalist have accepted that ultra-nationalist language and imagery have a place in public life, at least during a time of war. Online, some have adopted these signs and slogans simply as way of defying and trolling Russians.

The Russian authorities, too, may eventually have to reckon with the forces unleashed by the war in Ukraine. Ultranationalists on both sides have come to view the conflict as a landmark on the road to ultimate power.

In a recent VKontakte exchange on the subject of tactics, a seasoned neo-Nazi, under the alias Walter Weiss, summed up the far right's long game in both Ukraine and Russia.

"Climb the social ladder, pull up people with similar convictions," he advised. "If you demonstrate results...you can obtain supplies and support from above, which means you have an opportunity to change the system from within."

#8
Trump's Opportunity to Arm Ukraine

by Stephen Blank
Wall Street Journal, 30 June 2017
http://on.wsj.com/2t8vNmK

Mr. Blank is a senior fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council.

President Trump's trip to Poland next week is an exceptional opportunity to reassert U.S. leadership and American greatness. In Warsaw Mr. Trump can reaffirm the U.S. commitment to European security by giving Ukraine the weapons it urgently needs to defend itself against Russia's continuing aggression.

Russia's violations of the 2015 Minsk II accords grow daily in both number and intensity. Moscow has reconstituted four armies on Ukraine's borders, rebuilt the Black Sea Fleet, created a powerful antiaccess and area-denial bubble in the Black Sea, militarized Ukrainian energy installations there, and prepared the logistical infrastructure for a major war with Ukraine, including potential amphibious operations in the South. It is building nuclear bunkers in Feodosiia and Sevastopol. The Russian military clearly regards large-scale, protracted conventional war, backed by mounting nuclear threats, to be a real possibility.

Vladimir Putin believes that he is already at war with the West, even if shots are not yet being fired. How else to explain repeated overflights of Europe, close encounters with U.S. and other NATO naval and air forces, election subversion in France, Germany and Holland, massive information-war campaigns throughout Europe that coincide with continued hacking against America's political system?

Though Mr. Putin occasionally praises Mr. Trump, his actions demonstrate that he is contemptuous of the American president-and of U.S. resolve.

The Obama administration's strategic dereliction compounded the Russia problem. Mr. Trump's trip will be closely watched as a sign of his willingness to advance U.S. and European security. Giving Ukraine weapons that can meet Russia's threats-counterbattery radars, armored vehicles, antitank weapons, secure communications gear, reconnaissance drones, antilanding weapons like shallow water mines, and training and intelligence support-can help deter Russian aggression while solidifying American leadership of NATO.

Arming Ukraine would keep faith with American policies dating back to President Harry Truman to support free peoples against aggression. It would enhance U.S. leadership and resolve. Moreover, it would communicate those attributes globally and create, as Ronald Reagan's policies did, a real basis for future dialogue with a Russia deprived of the

means of aggression. A public show of helping Ukraine would also turn down the heat domestically. Mr. Trump's persistent critics would be forced to credit him with resisting Russia in support of American interests.

Arming Ukraine and shoring up NATO can't be the end of it. Congress must expand and extend sanctions while passing legislation to counter Russian information warfare. Perhaps the most direct way to impose costs on Russia is to increase American energy exports to Europe.

Mr. Putin won't like any of it. His goal all along has been to sow chaos in the West and diminish NATO's influence on his doorstep. Paradoxically, he is forcing Mr. Trump to play a bigger role in Eastern Europe than the U.S. president wants to. If Mr. Putin moans about it, Mr. Trump should deliver a strong, simple message: You brought this upon yourself.

While in Warsaw, Mr. Trump will have a rare opportunity to do the right thing and demonstrate American greatness in action. For our freedom and for Europe's, he should not miss that opportunity.

#9
War in Ukraine Was Years in the Making

by Vera Zimmerman
Atlantic Council, 3 July 2017
http://bit.ly/2uK7ta8

Vera Zimmerman, a UkraineAlert contributor, is an independent research analyst and translator of Russian, Ukrainian, and English.

Ukraine is the only country in the world that has ongoing experience with a hybrid war—a simultaneous and adaptive military strategy that blends conventional and non-conventional means. As a result, it offers valuable lessons that could help the West better understand emerging threats. In the last three years, Ukraine has found itself drawn into the burgeoning confrontation between an insolent Russia and a timid West. Taken by surprise, violated, and robbed by a neighbor who for decades touted the historical and ethnic ties between them, Ukraine was forced to quickly mobilize its scarce resources and learn how to fight a sophisticated enemy in a new type of warfare.

In a new comprehensive study, "The World Hybrid War: Ukrainian Forefront," experts from Ukraine's National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) examine the Ukraine-Russia conflict in the context of the global security crisis.

In the monograph, they conceptualize hybrid war, trace its origins, look at the evolution of Russia's revanchist ambitions, single out Ukraine's vulnerabilities and its response, and advocate a new strategy. The authors aim to share Ukraine's experience of hybrid war with Western readers and leave no doubt about the true nature of Russia's goals.

Volodymyr Horbulin, director of the NISS and the editor of the monograph, argues that a hybrid war has an undeclared beginning and an indefinite end. It has no outright winners, lacks clear goals, and "operates on several fronts simultaneously, inconsistently, and asymmetrically."

The monograph challenges those who view hybrid war as being a temporary phenomenon or a return to the Cold War, arguing that it constitutes a new form of global confrontation conducted between zones of stability and zones of chaos, between spheres where the rule of law is respected and those where it is not. Unlike the Cold War, which occurred in a bipolar world, hybrid war occurs in the age of globalization and subsequently cannot be confined to the periphery. The authors emphasize that the Donbas conflict is no longer local; it is, in fact, "a starting point for the formation of the new hybrid world order."

