The Ukraine List #481

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#1
UKL on Twitter (@darelasn)

I have opened a Twitter account (@darelasn) last December and have been periodically tweeting on matters pertaining to Ukraine and Ukrainian Studies (in moderation so far). Not quite a full-blown digital version of UKL, but at least a more frequent presence than UKL has been in the past while. You are welcome to follow me! –Dominique

#2
13th Annual Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine

Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa, 16-18 November 2017
http://www.danyliwseminar.com

CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS

The Chair of Ukrainian Studies, with the support of the Wolodymyr George Danyliw Foundation, will be holding its 13th Annual Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine at the University of Ottawa on 16-18 November 2017. Since 2005, the Danyliw Seminar has provided an annual platform for the presentation of some of the most influential academic research on Ukraine.

The Seminar invites proposals from scholars and doctoral students —in political science, anthropology, sociology, history, law, economics and related disciplines in the social sciences and humanities— on a broad variety of topics falling under thematic clusters, such as those suggested below:

Conflict
- war/violence (combatants, civilians in wartime, DNR/LNR, Maidan)
- security (conflict resolution, Minsk Accords, OSCE, NATO, Crimea)
- nationalism (Ukrainian, Russian, Soviet, historical, far right)

Reform
- economic change (energy, corruption, oligarchies, EU free trade, foreign aid)
- governance (rule of law, elections, regionalism)

- media (TV/digital, social media, information warfare, fake news)

Identity
- history/memory (World War II, Holodomor, Soviet period, interwar, imperial)
- language, ethnicity, nation (policies and practices)
- culture and politics (cinema, literature, music, performing arts, popular culture)

Society
- migration (IDPs, refugees, migrant workers, diasporas)
- social problems (reintegration of combatants, protests, welfare, gender, education)
- state/society (citizenship, civil society, collective action/protests, human rights)

The Seminar will also be featuring panels devoted to recent/new books touching on Ukraine, as well as the screening of new documentaries followed by a discussion with filmmakers. In 2016, four book panels (Lawrence Douglas/The Right Wrong Man, Catherine Gousseff/Échanger les peuples, Serhii Plokhy/The Gates of Europe, and Ioulia Shukan/Génération Maidan) were on the program and two films were screened (Elena Volochine/Oleg's Choice, Antony Butts/DIY Country). Information on the 2016 book panels and films can easily be accessed from the top menu of the web site. The 2017 Seminar is welcoming book panel proposals, as well as documentary proposals.

Presentations at the Seminar will be based on research papers (6,000-8,000 words) and will be made available, within hours after the panel discussions, in written and video format on the Seminar website and on social media. The Seminar will privilege intensive discussion, with relatively short presentations (12 minutes), comments by the moderator and an extensive Q&A with Seminar participants and assembled public.

People interested in presenting at the 2017 Danyliw Seminar are invited to submit a 500 word paper proposal and a 150 word biographical statement, by email attachment, to Dominique Arel, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, at darel@uottawa.ca AND chairukr@gmail.com. Please also include your full coordinates (institutional affiliation, preferred postal address, email, phone, and Twitter account [if you have one]). If applicable, indicate your latest publication or, in the case of doctoral or post-doctoral applicants, the year when you entered a doctoral program, the title of your dissertation and year of (expected) completion.

Books published between 2016 and 2018 (**as long as** near-final proofs are available prior to the Seminar) are eligible for consideration as a book panel proposal. The proposal must include a 500 word abstract of the book, as well as the **150 word** bio and full coordinates.

Films produced between 2015 and 2017 are eligible for consideration as a documentary proposal. The proposal must include a 500 word abstract of the film, as well as the **150 word** bio, full coordinates, and a secure web link to the film.

In addition to scholars and doctoral students, policy analysts, practitioners from non-governmental and international organizations, journalists, and artists are also welcome to send a proposal.

The proposal deadline is 28 June 2017. The Chair will cover the travel and accommodation expenses of applicants whose proposal is accepted by the Seminar. The proposals will be reviewed by an international selection committee and applicants will be notified **in the course of** the summer.

To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Danyliw Seminar in 2014, a special website was created at www.danyliwseminar.com. The site contains the programs, papers, videos of presentations and photographs of the last three seminars (2014-2016). To access the abstracts, papers and videos of the 2016 presenters, click on "Participants" in the menu and then click on the individual names of participants. The 2016 Program can be accessed at https://www.danyliwseminar.com/program-2016.

Check the "Danyliw Seminar" Facebook page at http://bit.ly/2rssSHk.
For information on the Chair of Ukrainian Studies, go to http://bit.ly/2r7Hl8L

The Seminar is made possible by the generous commitment of the Wolodymyr George Danyliw Foundation to the pursuit of excellence in the study of contemporary Ukraine.

#3
Kule Doctoral Scholarships on Ukraine

Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa
Application Deadline: 1 February 2018 (International & Canadian Students)

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 (http://socialsciences.uottawa.ca/ukraine).

#4
ASN 2017 Post-Convention Announcement

The Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) held its 22nd Annual World Convention on 4-6 May 2017 at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York. The Convention Awards were announced at a special ceremony on Saturday May 6.

The ASN Doctoral Student Awards, to honor the best graduate papers, were given to

- **Mark Kettler** (UC Berkeley, US, History/Central Europe Section) on German assessments of Polish nationhood in the First World War;
- **Egor Lazarev** (Columbia U, US, Political Science/Caucasus-Eurasia-Turkey Section) on customary and religious legal orders in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia;
- **Marthe Handå Myhre** (U of Oslo, Norway, Russian Studies/Russia-Ukraine Section) on forced migrant "compatriots" from Ukraine to Russia;
- **Yu Sasaki** (U of Washington, US, Political Science/Nationalism-Migration Section) on why so few ethnolinguistic groups have achieved the status of "nation-states";
- **Koen Sloomaeckers** (Queen Mary U of London, UK, Political Science/Balkans Section) on the domestic implications of the LGBT Belgrade "Ghost" Pride;

The Harriman ASN Rothschild Book Prize went to **Max Bergholz** for *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Village* (Cornell University Press, 2016), a searing, original, and morally engaged study of violence in southeastern Europe during the Second World War, http://bit.ly/2pn10SS.
An honorable mention was given to Rebecca Gould for *Writers and Rebels: The Literature of Insurgency in the Caucasus* (Yale University Press, 2016). Four other contenders have also been recognized: David, Brophy, *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* (Harvard, 2016); Pieter M. Judson, The Habsburg Empire: A New History (Harvard, 2016); Erik R. Scott, *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (Oxford, 2016); and Gerald Izenberg, *Identity: The Necessity of a Modern Idea* (Pennsylvania, 2016).

The ASN Huttenbach Prize for Best Article in *Nationalities Papers* was given to **Mohira Suyarkulova** for "Fashioning the Nation: Gender and Politics of Dress in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan," which appeared in the Vol. 44. No. 2 issue of the journal, http://bit.ly/2pxuhIR.

The ASN Documentary Award went to *Liberation: The User's Guide* (France/Russia, 2016), from director **Alexander Kuznetsov**, a striking vérité documentary that follows the long struggle of two inmates at a mental hospital, http://bit.ly/2pgtlru.
Two special mentions will be announced later.

The ten most attended panels/events at the Convention were
- the book panel on Timothy Snyder's On Tyranny
- the roundtable "Identity in Times of Crisis and Conflict in Ukraine"
- the roundtable "The Deeping of Authoritarianism in Turkey after the Failed Coup"
- the panel "Contemporary Populism and Illiberalism in Central Europe"
- the film Lenin: Another Story of the Russian Revolution
- the panel "Decommunization and Memory Politics in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine"
- the roundtable "CEU and Growing Threats to Academic Freedom"
- the roundtable "Researching Everyday Nationalism in Challenging Settings"
- the panel "Federalism, Autonomy, and Nation-Building in Russia"
- the book panel on Max Bergholz "Violence as a Generative Force" (Balkans)

Prior to the Convention, ASN issued statements in defense of CEU (http://bit.ly/2oQkHPA) and the European University at St. Petersburg (http://bit.ly/2rM4Yxb).

ASN wishes to express its gratitude to the Harriman Institute for its exceptional support in making the event a remarkable success. Special acknowledgments are reserved for ASN Executive Director Ryan Kreider, Convention Manager Ilke Denizli, Convention Registration Manager Kelsey Davis and Convention Communications Manager Agathe Manikowski, with warm kudos to the Harriman student staff and from the University of Ottawa student team.

The next ASN Convention will take place on **3-5 May, 2018**, at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University. The Call for Papers will be issued in early September and the submission deadline will fall on **October 25, 2017**.

For more information on the ASN World Convention: https://www.asnconvention.com
For more information on ASN, http://www.nationalities.org.

#5
22 Panels/Events on Ukraine at ASN 2017 Convention

Ukraine had its largest section ever at the ASN 2017 World Convention --held at Columbia University, New York, on 4-6 May – with 22 events, including fourteen regular panels (one of them a roundtable), three book panels and five new documentaries.

The fourteen panels are listed at http://bit.ly/2rOyX0K (click on "Ukraine").

The three book panels:

- Samuel Charap/Timothy Colton, Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia (Routledge 2017) [see New Book entry below]
  https://www.asnconvention.com/panel-bo1

- Lawrence Douglas, The Right Wrong Man: John Demjanjuk and the Last Great Nazi War Crimes Trial (Princeton 2016)
  https://www.asnconvention.com/book-panel-bo9-u15

- Marci Shore, The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution (Yale, 2017) [to be published in Fall 2017]
  https://www.asnconvention.com/panel-bo19-u16

The five documentaries:

- The Displaced Ukrainians (UK, 2017, dir. Mark Neville)
  https://www.asnconvention.com/the-displaced-ukrainians

- The Trial: The State of Russia vs Oleg Sentsov (Estonia, 2017, dir. Askold Kurov)
  https://www.asnconvention.com/the-trial

- Ukrainian Sheriffs (Ukraine/Germany, 2015, dir. Roman Bondarchuk)
  https://www.asnconvention.com/ukrainian-sheriffs

- When Will This Wind Stop (Poland, 2016, dir. Anieta Astryd Gabriel)
  https://www.asnconvention.com/when-will-this-wind-stop

- Women of Maidan (US/Ukraine, 2016, dir. Olha Onyshko)
  https://www.asnconvention.com/women-of-maidan

A documentary not on Ukraine, but by Ukraine's foremost filmmaker, Sergei Loznitsa's Austerlitz (Germany, 2016), was also on the program.
https://www.asnconvention.com/austerlitz

#6

Ex-Rebel Leaders Detail Role Played by Putin Aide in East Ukraine

by Anton Zverev
Reuters, 11 May 2017
http://reut.rs/2r4f2Kw

A top aide to Vladimir Putin decides how the pro-Moscow administration of eastern Ukraine is run and who gets what jobs there, three former rebel leaders said, challenging Kremlin denials that it calls the shots in the region.