One lesson that can be drawn is that hybrid wars begin prior to the active phase. Russia prepared for years on many fronts before activating this war. Ukraine's historical dependencies on Russia created vulnerabilities that Russia successfully exploited; for example, Ukraine's connections to oligarchs and its pro-Russian politicians promoted the Kremlin's agenda, supported pro-Russian integration projects, and spread ideas of separatism. They allowed Russian intelligence forces to infiltrate Ukraine's national security apparatus to conduct subversive operations. Russia also exerted numerous forms of economic pressure on Ukraine, including trade and gas wars. And Ukraine's media oligarchy and its dependence on Russia's information space made Ukraine vulnerable to the Kremlin's disinformation campaign.

The disinformation campaign has created many false narratives. We have seen different interpretations of events, and contrasting claims about who's involved and even different names for the conflict. In the Russian case, identifying the main players is tricky, since President Vladimir Putin denies Russia's involvement, regarding himself instead as a peacekeeper, while implying that the victim is the actual aggressor. The monograph treats the verbal dimension as a separate component of the hybrid war, different from the kinetic one.

The authors underscore the dangerous presumption made by Ukraine and the West that there was no threat of war prior to 2014. In fact, Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy, nuclear disarmament, non-bloc status, and ineffective national security system put it at a great disadvantage. And when the active phase began, the country found itself in a security vacuum with only assurances from other countries. Although the West showed solidarity with Ukraine by condemning Russian aggression and imposing economic sanctions, this response has been insufficient, according to the monograph's writers.

They draw historic parallels between this hybrid war, Moscow's tactics in Moldova and Georgia, and Soviet methods. For example, Russia has suppressed independent thought and supported tactics that utilize nationalism, propaganda, protection of Russian speakers, economic support for loyal regimes, subversive actions, bribes, and military intervention for decades; its actions toward Ukraine are not new.

At present, Russia skillfully uses diplomacy to deny responsibility while at the same time it legitimizes the occupation through the Minsk peace process, whose terms are unfavorable to Ukraine.

What is Russia trying to achieve? The authors argue that Russia seeks to destroy Ukraine's sovereignty, reduce its geopolitical role, and reverse its Euro-Atlantic course. Some of the ways the Kremlin does this are by promoting federalization, supporting anti-government protests, and "revitalizing the pro-Russian lobby."

Thanks to the efforts of Ukraine's military, as well as to public support and the spirit of volunteerism, Moscow has failed to destroy Ukraine's sovereignty. To assure greater success, however, Ukraine needs to make smart preparations by relying on its own efforts. Horbulin recommends that Ukraine try to expand the Normandy talks to include the UK and US, which were signatories of the Budapest Memorandum. He also advocates that Ukraine craft a new long-term asymmetric national strategy to fight fake separatism and disrupt Russia's goals without ruining its own economy, build up and reform its defense capabilities, consolidate domestic and international support, and be "more active, more creative, and more pragmatic."

But as the book puts it, "our main strategic goal now is…whether we will be able to grasp and fully understand this new hybrid world, to understand its laws and patterns that until now have appeared to be total chaos." Reading this book would be a good first step.

#10
Ukraine's Stalled Revolution

Kiev May Talk Like Brussels But It Acts Like Moscow
by Andrew Foxall and Lincoln Pigman
Foreign Affairs, 29 June 2017
http://fam.ag/2tMugFg

More than three years have passed since Ukraine's Euromaidan Revolution, in which protestors took to the streets and ousted their corrupt leader Viktor Yanukovych. But reform has been slow in coming. To be fair, President Petro Poroshenko faces a Herculean task: protecting Ukraine from Russia's ongoing aggression in the east while reforming the country in a way that is in keeping with the ideals—democracy, transparency, and rule

of law—that united Ukrainians during Euromaidan. So far, however, Poroshenko has not handled this dilemma very well. He has used a heavy hand in cracking down on anything Russian and seems, ironically, increasingly determined to adopt Moscow's authoritarian methods even as he speaks the language of Brussels in advocating for democratic change.

Of course, Russia's aggression toward Ukraine is not limited to the fighting at their borders. Russian propaganda plays an even greater role in influencing Ukrainian politics than it does in Western countries. One false report that has been recently circulating, for example, claims that the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) is using drug addicts as spies in the country's east. Another alleges that Ukraine's newest public holiday, known as Volunteers Day, "glorifies" the killing of separatists in the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. Poroshenko's approach to countering Russian propaganda, however, has been blunt and ineffective. Rather than demonstrate to disillusioned Ukrainians, especially in the east, that the postrevolutionary state represents their interests, he has sought to censor any content associated with Russia under the guise of national security.

Last month, Poroshenko issued a decree banning a number of Russian sites, including the social networking platform Vkontakte and search engine Yandex—the Russian equivalents of Facebook and Google. It also banned the mail service Mail[dot]ru. All three were among Ukraine's most widely used websites on the eve of the ban. In 2016, Vkontakte, for instance, was used by 70 percent of Ukrainian Internet users. The ban followed a similar measure implemented in January when Dozhd (TV Rain), the independent television station known for its critical coverage of corruption in Russia and the wars in Ukraine and Syria, was blocked—for no apparent reason save that it is Russian. Ukraine is now the second country—after Russia—to repress Dozhd.

Some Ukrainians have since made the move to non-Russian social media, such as Facebook. But given the lack of public confidence in the office of the president—viewed unfavorably by 76 percent of Ukrainians, accordingto a poll conducted by the International Republican Institute, a nonpartisan think tank based in Washington, D.C.—Poroshenko's decision to block major online platforms through executive power alone appears especially brazen.

The ban on Russian content and online services has been widely criticized, both within and outside of Ukraine. Euromaidan organizer and parliamentarian Serhiy Leshchenko wrote on Facebook that it represented an effort to "move the focus of public debate from the fight against corruption to pseudo-patriotism." Memorial, Russia's preeminent human rights NGO, also spoke out against the decree, warning that it represented "a step not toward Europe but in the opposite direction." Reporters Without Borders stressed that "the huge security challenges facing the Ukrainian authorities ... in no way justify censorship of this kind," calling the ban "neither proportionate nor justified in light of the stated aims."