Their comments to Reuters shed light on the role played by the secretive Vladislav Surkov, who has long been at the Russian president's side. The Kremlin says his official role is to advise Putin on Ukraine, where the rebels are fighting government forces.

The extent of his influence and powers has not been spelled out or acknowledged by the Kremlin which casts its role in the conflict as one where it has influence but is not a protagonist.

The three men who have held senior roles in the separatist movement in eastern Ukraine have explained in detail how Surkov controls the situation on the ground via handpicked proxies who give him regular situation reports, used aides to arrange elections there, and has worked to build power structures that are responsive to Moscow's wishes.

"Any call from Moscow was viewed as a call from the office of Lord God himself and... was implemented immediately," recalled Alexei Alexandrov, one of the leaders of the separatist rebellion in Donetsk who has since left the area in eastern Ukraine. Two other separatists corroborated his account, but declined to be identified.

Surkov and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not respond to questions about the extent of Surkov's role in Ukraine. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's office also declined to comment.

Reuters has previously gathered evidence that Moscow sent Russian troops and irregular fighters, and weapons, to help the separatists, who tried to break away from Ukraine in 2014. A senior former separatist described last year how Russian financial support propped up the breakaway area.

The Kremlin has always rejected those accusations as part of its effort to get Western sanctions imposed on it over Ukraine eased.

Reuters was unable to independently verify the separatists' descriptions of Surkov's role, but their individual versions of events tallied with one another, with key details and dates consistent with existing open source information about Surkov.

Alexandrov and the two other officials said their willingness to speak out underscores a sense that their uprising has been hijacked by the Kremlin, which has put in place loyalists who they say do not have the region's best interests at heart. All three said Moscow had gradually forced out most of the separatists behind the original uprising by using threats of death and detention.

"At first we were a bit naive and thought that maybe our Moscow uncles simply didn't understand what was happening here, when our Moscow comrades treated us like dirt," said one of the three former separatist leaders who said he last spoke to Surkov in November.

"But then I understood that they understood everything, and simply wanted us to keep our mouths shut."

Handpicked Leader

Surkov helped Putin engineer Russia's tightly controlled political system and coined the term "sovereign democracy" which the Kremlin uses to describe that system.

Viewed in the West as one of the architects of Russia's annexation of the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, Surkov was blacklisted from entering the United States and the European Union in March of that year. He told a Russian newspaper that being on Washington's blacklist was a "big honor" for him.

The separatists who came forward to describe Surkov's role say he also played a key role in the appointment of Alexander Zakharchenko as leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) in eastern Ukraine, the rebels' biggest breakaway entity by population.

Zakharchenko, a former coal mine electrician from eastern Ukraine, was the leader of an anti-Kiev militia when he was summoned to Moscow in 2014. Separatist leaders were

grooming him to be defense minister in the DNR. But after he met Surkov in the Kremlin, word came back from Surkov's office that Zakharchenko was to be given the top job.

A spokeswoman for Zakharchenko did not respond to written questions.

At the time, the Donetsk rebels had been led by two men who described themselves as volunteers from Russia. Far-right former journalist Alexander Borodai was the political chief, and Igor Strelkov, who said he was a former agent in Russia's federal security service (FSB), was the military commander.

Moscow wanted them replaced by a local to try to show the West that the uprising was a grassroots phenomenon, Borodai told Reuters. It picked Zakharchenko, whom it viewed as easy to control, said one of the three ex-separatist sources.

After what Alexandrov described as a verbal order from Surkov's office, Borodai and Strelkov quietly stepped down so that Zakharchenko could take over.
Borodai said he had been the first to suggest that Zakharchenko take over, but declined to answer detailed questions on the subject.

Strelkov did not respond to a request for comment, but has previously told Reuters he left the region after coming under pressure from people he declined to name.

After Zakharchenko was made leader of the Donetsk separatists, the region held an election which confirmed him in office. A team of Russians who worked for Surkov arrived in Donetsk to help run Zakharchenko's campaign, said Alexandrov. Reuters could not independently confirm that assertion.

Ukraine and its Western allies then rejected the vote. Separatists shrugged that rejection off, however, and Moscow suggested the Ukrainian government could now negotiate directly with the separatists, an offer Kiev spurned.

The contested election helped entrench Zakharchenko, all three former rebel leaders said.

Surkov's election team did not tell anyone in Donetsk their real names, and used military-style radio call signs instead.

Asked how he knew they worked for Surkov, Alexandrov said: "They didn't hide it. They announced it loudly at the first opportunity."

Five sources, including one close to the presidential administration and another who worked with Surkov in the Kremlin, said Surkov has regular meetings with separatist leaders, both in the breakaway territory and in Russia.

They say his involvement continues now, three years on from the start of the rebellion in eastern Ukraine.

Alexandrov said he met Surkov in Moscow in August 2014. Another of the former separatist leaders said his most recent meeting with Surkov in Moscow was in November last year.

Double Role

Surkov had at least three meetings last year with Victoria Nuland when she was U.S. Under-Secretary of State for European Affairs -- in January, May and June -- according to the U.S. embassy in Moscow.

Nuland told reporters at the time that the meetings had been part of a U.S. attempt to get all sides to implement the Minsk accord, which introduced a shaky ceasefire in eastern Ukraine and laid out steps for a political solution to the conflict.

Her meeting with Surkov in June in Moscow was "thorough and constructive," the U.S. embassy said.
But the sources who spoke to Reuters said Surkov's true role went far beyond acting as a peace broker.

Surkov's activities, which began at least six months before the internationally-brokered Minsk peace deal, focused on choosing personnel to take senior posts, on creating a structure for the separatist administration, on formulating a media strategy for the separatists and planning local elections, according to the people who spoke to Reuters.

After meeting Surkov in May, Nuland had warned that such elections, organized by the separatists without Ukrainian government involvement, would be ignored by Washington.

Poroshenko's office declined to comment on these accounts.

#7

The Crisis Over Ukraine – Three Years On: Is a "Grand Bargain" Totally Ruled Out?

Arkady Moshes
The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, No, 12, May 2017
http://bit.ly/2qiwb2q

An explicit "deal" between the West and Russia on Ukraine is not possible. Europe would like to reach a more pragmatic modus vivendi with Moscow, but a sustainable freezing of the conflict in Donbas remains a critical minimum precondition.

The military phase of the conflict in Ukraine's Donbas started three years ago, in May 2014. Throughout this period, observers have discussed whether or not the West would eventually go for an agreement with the Kremlin, "turn the page" and "trade" Ukraine for cooperation with Russia in other areas. A quick return to "business as usual" after the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and a half-hearted initial Western reaction to Russia's annexation of Crimea provided sufficient grounds for concern that this would happen.

Thus far, however, the West has remained formally committed to the cause of conflict resolution and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Diplomatic rhetoric gradually became less ambiguous in putting the blame for the continuing conflict on Moscow. Furthermore, in March 2015 the European Council legally conditioned the lifting of EU sanctions against Russia upon the full implementation of the peace plan known as Minsk-2, which foresees the return of Ukraine's sovereign control over its common border with Russia.

Several considerations may help to explain why the "understanding", viewed as plausible at the beginning of the conflict, has not come about. First and foremost, the majority of Western political circles came to the conclusion that what is at stake is not a controversy with Russia over Ukraine, but a much more comprehensive antagonism, in which Ukraine is only one of the components. Recurring talk of a second Cold War, new military deployments on both sides, Western concerns about Russia's interference in internal political processes, and about other means of so-called "hybrid" warfare, constituted a problem that extended far beyond Ukraine, and which was impossible to solve in Ukraine only.

Second, there is currently a much better understanding that the era of Yalta-type partitions of Europe is long gone and that Ukraine is no one's to "give away", whatever classical realpolitiker may say. Unlike in 1945, the would-be "big powers" do not have the resources to impose their will on a third country. In today's reality, the Western pressure on Ukraine to make it comply with a hypothetical Western-Russian agreement that Kyiv would not find acceptable (the federalization of the country, for example) is more likely to lead to deep political or even military destabilization at the EU's borders than to the "orderly" establishment of a "privileged sphere of interest".

Third, selective engagement between the West and Russia simply did not work. The "Ukraine for Syria" trade-off failed by default when Russia and the West also found themselves on different sides of the divide in Syria. Yet all this does not mean that the West has given up attempts to preserve pragmatic interaction with Russia, on Ukraine as well as more generally. Two fundamentals are of primary significance in this context.

One is the notorious "Ukraine fatigue". When Dutch citizens reject the ratification of the Association Agreement with Ukraine in a referendum, when it takes the EU an unprecedentedly long time to complete visa liberalization with Ukraine after all the conditions have been met, and when US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reportedly asks his G-7 colleagues why American taxpayers should care about the conflict in Ukraine – all this reveals a lack of confidence that Ukraine is worth the effort.

But more important is the fact that Europe is obviously uncomfortable witnessing Russia's conversion from a potential strategic partner into a strategic problem. Several EU capitals openly disagree with the adopted tough line. Deconfliction, albeit not at any price, remains an acute political task for the EU. Dialogue is actively being pursued, as recent visits to Russia by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and German Chancellor Angela Merkel may attest.

The West is refraining from raising the costs of the conflict in Ukraine for Russia, out of apparent concerns about exacerbating the situation, and apparently cannot do much to wrest the initiative on the ground from Moscow's hands. More dubious are persistent attempts to push through the Nord Stream 2 project. This gas pipeline on the Baltic Sea bed would deprive Ukraine of most of its transit revenues (which would then have to be indirectly compensated for by Western donors) and dismantle Ukraine's largest remaining leverage over Russia, which has been the Kremlin's objective all along. Yet none other than Berlin, otherwise the champion of Ukraine's cause, stubbornly continues to treat Nord Stream 2 as a "commercial project".

What is missing from the soughtafter modus vivendi is progress in the conflict zone. On the contrary, the conflict tends to escalate from time to time, as the tragic death of an OSCE monitoring mission member demonstrated at the end of April. Furthermore, this spring the situation acquired qualitatively new negative dynamics after the legal trade between breakaway territories and the rest of Ukraine was disrupted.

Arguably, from the Western point of view, a frozen conflict or even a sustainable ceasefire would be a significant improvement compared with the current situation. Whether it is negotiable, whether the West would be willing to go beyond the circulating semi-official suggestions about disaggregating Minsk-2 and gradually lifting the sanctions, and whether Moscow would be satisfied with merely another frozen conflict as the end-result of its Ukraine policy, as opposed to decisive influence in the country, remains to be seen.

Perhaps this is not yet likely. But it is still a necessary minimum precondition for any real improvement in Western-Russian relations.