The ban's defenders, including parliamentarian Volodymyr Ariev, have reasoned that since Russia's security services can use sites like Vkontakte—which was effectively acquisitioned by the Kremlin in 2014—to access the data of Ukrainian users who work in government and in the military, drastic action is required. But the scope of the decree's ban on Russian social media sites undermines that argument, since it is far too broad and extends to ordinary Ukrainians who are not involved in matters of counterintelligence.

Poroshenko's moves to limit freedom of expression may have drawn international condemnation, but Ukraine's worst setbacks have been on the anti-corruption front, where activists and reformers have been punished for their efforts to expose graft.

Ongoing proceedings against Roman Nasirov, Ukraine's tax and customs service chief who is charged with stealing $100 million in tax revenues, are widely viewed as a test of Ukraine's commitment to fighting corruption since he is one of the first senior-ranking officials to go to trial. But the government has made life exceedingly difficult for anti-corruption activists. In April, Oleksandra Ustinova of the Anti-Corruption Action Center had the flight details of a vacation she had taken—information made available to Ukraine's security services by a recent law—leaked to pro-government activists. The same month, Vitaly Shabunin, a colleague of Ustinova's, accused the SBU of organizing a picket near his house. Other activists' homes have been raided by the SBU, one of several trends made all the more striking by the security services' inaction regarding, and even apparent involvement in, high-profile murders like that of investigative journalist Pavel Sheremet in July 2016.

Those fighting corruption from within the government have not been spared, either. In April, Valeriya Gontareva, a former governor of Ukraine's central bank whose economics reforms have been called "fantastic" by the International Monetary Fund and who oversaw the reduction of central bank bureaucracy, quit her job after what she described as "three years of sustained harassment" that included death threats from oligarchs impacted by her nationalization of Ukrainian banks. In her words, these institutions were fraudulent, and ranged from "zombie banks without any assets … only liabilities" to "money laundering machines."

There has been little progress, moreover, in the pursuit of justice against the allies of former president Viktor Yanukovych, such as Yuriy Boyko, a former vice prime minister and energy minister accused of embezzlement, and Yuriy Chmyr, a deputy chief of staff to Yanukovych under investigation for his involvement in state repression during Euromaidan. Worse still, some anti-corruption activists say that backroom deals are being made between those allies and the prosecutor-general's office—the same office that recently lashed out at Transparency International, accusing its Ukrainian branch of attempts at "discrediting the whole country" for its coverage of the government's failure to prosecute Yanukovych-era crimes. The IMF, for its part, sided with Transparency International, noting in a November 2016 report that "tangible results in prosecuting and

convicting corrupt high-level officials and recovering proceeds from corruption have yet to be achieved."

The Ukrainian government's preference for fighting anti-corruption activists, rather than corruption itself, has not gone unnoticed by the EU. Hughes Mingarelli, the head of its delegation to Ukraine, recently cautioned Ukraine that it was exhibiting "a worrying trend reminiscent of past and gloomy times for the country."

To be sure, Ukraine is closer to EU membership than it was at the end of Yanukovych's presidency. Since the provisional application of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area in January 2016, which opened parts of the EU's internal market to Ukraine, Kiev has adopted several legislative acts that have brought its trade-related legal framework closer to that of Brussels. Only last month, its efforts in meeting all the benchmarks under the Visa Liberalization Action Plan were rewardedwith visa-free travel throughout the Schengen Area for Ukrainian citizens. In a speech celebrating the long-awaited visa-free regime, Poroshenko declared that it represented the "conclusion of [Ukraine's] break with the Russian empire and of that of the democratic Ukrainian world with the authoritarian Russian world."

The West should continue to support Ukraine in its fight against Russian-backed separatists in the east and in its efforts to reform the country. But it must also use all means necessary to prevent Ukrainian democracy from falling victim to Kiev's imitation of democracy. This includes finding ways to push Poroshenko and his government harder, making any future aid conditional on the development of effective administrative and judicial systems, and providing additional support to civil society. As it stands, Poroshenko's behavior threatens Ukraine's European future and risks a return to its illiberal past.

#11

Ukrainian Court to Try Yanukovych Case in Absentia

by Nataliya Trach
Kyiv Post, 29 June 2017
http://bit.ly/2strlh4

The Obolonsky District Court in Kyiv on June 29 allowed an absentee trial of the high treason case against Ukraine's fugitive ex-President Viktor Yanukovych.

The judges made the ruling after a one-hour deliberation. The decision cannot be appealed.

The presiding judge Vladyslav Devyatko announced the decision after Yanukovych, who now lives in Russia, failed to show up in the court.

"Not only did the defendant fail to arrive in the court but he also did not take an opportunity to take part in the court hearings via a video conference," Devyatko said.
The ex-president's lawyer Vitaliy Serdyuk said Yanukovych could not attend the hearings because it would put his life under threat.

The court will proceed with the case on July 6.

Yanukovych is charged with a number of crimes, including violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, high treason, and waging a war or aggressive military actions. Yanukovych has previously denied any wrongdoing of the kind.
The accusations are based on the ex-president's actions during the EuroMaidan Revolution in 2013-2014, including his alleged attempt to get military help from Russia in order to preserve his power.

The prosecution is seeking a life sentence for the ex-president.

Yanukovych's lawyers asked prosecutors to explain to them the meaning of the indictment during the next session, calling it "an empty bill."

The court on June 29 also determined the procedure for examining evidence in the trial. First, the court will study evidence from both sides, including photos and videos.

The previous meeting of the Obolonsky District Court took place on June 26. Back then the court postponed the hearing of the case because Yanukovych failed to attend. Now the court will proceed with the trial in absentia.

According to the Obolonsky District Court schedule for July-August the hearings in the case of Yanukovych will take place on July 6, July 12, July 13, Aug. 3, Aug.10, Aug. 17, Aug.23, and Aug. 31.

#12
Ukraine Cyberattack Was Meant to Paralyze, not Profit, Evidence Shows

by Andrew E. Kramer
New York Times, 28 June 2017
http://nyti.ms/2tZIIqZ

Kiev, Ukraine — The day started like most for Roman N. Klimenko, an accountant in Kiev who had just settled in at his desk, typing at a computer keyboard and drinking coffee. He was unaware that concealed within his tax preparation software lurked a ticking bomb.

That bomb soon exploded, destroying his financial data and quickly spreading through computer systems vital to Ukraine's government — and beyond. The cyberattack, on Tuesday, was caused by a virus similar to one that wreaked global havoc less than two months ago.

Both had the appearance of hacker blackmail assaults known as ransomware attacks: screens of infected computers warn users their data will be destroyed unless ransoms are paid.

But in Ukraine's case, a more sinister motive — paralysis of the country's vital computer systems — may have been at work, cybersecurity experts said on Wednesday. And many Ukrainians cast their suspicions on Russia.

Cybersecurity experts based their reasoning partly on having identified the group of Ukrainian users who were initially and improbably targeted: tax accountants.

All are required by law to use a tax preparation software such as that made by a Ukrainian company, M.E.Doc. The software that runs on Microsoft Windows-based computers was recently updated. Microsoft issued a statement on Wednesday saying it "now has evidence that a few active infections of the ransomware initially started from the legitimate M.E.Doc updater process."

Cybersecurity experts said that whoever launched the assault — on the eve of a holiday celebrating Ukrainian independence — must have known that M.E.Doc software, which is integrated into Ukrainian government computers, was their gateway.

"You don't hit the day before Constitution Day for no reason," said Craig Williams, the senior technical researcher with the Talos division of Cisco, the American technology company, which helped pinpoint the origin of the Tuesday attack.

Brian Lord, a former deputy director for intelligence and computer operations at Britain's Government Communications Headquarters, the country's equivalent to the National Security Agency, said, "This isn't about the money."

"This attack is about disabling how large companies and governments can operate," he added. "You get a double whammy of the initial cyberattack and then organizations being forced to shut down their operations."

For Mr. Klimenko, the software update seemed to go fine — until hours later. "The screen became red," he said in an interview. "A warning appeared, and everything on the hard drive was scrambled."

Mr. Klimenko quickly realized he had lost all past-year filings, a catastrophe for an accountant. “Now I cannot confirm that I filed,” he said. “Honestly, I don’t understand what happened.”

Yet to be determined is the source of the virus. But Russia was seen as the prime suspect because it has been engaged in overt and covert warfare with Ukraine since the 2014 revolution that deposed a Kremlin-friendly government. A Russian role has yet to be proven and may never be. Nevertheless, analysts said on Wednesday that if the attackers’ object was to sow chaos at the highest levels in Ukraine, M.E.Doc provided an ideal way. Its software is not only widely installed at government agencies and banks, but is mandatory at many Ukrainian businesses and government agencies.

M.E.Doc said in a statement that it could not confirm whether the virus had been distributed through the update, but that it was “cooperating with Ukraine’s cyberpolice on the investigation.”

In another indication that Ukraine was a prime target, the national police said on Wednesday that more than 1,500 companies had filed complaints or appealed for help because of computer intrusions. That was far more than in other countries, although Russia seemed to be the second-most widely affected.

While analysts remained cautious about assigning blame, there was little reticence in official circles in Ukraine, particularly as it became clear that the country was the primary target. The timing was an especially clear sign of political intent, they said.

Adding to their suspicions, just a few hours before the computer strike, a Ukrainian military intelligence officer, Maksim Shapoval, was killed by a car bomb in Kiev. It was the latest in a string of assassinations of opponents and critics of Russia in the Ukrainian capital.

“War in cyberspace, seeding fear and horror among millions of personal computer users, and inflicting direct material damage from destabilizing the work of businesses and the state, is just one part of the hybrid war of the Russian empire against Ukraine,” Anton Gerashenko, a member of Parliament, wrote on Facebook. The assassination of Mr. Shapoval is another, he wrote. Mr. Gerashenko called the spread of the virus the “most massive computer attack in the history of Ukraine.” He said it was only “masked as an effort to extort money from computer users,” with the real goal economic disruption.

In this view, what began as a strike at Ukraine later and perhaps inadvertently spread to other countries merely as collateral damage.

The timing of the attack was suspect in another way, coming after a rare stretch of upbeat news in Ukraine. Last week, the European Union waived visa requirements for Ukrainians, at least those few fortunate enough to have the means to travel. That was a

euphoric moment for many Ukrainians, some of whom could be seen celebrating with raised fists after gliding through immigration lanes in European airports.

President Petro O. Poroshenko met in Washington with President Trump, undermining what politicians here say is an overarching Russian goal of weakening Ukraine by highlighting the incompetence and corruption of the government.

The attack also comes in the context of a long-running trade war between Russia and Ukraine, on the sidelines of the actual shooting war in eastern Ukraine between the government and Russian-backed separatists.

In recent months, the authorities in Kiev have banned Russian software imports and blocked coal shipments from areas under rebel control. The coal embargo cut off a vital financial lifeline in the east, forcing Russia to take some of the coal.

The police have established a computer headquarters with the domestic intelligence agency, the S.B.U., and Cisco to analyze the attack in hopes of tying it to Russia. Though cybersecurity experts have not linked the malware to any particular state or criminal group, a Russian computer attack targeting Ukraine's economy would be consistent with the recent economic skirmishing, analysts say.

"If you look at Ukrainian cyberspace, M.E.Doc is an excellent carrier for a virus," Ivan Lozowy, director of the Institute of Statehood and Democracy, said in a telephone interview. The software is used by businesses large and small, and it can transmit a virus to government computers, where it is designed to file returns. "The Russians are interested in Ukraine having as many problems as possible," he said.

#13
Ukraine's Economy Has Turned a Corner

by David Clark
Financial Times, 4 July 2017
http://on.ft.com/2stkrso

David Clark is chairman of the Russia Foundation

On the surface, not much seems to have changed since Russia-sponsored separatists seized parts of eastern Ukraine three years ago. Fighting has flared up intermittently, but the front line has remained effectively frozen and efforts to find a diplomatic solution have reached a standstill.