#8
In Ukraine, Feeling Grows that the East is Lost to Russia

by Yuras Karmanau
Associated Press, 5 May 2017
http://dailym.ai/2qxOCgJ

MINSK, Belarus—Leonid Androv, an electrician from Kiev, was drafted into the Ukrainian army and spent a year fighting Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine after the conflict broke out in 2014. Now, like many other Ukrainians, he is ready to accept that those lands are lost. "The Russians are in charge there and they are methodically erasing everything Ukrainian. So why should I and impoverished Ukraine pay for the occupation?" said Androv, 43.

Long unthinkable after years of fighting and about 10,000 deaths, Ukrainians increasingly are coming around to the idea of at least temporarily abandoning the region known as the Donbass, considering it to be de facto occupied by Russia.

This would effectively kill the Minsk peace agreement brokered by Germany and France, which aims to preserve a united Ukraine. The Minsk agreement is still firmly supported both by the West and Russia, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin affirmed at their meeting this week.

The 2015 agreement, which Ukraine signed as its troops were being driven back, has greatly reduced but not stopped the fighting, while attempts to fulfill its provisions for a political settlement have failed.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko still stands by Minsk. In recent months, however, his government has moved to isolate the east by blocking trade and shutting off supplies of electricity and gas, demonstrating that it now considers the industrial region to be Moscow's problem.

Several factions in the Ukrainian parliament have introduced legislation that would designate those territories outside of Kiev's control as "occupied." "We should call a spade a spade and recognize the Russian occupation of Donbass," said Yuriy Bereza, a co-author of the legislation. Bereza, who commanded one of the volunteer battalions that fought in the east, called it necessary to preserve the state.

The likelihood of the legislation coming up for a vote is low, given the government's reluctance to formally acknowledge the loss of these territories. Almost half of Ukrainians, however, favor declaring the separatist-controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to be occupied, according to a poll conducted by the Razumkov Center.

Under Minsk, the two regions are to remain part of Ukraine but with "special status." They would have the right to hold their own elections. Those who fought against the Ukrainian army would receive amnesty.

These provisions have little popular support. The poll found that only 22 percent of Ukrainians were ready to grant the Donbass this "special status," while 31 percent of respondents said they found it difficult to answer. The poll, conducted in January among 2,018 people across Ukraine, had a margin of error of 2.3 percentage points. "It is obvious that Ukrainian society supports the isolation and blockade of the Donbass. And this

is exactly what is dictating President Poroshenko's behavior," said Razumkov Center sociologist Andrei Bychenko. "If Poroshenko plans to seek a second term, he has to think about the mood of society, not about the expectations of the West."

Poroshenko was elected after mass protests led to the ouster of Ukraine's Russia-friendly president in early 2014 and put the country on a path toward closer integration with the West.
While still speaking about a united Ukraine, Poroshenko's government last month shut off electricity supplies to Luhansk over unpaid debts. Kiev already had stopped supplying gas to both the Luhansk and Donetsk regions and in March, Poroshenko imposed a trade blockade on the regions beyond Kiev's control.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters this was "one more step by Ukraine to rid itself of these territories." Although Russia quickly annexed the Crimean Peninsula at the start of the conflict, Putin has made clear he has no interest in annexing eastern Ukraine. "The Kremlin has tried to push this cancerous tumor back into Ukraine, using Donetsk and Lugansk as a Trojan horse to manipulate Kiev," said Russian political scientist Andrei Piontkovsky. "But the Ukrainian government has had enough sense not to let it happen."

Putin, speaking to journalists Tuesday after talks with Merkel, responded angrily to a suggestion that perhaps it was time for a new peace agreement since the Donbass already had de facto separated from Ukraine. "No one has severed these territories. They were severed by the Ukrainian government itself through all sorts of blockades," Putin said. Russia was forced to support Donbass, he added, noting that it was "still supplying a significant amount of goods, including power, and providing coke for Ukrainian metallurgical plants."

Putin and Merkel both said that despite the problems they saw no alternative to the Minsk agreement. Sergei Garmash is among the 2 million people who have left their homes in eastern Ukraine. He said there is almost nothing Ukrainian left in Donetsk, which now uses Russian rubles, receives only Russian television and survives thanks to Russian subsidies. "Ukrainian politicians need to be brave and legally recognize this territory as occupied by Russia. This will force Moscow to pick up the bill. And the more expensive this adventure will be for the Kremlin, the sooner it will walk away," said Garmash, 45, who now lives in Kiev.
Moscow sends humanitarian convoys to the Donbass every month and pays the salaries and pensions of people who live there. Russia also supports the separatist military operations, although the Kremlin continues to deny that it sends arms and troops.

Russia has been hurt economically by sanctions imposed by the West over the annexation of Crimea and support for the separatists. "Public opinion has swung sharply toward the isolation of Donbass, and for the Kiev government it is an opportune time to shift all the expenses of the 'frozen conflict' to Moscow," said Vladimir Fesenko, head of the Penta

Center of Political Studies in Ukraine. “Of course the war in Donbass was incited by Russia to slow Ukraine’s move toward Europe,” Fesenko said. “But no Ukrainian politician can publicly give up on Crimea and Donbass and recognize them as part of Russia.” Androv, the Kiev electrician, said the problem is that no one knows what to do with Donbass. Likening it to a suitcase with no handle, he said: “It’s too heavy to carry, but it’s a shame to throw it away.”

#9
Killing Pavel

by Paul Niland
Kyiv Post, 11 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2qglECN

A documentary released on May 10 sheds fresh light on the early morning killing of a prominent journalist in central Kyiv. The murdered man was Pavel Sheremet, a Belarussian journalist who had made Ukraine his home. He was killed by a car bomb 100 meters from his home, on July 20, 2016.