Yet this is far from being the whole story. While the military aspects of the conflict have dominated the headlines, the real battle for Ukraine's future has always been elsewhere.

It rests on the ability of the country to restore stability and prosperity even as its territorial integrity is being brutally compromised. On this measure, Ukraine is beginning to make real progress.

Russia's intervention was primarily conceived as a form of economic warfare. The aim was not to capture land but to weaken Ukraine and turn it into something akin to a failed state.

In this it was initially successful. At war with it largest trading partner and separated from many of its most productive industrial assets in the east, Ukraine was forced to the brink of economic collapse.

The hryvnia lost about 70 per cent of its value against the dollar, inflation spiked at 60 per cent and the combined fiscal deficit (including the state budget and the state energy company, Naftogaz) ballooned to more than 10 per cent of GDP. The economy contracted by 6.6 per cent in 2014 and a further 9.8 per cent in 2015, a more severe downturn than the one experienced by Greece.

Things look very different three years on. Macroeconomic stability has been restored and Ukraine appears to be on the road to recovery. A more stable exchange rate has helped to bring inflation under control (down to 12.4 per cent last year and a projected 6 per cent next year).

Output is now increasing for the first time since 2012, with growth of 2 per cent last year expected to rise to 2.8 per cent this year and more than 3 per cent in 2018. Renewed growth and lower inflation has, in turn, allowed battered living standards to start recovering. Real wages increased by 11.6 per cent in 2016.

The Ukrainian government has also set out a path to long-term fiscal sustainability through a mix of spending cuts and tax reform. A budget deficit of 2.2 per cent last year was comfortably beneath the 3.7 per cent ceiling set by the IMF.

Although the deficit is due to widen to 3.1 per cent this year, the increase is largely because of cuts in payroll social security taxes needed to reduce labour costs and stimulate the economy.

An improved and simplified tax code, along with the rise in economic activity, is increasing the contributions of income tax and VAT to national revenues. Naftogaz is now in surplus.

The next big challenge is reform of an unsustainable pension system that accounts for more than a quarter of public spending and has been described by the World Bank as "a major fiscal vulnerability".

A plan drawn up by finance minister Oleksandr Danyliuk is currently before the Rada and aims to bring costs into line with revenues by tightening eligibility, broadening the base of contributions and raising the effective retirement age.

With the pension deficit currently in excess of 6 per cent of GDP, changes are essential to meet the government's goal of reducing the overall budget deficit to 2 per cent by 2020.

None of the progress that has been made so far would have been possible without international financial support, primarily in the form of a $17.5bn IMF loan facility.

The fact that Ukraine has managed to unlock four tranches of that funding, totalling $8.38bn, is an achievement in itself. Past failure to reform meant that, until now, no Ukrainian government had succeeded in securing more than a single tranche of IMF funding.

The current administration deserves credit for embracing unpopular but necessary reforms that its predecessors ducked, such as removing energy subsidies that fostered inefficiency and corruption.

It has also earned praise for the speed with which it acted to head off a major financial threat by nationalising PrivatBank, Ukraine's biggest lender, after it became insolvent in December.

The big test of these changes is how they affect investor sentiment and enable Ukraine to attract badly needed foreign capital. FDI flows, which came to a standstill with the onset of war, have resumed, albeit tentatively.

While much of this money is linked to the recapitalisation of the banking system, there have also been significant new foreign investments in export-oriented production, particularly in western Ukraine.

The new free trade agreement with the EU, combined with proximity to the European market, creates an opportunity for Ukraine to become an integral part of the continental supply chain, building up new centres of economic production to replace lost capacity in the east.

Another important milestone is likely to be achieved this year when Ukraine is expected to return to the sovereign debt market with its first new bond issue since 2013.

At the time of Ukraine's debt restructuring deal in 2015, the prospect seemed a distant one. But the IMF programme always envisaged that Ukraine would be ready to return to the market in 2017 and there are signs of investor appetite.

Achieving these outcomes will require Ukraine to maintain and deepen its reform efforts.

In addition to sorting out the pensions system, the next frontier is land reform where the government hopes that liberalisation will bring higher investment and new dynamism to the agricultural sector.

This week the government delayed presenting a reform bill to parliament where populist opposition politicians are trying to obstruct changes that are needed before the next tranche of IMF funding can be released. The moment of truth on this will come in the autumn.

As always, further steps need to be taken to root out corruption, which remains a greater impediment to Ukraine's progress than any scheme devised by the Kremlin.

A lot of good work has already been done but perceptions of corruption remain stubbornly high. Changing that is still by far Ukraine's most important challenge.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that Russian president Vladimir Putin's strategy of trying to enfeeble Ukraine and raise the price of western support has failed as the country continues to make progress towards the goal of economic self-sufficiency.

#14
Siemens Turbines Delivered to Crimea Despite Sanctions – Sources

by Anton Zverev, Anastasia Lyrchikova and Gleb Stolyarov
Reuters, 5 July 2017
http://reut.rs/2tJaivi

Russia has delivered electricity turbines made by Germany's Siemens to Crimea, a region subject to European Union sanctions barring EU firms from supplying it with energy technology, three sources with knowledge of the delivery told Reuters.

Reuters was unable to determine if Siemens knew of or condoned the equipment transfer, but the move exposes the German company to potential accusations of indirect sanctions-busting and of not taking sufficient safeguards to ensure its equipment does not end up on territory most countries view as illegally annexed, say legal experts.

"Siemens has not delivered turbines to Crimea and complies with all export control restrictions," said Wolfram Trost, a spokesman for Siemens in Munich, when asked to confirm the turbine transfer to Crimea.

Citing client confidentiality, he did not answer written questions asking whether Siemens was aware that the turbines had been shipped to Crimea and whether it would now be activating or servicing them.

Russia needs the turbines for two Crimean power plants the Kremlin wants to get up and running to fulfill a promise, made by President Vladimir Putin, to ensure a stable power supply for the region's residents after it was annexed by Moscow from Ukraine in 2014.

Delivery of the turbines, intended for the two new power stations under construction, had been delayed for over a year because the firms involved feared violating EU sanctions, people involved in the project have told Reuters.

Russia's Energy Ministry, which oversees the Crimea power plants project, declined to comment. It referred questions to Technopromexport, the Russian state-owned firm which is building the plants. Technopromexport declined to comment.

One source close to the project, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic, told Reuters that two of the turbines had been delivered from Russia by sea to Crimea.

He said they were destined for use in a power plant in the Crimean city of Sevastopol. He said the turbines were unloaded at Sevastopol port, and that preparatory work was underway at the power plant site to install and commission the turbines.

The turbines were SGT5-2000E gas turbines, he said, a type manufactured only by Siemens and its subsidiaries.

Russia or Crimea?

An official in Crimea's energy sector who is familiar with the power plants project, and an employee with a company involved in the project, also said the turbines were Siemens turbines, and that they had been delivered to Crimea.

EU sanctions bar European individuals and companies from providing energy technology to Crimea or from taking any actions designed to circumvent those rules due to the bloc's view that the peninsula was illegally stolen from Ukraine.

Legal experts say there are no court precedents to say whether Siemens could be held responsible if a third party brought the turbines to Crimea.

When asked about the matter, the European Commission has declined to comment on the Siemens case in the past, saying it is up to EU member states to enforce sanctions rules on their companies.

When asked about the issue on Wednesday, a spokesman for German's Ministry for Economic Affairs said he had no immediate comment.

The individual close to the project and the official in the Crimea energy sector told Reuters the turbines delivered to the port in Sevastopol had come from Taman, located in southern Russia, some 10 miles (16 km) from Crimea.

Siemens told reporters in March that a Russian joint venture in which it has a majority stake supplied turbines for use in a power plant that was planned for construction in Taman.

The joint venture, Gas Turbine Technologies LLC, made the turbines that were sent to Taman at its factory in the Russian city of St Petersburg.

Siemens has a 65 percent share in the joint venture, and Russian company Power Machines has a 35 percent stake.

The sanctions barring the supply of energy technology to Crimea do not apply to the Taman project because it is located on internationally recognized Russian territory.

The turbines for the Taman plant were bought by Technopromexport - the same company building the two Crimea plants - because, it previously said, it would be building the plant in Taman.

Sources close to the Crimean project have previously told Reuters that one of the options under consideration was to use the Taman turbines in Crimea.

Asked about that possibility last year, Siemens said it was supplying the turbines only for use in Taman, and not in Crimea.

It said at the time it had "no reason" to believe the turbines would be diverted to Crimea, and said it respected and would abide by the sanctions regime

#15
Coercion and Financial Secrecy in Ukraine's Emerging Economy: What the IMF Approach Misses

by Andrew Barnes
PONARS Policy Memo, June 2017
http://bit.ly/2tC4F2b

Much analysis of how Ukraine's economy operates takes place through the lens of International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommendations and reviews, which focus on budget deficits and anti-corruption efforts. Excessive emphasis on formal policy changes, however, and the "political will" to carry them out, ignores a number of forces at play in creating and maintaining real economic activity on the ground. While high-level discussions are occurring in Kyiv or Washington, people in Ukraine are creating new patterns of economic activity in practice. This memo examines some of these developments, demonstrating the ubiquity of both coercion and secrecy in market interactions. These characteristics are not unique to wartime Ukraine, although they are easier to see in that context. Likewise, within Ukraine, they are not confined to Crimea or the Donbas; they flourish throughout the country. The lesson, therefore, is that we need to think more about how to redirect and reshape these activities, rather than simply trying to eliminate them.

The Usual Story

Ukraine joined the IMF in 1992 and has signed no fewer than ten major agreements with it—two since the Euromaidan in 2014. The goals of macroeconomic stabilization and structural reform have remained remarkably stable over the years, and each new agreement has been signed amid renewed optimism because the IMF has routinely professed conviction that the government is ready to muster the "political will" to implement the required reforms.

In some respects, Ukraine has achieved extraordinary success in areas the IMF deems important. Most notably, the economy returned to growth in 2016, despite the ongoing fiscal and physical toll of the war. Although industrial growth was still negative, retail and agriculture led the economy to a 2.3 percent growth rate in 2016 after declines of 6.6 percent in 2014 and 9.9 percent in 2015. The blockade against Donbas coal hampered industrial production in the first third of 2017, but an IMF statement in May continued to predict GDP growth of over 2 percent for the year. In addition, the annual inflation rate has remained under 10 percent; the Ukrainian hryvnia (which has remained free-floating, consistent with IMF recommendations) has avoided any precipitous drops, even though it has crept downward in value over the past year; and the government has remained up-to-date on payments on external debt, except on a disputed $3 billion Eurobond owned by Russia.

On the structural side, Ukraine has made striking changes in its natural gas sector. In a policy change aimed directly at satisfying IMF demands, the country unified the tariff for gas beginning in May 2016. The old system included different price points for different consumers and, like any other multi-tiered pricing system, was subject to cheating: insiders falsified invoices to buy and sell at their preferred prices. In addition, Ukraine has eliminated its gas imports from Russia, relying instead on supplies from elsewhere in Europe. This change was not in response to IMF requirements, but it makes the country less vulnerable to Russia-imposed shocks in the gas sector.
Despite these successes, the standard drama with the IMF continued, albeit with characteristics unique to Ukraine's situation. On the macroeconomic side, budgetary brinksmanship captured the attention of observers for several months in the winter of 2015-16, when the IMF insisted on a federal deficit of less than 3.7 percent of GDP, but parliament refused to pass it. In February 2016, Ukraine's Latvian-born Economics Minister Aivaras Abromavičius resigned from the cabinet, prompting further concern from the IMF that appropriate reforms would not be undertaken. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk barely survived a no-confidence vote in February 2016 but resigned in April and was replaced by Volodymyr Hroisman (see below). Throughout this political turmoil, the IMF continued to conduct its reviews of the Extended Fund Facility, but the evaluation was well behind schedule and the IMF did not approve releasing the next tranche of funds until September 2016. Another standoff occurred in 2017 over the governments' unwillingness or inability to end the rail blockade in the East, but the next tranche was released in April 2017.