Ukraine has long struggled to move towards European values and norms – for many this was the very reason for the beginning of the Euromaidan Revolution. European values and norms include things like freedom of the press, as well as the professionalism and independence of the work of law enforcement bodies. The documentary demonstrates that in today’s Ukraine, sadly, even after a revolution that cost the lives of a hundred people, Ukraine still falls far short of these benchmarks.

The 50-minute-long documentary, entitled “Killing Pavel,” featuring an investigation by four Ukrainian journalists from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, a Kyiv Post partner, and the investigative team Slidstvo.info, reveals a lot of new information about the killing. It lays bare the shortcomings of the investigators and prosecutors supposed to find those responsible for this horrific crime. And it raises significant questions about the actions, or competency, of Ukrainian law enforcement, at a minimum.

Full disclosure: I didn’t know Sheremet well, but we had several mutual friends. I met him only once. He was a charming man, intelligent, highly articulate, funny, and warm. I took flowers to the site where he was killed, and I attended his memorial service in Kyiv. More disclosure, I have also met Khatia Dekanoidze, the former Head of the National Police of Ukraine, who features in the documentary. To my knowledge, Dekanoidze is a hardworking and competent person, she won her job on merit, was dedicated to applying her experience in her native Georgia to helping Ukraine, and did so tirelessly. The lights in her office were often burning into the early hours of the morning. For those reasons,

the holes in the official investigation that have been highlighted in her interviews for the Killing Pavel documentary are, to say the least, surprising.

Failures of the official investigation

It is known that the bomb that killed Sheremet was planted under his car at around 2:30 a.m., and that this act was carried out by a two person team, a man and a woman. The CCTV footage previously released related to this case was grainy, and it was impossible to get positive identification of either the main suspects or any witnesses to the act that lead to Sheremets's death a few hours later.

It would be expected that, in a murder case, every possible lead and angle would be followed. However we learn from this new report that technologies that could have been used to get to the facts were simply not applied.

In addition, key witnesses were ignored, or not identified. At the precise moment that the bomb was being planted a taxi cab dropped off a fare meters away from Pavel's cherry red Subaru Crossover. The cab driver was tracked down by the investigative journalists, and it is clear from his statement that he was never interviewed by the police. He only learned that he was a possible witness to the crime when he was contacted for the documentary.

CCTV footage from the area around Sheremet's home reveals the presence of two vehicles of interest on the street in question in the hours before the bomb was planted – a white Mercedes SUV and a gray Skoda. These two vehicles arrived at the same time, 11:30 p.m., the drivers of the vehicles interacted with each other, and they left the scene close to four hours later, not long after the bomb had been planted. All of this occurred a short distance from where they waited in their parked cars. Dekanoidze said that, to the best of her knowledge, all vehicles in the area and showing up on the CCTV tapes obtained by the authorities had been traced. This is obviously not true, because the owner and driver of the gray Skoda were only tracked down as a result of forensic examination of the footage carried out for the documentary by a member of the Bellingcat organization.

It is inconceivable that a murder investigation could overlook something as important as two vehicles that were in the location where the bomb was planted, at the time that the bomb was planted. The fact that these vehicles were occupied during this period suggests that the occupants are either; a) vital witnesses, or, b) accomplices to the crime.

As a result of weeks of work done by Bellingcat, the registration number of the Skoda was ascertained, (the Mercedes SUV was parked a little further down the street, and neither the vehicle or the driver have been identified). Natalya Zaretska, the owner of the gray Skoda, registration AA 2551 MO, was contacted by the investigative journalists. It is clear from the outset of the communication between journalist Dmitro Gnap and Seretska that she was not keen to discuss this topic, her answers were evasive, and had she been unaware of any potential wrong-doing related to the vehicle registered in her name there

would have been no need for any evasiveness when contacted either by telephone or in person.

Identifying the gray Skoda and its registered owner then leads to another vital fact – who was using that vehicle on that night. It turned out to be a man called Ihor Andriivych Ustimenko. When contacted and interviewed by journalists, Ustimenko claimed to have seen nothing on the night in question. The journalists then managed to find out, through an anonymous source, that Ustimenko had joined Ukraine's SBU security service in 2014. This was now confirmed (in a tweet and Facebook post intended to rubbish the documentary, judging by the tone) by a spokesperson from the SBU – apparently Ustimenko was in the service of the SBU until late April 2014.

Trail of bad excuses

The fact that the SBU's spokesperson, Olena Gitlyanska, confirmed that Ustimenko had been a member of the SBU is interesting – it is a clear attempt to distance the SBU from this matter, but in fact it just raises more questions.
Are we to believe a former SBU officer was sitting on a street while a bomb was being planted, and saw nothing suspicious?

Are we to believe a former SBU agent knew, with absolute certainty, that he was in the vicinity when a serious crime was being committed, and he did not voluntarily present himself to the authorities to give testimony? Any person who had ever had any position in law enforcement anywhere in the world would have done the exact opposite.

Are we to believe a former SBU agent, with knowledge of their potential value as another witness in a murder case, would refuse, as Ustimenko did in this documentary, to identify the other person who was with him at the exact time the bomb was planted, the white Mercedes SUV driver.

No, this is not normal. This is not believable.