The structural issue most consistently highlighted by the IMF in post-Euromaidan Ukraine has been high-level corruption. Indeed, many observers of Ukrainian politics saw corruption as the reason for untamed deficits and the resignations of favored reformers like Abromavičius. Any number of examples could be raised to show the extent of the problem, but four will suffice here. First was Yatsenyuk's narrow escape from the threat of a no-confidence vote in February 2016. His survival (for two months) was apparently tied to a deal among the country's leading oligarchs: it was a last-minute walkout by parliamentarians connected to those oligarchs that saved him. Second was the political drama that played out around General Prosecutor Viktor Shokin. For several months in late 2015 and early 2016, accusations grew that Shokin was blocking prosecutions of high-level corruption allegations, but he continued to hold his post. Even after President Petro Poroshenko ostensibly removed him from office in February, he remained in his post until March 29, when parliament finally voted to remove him. A third striking incident occurred in August 2016 when one office responsible for combatting corruption (the General Prosecutor) arrested two staff members from another office responsible for combatting corruption (the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine). Finally, in March 2017, the government amended an anti-corruption law that required public servants to disclose assets, extending it to NGOs and journalists who report on corruption—an action many saw as an attempt to silence the watchdogs.

The Centrality of "Marginal" Activities

There is nothing inherently wrong with following the drama of budget debates, high-level resignations, or corrupt machinations in government. While high-level discussions are going on, however, citizens are developing a real economy across the country. This activity reveals important truths about economics that standard models typically do not highlight, namely the ubiquity of coercion and financial secrecy. Below are examples of these different sources of coercion in economic transactions in Ukraine, as well as a short discussion of the emerging financial system that provides context for those activities.

At the top of the wealth pyramid are oligarchs, who face myriad threats—from the state, from other oligarchs, from would-be oligarchs, and from external shocks—but they also have access to a wide variety of coercive resources to defend against those potential threats and/or to strengthen their own position. The case of Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov, provides an almost limitless supply of examples of this process. When the Kyiv government tried to punish him for raising electricity prices in 2015, hundreds of workers from his coal mines picketed the Energy Minister's office, and a parliamentary bloc understood to be financially supported by him walked out of legislative proceedings. His coal and electricity conglomerate had holdings in both eastern and western Ukraine, and for three years he was able to operate successfully in both regions, partly because he also ran a network of trucks delivering humanitarian aid in the Donbas. Doing so required the direct application of coercive power in the form of hired security forces, as well as negotiations with other powerful actors, notably the bodies attempting to set rules in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kyiv.

After the imposition of the rail blockade at the start of 2017, however, the strongmen of the Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics" began to seize his property (and those of other Ukrainian owners), and the tightening blockade stopped the flow of coal from the Donbas to the rest of Ukraine. Interestingly, Akhmetov was never able to defend his holdings in Crimea, where the self-declared parliament of the peninsula voted to nationalize his energy and telecommunications holdings and armed men took over the facilities. Likewise, several branches of his First Ukrainian International Bank were shut down on rebel territory, and separatists seized equipment from his television channel. He is powerful, and his access to coercive power is significant, but even an oligarch's hold on productive assets is not unbreakable.

Another group of economic players in Ukraine are what might be referred to as warlord businesspeople: individuals who use their control over physical coercion in part to take desirable assets, operate lucrative trade routes, and directly enforce their claims to wealth. In other words, they are engaged directly in the creation and operation of an economic activity. One example is Aleksandr Zakharchenko, Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, who commands 3-4,000 armed men and controls much of the regional retail trade, including the "nationalized" ATB supermarket chain. He and his men also allegedly control the gasoline trade in Donbas. Another example is Alexander Khodakovsky, the commander of the Vostok battalion, who allegedly provides

protection to Akhmetov's trucks and controls the illicit trade across the separatist border with the rest of Ukraine. These phenomena are not unique to Donetsk and Luhansk, as leaders of the former "volunteer battalions" use their coercive resources to operate or protect businesses in western Ukraine. These figures, and others like them, face threats from other warlords and from any "state actor" that wants to impose "order" on them. Their main defense is the direct application or threat of force, which illustrates the role of naked coercion in the conduct of economic activity.

Similar to the warlord businesspeople, but without direct control over the means of coercion, are the entrepreneurs who operate informal or illegal businesses and need to protect their assets. One of the most common sectors for such work in Ukraine is amber mining and smuggling. To mine amber, groups of workers clear forest areas, pump high-pressure water into the soil, and skim the debris that floats to the surface. They need to protect the mining area from potential competitors and state authorities. When they transport their product illegally, they must protect it from confiscation—the greatest threat they face is from state employees, usually either police or border guards. These businesspeople generally cannot apply force directly and instead hire protection, pay off state actors, or both.

If business is impossible without coercion, it is also impossible without banking—not necessarily a system for connecting savers and borrowers, but simply a system for moving money. Furthermore, most business does not take place without banking secrecy—a system for moving money without being tracked by formal state institutions. In Ukraine, we see several strategies for moving money surreptitiously, which provides context for all other economic activity. In the self-proclaimed republics of Luhansk and Donetsk, so-called "Central Banks" were established to facilitate payments among businesses, to collect taxes, and to distribute rubles coming from Russia to pay pensions. Their activities are largely opaque to outside observers. In Crimea, hundreds of bank branches saw their premises taken over almost overnight and turned over to Russian banks. Interestingly, these were not the biggest and best-known Russian banks, probably because their Russian headquarters were afraid of international sanctions. The banks in Crimea include one with an owner who has been investigated by both the FBI and the Russian Investigative Commission and one that was part of a $20 billion money-laundering scheme. Like the use of coercion in economic activity, banking secrecy is not unique to the territories most affected by the war. Oligarchs, leaders of armed groups, illicit entrepreneurs, and corrupt officials throughout Ukraine make use of extensive offshore networks to hide both legal and illegal profits.