Any honest law enforcement professional would immediately come forward to help their colleagues. A person involved in law enforcement, past or present, who refuses to present themselves to give testimony or identify other possible witnesses, for any reason, is obstructing an investigation, and obstructing justice. The fact that Ustinenko is no longer a serving member of the SBU (or so the agency says) absolves him of none of his ethical or legal obligations to provide testimony. A court can decide whether his actions, or inaction, of the last ten months amounts to obstructing justice.
Ustimenko must be compelled, immediately, to identify the driver of the white Mercedes, and also to provide an alibi for his claim that he was in that area at that time to provide private security services for a family. At present, we only have his word that this was why he was there, and on the face of it his word seems to be worth very little.

More overlooked details

And more holes in the official investigation were highlighted by this documentary. Another possible witness was seen on CCTV on an adjacent street at the time the bomb was planted. The only footage obtained by the authorities showed him from behind only, carrying a distinctive backpack with parallel luminescent stripes. Dekanoidze said that she was not aware of footage showing his face, but the documentary makers found such footage. Dekanoidze then stated that it would not have been appropriate to release an image of a potential witness to such a crime to the public. My previously stated respect for Dekanoidze notwithstanding, she is completely wrong, because that's precisely what would have happened in a competent investigation.

"Police are appealing for information to identify this man, a potential witness to a murder" is not an uncommon statement.

The authorities also failed to find all CCTV footage of the likely perpetrators of this crime, but the journalists and investigators did, and one revealing piece of color CCTV footage showed that the man in question was wearing a hoodie with a distinctive patch on the back. It appears from analyzing footage of the moments before the bomb exploded that a man of similar build and wearing a hoodie with a similar patch on the back was back on the same street as Sheremet left his home, for the very last time, on July 20.

Perhaps most damning of all, the makers of the documentary asked for comment on the new information from President Petro Poroshenko – and his office did not respond. The SBU and the Prosecutor Generals' office both declined to give interviews; and Interior Minister Arsen Avakov did not respond to a request for comment either.

A prominent journalist was murdered in broad daylight, and failing to bring the perpetrators to justice, whoever they are, is unacceptable. Thanks to the makers of the "Killing Pavel" documentary, the authorities now have more information to work with.

And turning a blind eye, or further obstruction in this case, is also unacceptable.

#10
No Jail Time for Ukrainian Soldier Who Murdered Civilian [UKL title]

Volodymyr Ishchenko
Facebook, 12 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2pIZ5pi

Ukrainian soldier, who kidnapped, tortured and likely murdered a local man in Donbass suspected in cooperation with the separatists, was sentenced only to 5 years conditionally,

i.e. he was released in the court. So, essentially kidnapping and murder in Ukraine is punished more or less the same way as posting "Lenin lives" on Facebook. See http://bit.ly/2qDiNHd (in Russian).

Lviv Youth Gets 2 ½ Years for Facebook Communism
Volodymyr Ishchenko
http://bit.ly/2qgDVjE

A fragment from the sentence to the guy who yesterday got 2.5 years for "Facebook Communism" in Lviv. I am trying to translate Ukrainian legal jargon, it's not easy. In original this is mindblowing.

"Particularly, this person was incriminated in that he, during the period from May 2015 till April 2016, using his own laptop, in the social network 'Facebook', under an alias account, intentionally, with a purpose of spreading communist ideology to a wide public, understanding that this page is open-access and an infinite number of users of the social network 'Facebook' can read it, posted publications, also in the social network public pages, that, according to the linguistic expertise's conclusion, contain propaganda of the elements of communist ideology, which is the circulation of tendentious information aimed at idealizing and popularizing communist ideology and public use of the products with the communist regime symbols to which belong: publications about V. I. Lenin, i.e. the person who hold a leadership position in the top power bodies of the USSR, his philosophic-political quotations, and also widely known communist slogans: 'Lenin lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin will be alive!'; 'Plan is a law, plan's fulfillment is a duty, the overfulfillment is an honor!'"

Official announcement in Ukrainian: http://bit.ly/2r4aAvs

#11
On the Court Ruling [UKL title]

Mikhail Khokhlovych
Facebook, 12 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2qcVlPQ

Today, a Donetsk oblast court, citing a sincere confession and military engagement in the Anti-Terrorist Operation in the East of Ukraine as mitigating circumstances, sentenced a soldier to five years of prison with a three year probation period for the kidnapping of a local civilian that resulted in his death. Numerous eyewitness accounts of the convict's army colleagues claim that he suspected a local man of ties with the separatists after which he kidnapped him, put a bag over his head and brutally questioned him inflicting physical damage so severe the man, who spent the night tied up on the floor, was found

dead in the morning. His body was then wrapped in a tent and disposed of in a nearby field by a group of soldiers. When the body was found it had decomposed to such a state that it was impossible to establish if the victim's death was a result of physical violence endured during the "passionate interrogation". The court then proceeded to make the assumption that the man had died from the complication of some unidentified prior disease he was unable to get treatment for because he was lying tied up in a Ukrainian military base. This cleared the charges of murder and battery and the court prosecuted the soldier for kidnapping alone. This extremely mild sentence means that the convicted war criminal will go back to serving in the Ukrainian army knowing that the Ukrainian judicial system will have his back in case he oversteps his boundaries in zealously serving his Motherland. I can only begin to imagine how this news will be interpreted by those still living in the war zone after three years of armed conflict.

Two days ago a Lviv court in the West of the country sentenced a young man to two and a half years of prison with a one year probation period for "using Facebook to spread communist propaganda." This sentence was also mitigated by the accused's confession and cooperation with the prosecution, otherwise he would have faced up to five years in prison for sharing images of Soviet symbols and slogans.