Conclusion

It may be tempting to see the phenomena described in this memo as resulting from Ukraine's particular situation of occupation and war, but that is not the case. Coercion and secrecy are ubiquitous in Ukraine not because of anything peculiar about Ukraine, but because of the simple coexistence of coercive power and desirable assets. These patterns appear in Kyiv-controlled Ukraine just as they do in Crimea and the Donbas, even

if they take somewhat different forms in different areas. Indeed, they appear in economies around the world.

This observation suggests that the IMF's advice to Ukraine, while not entirely wrong, is quite limited in its likely effects. First, inasmuch as the advice is premised on the assumption that in a well-performing economy coercion would be applied only by a rule-of-law state and the movement of money would be transparent, its foundation does not comport with what we see throughout the world. Second, while no one should doubt that official corruption is a significant problem in Ukraine, that is only one version of coercion and secrecy (or one source of power to engage in them) that appears in real economies. While it may be theoretically possible to root out oligarchs, mafias, strongmen, bribes, and grey finance, that is not what we see in most settings. Instead, we see different forms of coercion and different strategies of financial secrecy. Research and recommendations therefore need to be aimed at channeling those tendencies in less harmful directions, rather than trying to eliminate particular types of them entirely.

#16

From: On all aspects of Russia and the FSU [russian-studies@jiscmail.ac.uk] On Behalf of Andreas Umland

Sent: Sunday, July 02, 2017 9:29 AM
Subject: Footnote on Snyder's Bundestag lecture on German responsibility vis-a-vis Ukraine

Footnote to the Deutscher Bundestag lecture "Germany's Historical Responsibility for Ukraine" organized by Marieluise Beck for the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen Bundestagsfraktion on 20 June 2017, at Berlin. See http://bit.ly/2tEkuVm.

Excellent that Professor Timothy Snyder (Yale University & IWM - Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen) is finally raising these important issues for German memory politics, at this - by itself, arguably historic - event in the Berlin Bundestag. When I tried, in early 2013, to make a similar argument in an article called "Germany's Ukrainian Obligation," I could not find a German outlet for that. After months of silence and various rejections by German editorial boards, finally, an obscure Berlin anti-racism journal published a small excerpt of my piece. See: "Die ukrainische Verpflichtung Deutschlands," ZAG - Antirassistische Zeitschrift, no. 63 (2013), pp. 10-11, http://bit.ly/2syDxS0.

A different version of this argument had already appeared, in 2012, as part of a longer paper that I could only publish in a German journal of which I am myself a co-editor and which is published by the Zentralinstitut für Mittel- und Osteuropastudien Eichstätt of which I am a member (not my preferred way to publish a text first). See: "Die heutige deutsche Ukrainepolitik in ihrem zeithistorischen und geostrategischen Kontext:

Erwägungen zu einer Neuorientierung des Engagements Berlins im östlichen Europa," Forum für osteuropäische Ideen- und Zeitgeschichte, vol. 16, no. 2 (2012), pp. 231-266. http://bit.ly/2uhrwxh.

Some reasons, facets and repercussion of Germany's continuing ignorance about Ukraine were listed briefly in this 2012 essay: "Weißer Fleck: Die Ukraine in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit," Osteuropa, vol. 62, no. 9 (2012), pp. 127-133. http://bit.ly/2siHmqh. Unfortunately, much of this critique from five years ago remains valid to date.

#17

New Book

Migration and the Ukraine Crisis: A Two-Country Perspective
An E-IR open access book.
Edited by Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska & Greta Uehling
http://bit.ly/2tVAP98

Available now in book stores worldwide and via free download from E-International Relations.

About the book
Since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the beginning of the war in Donbas, Eastern Europe has been facing a migration crisis. Several million Ukrainians are internally displaced or have fled the country and now face an uncertain future. At the same time, Western-imposed sanctions and the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union have affected Russia's migration policies. These largely ignored processes have a potential to change the social landscape of the region for many years to come. The aim of this collection is to shed light on the forgotten migrant crisis at the European Union's doorstep and make sense of the various migration processes in and out of Ukraine and Russia. The book is divided into two sections. The first section deals with migration processes that have taken place within Ukraine or have involved Ukrainian citizens' migration out of the country, excluding Russia. The second section discusses Russia's response to the rapid inflow of migrants from Ukraine, its changing migration policies and their effect on migrants, as well as other processes related to the phenomenon over the course of the Ukraine crisis.

Contributors
Tania Bulakh, Mikhail Denisenko, Joanna Fomina, Michael Gentile, Kateryna Ivashchenko-Stadnik, Marina A. Kingsbury, Irina Kuznetsova, Viacheslav Morozov, Vladimir Mukomel, Olga Oleinikova and Caress Schenk.

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New Book

Ukraine in the Crossfire
Chris Kaspar de Ploeg
Clarity Press, 2017
ISBN: 978-0-9972870-8-0
http://www.claritypress.com/dePloeg.html

Ukraine is embroiled in a bloody civil war. Both sides stand accused of collaborating with fascists, of committing war crimes, of serving foreign interests. This proxy-war between Russia and the West was accompanied by a fierce information war. This book separates fact from fiction with extensive and reliable documentation. While remaining critical of Russia and the Donbass rebellion, De Ploeg demonstrates that many of the recent disasters can be traced to Ukrainian ultranationalists, pro-western political elites and their European and North-American backers.

''Chris de Ploeg's book stands out from other major accounts on the Ukraine's crisis, even by highly esteemed academics, in its careful work with the facts, which is a very important feature amidst the conscious propaganda and information war from all the sides of the conflict. It is also the best left-wing analysis so far. Being critical to a problematic Maidan uprising and the neoliberal-nationalist government it helped to bring to power, the author does not take equally wrong Putin-versteher position and shows how the rivalry of competing imperialisms and nationalisms brought Ukraine into the current political and economic disaster.''
--Volodymyr Ishchenko. Deputy director of the Center for Social and Labor Research in Ukraine and lecturer at the Department of Sociology in Kyiv Polytechnic Institute.

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