Both of these rulings were made immediately after violent clashes of the far right with those who came out to celebrate Victory Day all over the country and numerous arrests for civilians bearing Soviet war-related flags including a 79 year-old man who put on a USSR T-shirt on May 9. Because WWII symbols have been widely used by pro-Russian sympathisers and the Russian media has been quick to amplify the role of May 9 as a stumbling point for two irreconcilable visions of Ukrainian history and its future, the state wanted to maintain a low turnout without WWII symbols used in Moscow and the unrecognised republics. At the same time, they wanted to keep violence against the largely elderly protesters to a minimum. Unsurprisingly, the ban on traditional symbolism called for reinforcement from the police which resulted in a series of arrests in addition to police violence against the far-right who had threatened to sabotage the march. The PR disaster of Victory Day and the Kafka-esque court rulings of this week demonstrate the condition of the Ukrainian national project: unable to defeat the enemy in the frontline with the Minsk peace negotiations fallen flat, the government has resorted to combatting what they perceive as the cause of the conflict: the Soviet (and pro-Russian) within its subjects.

Why else would a court regard a war crime as less severe than a civil crime? Once a Ukrainian citizen becomes suspected of separatist or pro-Russian sympathies s/he is no longer a civilian victim but an enemy regardless of their degree of involvement in military action (if any). This painting of Ukrainian citizens as enemies can take the forms of the blaming of the residents of the unrecognised republics "for nurturing separatism" and the discrimination of IDPs in employment and accommodation rental in continental Ukraine, as well boycotts of allegedly pro-Russian and widely popular TV and radio stations who are believed to turn the citizens into "Russian-loving zombies". It also results in the glorification and heroisation of those fighting against "the separatist condition" and treating participation in the war as a moral indulgence against war crimes, as the

case of the soldier who was given six months probation for raping a minor demonstrates. With the economy in shambles and the IMF-driven austerity putting the burden of the state's economic flounder on the shoulders of its citizens, the only way for the Ukrainian government to acquire support of the impoverished population is to make them see the current hardships as a temporary setback on its path towards a glorious European future. Paradoxically enough, the state's fanatical attempts to incorporate "anti-Western" populations into its national project by stripping them of the Soviet is exactly what's alienating already disengaged citizens and fuelling further anti-government sentiment. With the government unwilling to make concessions concerning its nationalist vision of history, language and identity, the only way to ensure its continued rule is to silence dissent with the help of the repressive apparatus, the powers of which were originally unleashed post-Maidan to "fight the enemies of freedom", and far-right groups, who, often as "anonymous patriots", physically assault representatives of political parties whose vision of Ukraine differs from the mainstream pro-European discourse.

The bottom line is, Ukraine is not a democracy. It's trapped in a vicious cycle of an undeclared war with Russian influence at its border and within itself which, while temporary, feels like forever and is driving the country ever further from the Maidan's original aspirations of becoming a European democracy (whatever that might mean).

#12
Injustice Wins Again

by Oleg Sukhov and Olena Goncharova
Kyiv Post, 21 April 2017
http://bit.ly/2s7IjSn

Four former Berkut riot police officers charged with murder, torture and assault fled to Russia on April 9–11, after courts in Kyiv ruled that they could be released from custody. The incident has triggered a public outcry, with critics arguing that the officers' flight is another classic example of Ukraine's politicized and corrupt judiciary.

They claim the cases were sabotaged by the Interior Ministry led by Arsen Avakov, accusing the nation's biggest law enforcement agency of protecting former Berkut officers accused of crimes committed during Ukraine's 100-day EuroMaidan Revolution that drove President Viktor Yanukovych from power on Feb. 22, 2014.

Lawyers suspect the court rulings were influenced by higher-ranking officials who the officers might have implicated in wrongdoing.

"It's an outrage," says Yevhenia Zakrevska, a lawyer for the families of EuroMaidan activists allegedly killed by Berkut police. "The court ruled there are no risks in the release of (the Berkut officers). It was an unlawful decision."

The National Police, accused of protecting its officers, denied any meddling, while the Interior Ministry and the courts involved did not comment by the time the Kyiv Post went to publication.

Suspects released

The officers who fled later released a video from Russia saying that they "have realized that it's dangerous for them to stay in Ukraine." They had pleaded not guilty and complained about prosecutors' alleged bias.

The four ex-Berkut officers — Vitaly Honcharenko, Vladyslav Masteha, Artem Voilokov and Oleksandr Kostyuk — were detained in June in Kharkiv, where they lived and served. Only Honcharenko had been suspended, while the other three still worked in the police force.

Three judges of the Kyiv Court of Appeals — Oleh Prysyazhnyuk, Vyacheslav Dzyubin and Tetiana Rosik — released Honcharenko on April 6.

Berkut officers Voilokov and Masteha were placed under nighttime house arrest — a measure effectively equivalent to release during daytime — by Iryna Lytvynova, a judge of Kyiv's Pechersk Court, in March.

The fourth officer, Kostyuk, was released by Roman Novak, a Pechersk Court judge, in November.

Valery Lashevych, a judge of the Kyiv Court of Appeal, placed another ex-Berkut officer, Oleksandr Belov, under nighttime house arrest in November. Belov is still in Ukraine. Sergii Gorbatiuk, head of the prosecutorial department for trials in absentia, believes the judges' rulings to be unlawful and says he is planning to prosecute them.

Judges' background

Some of the judges who released the officers have a controversial reputation and are considered to be loyal to the authorities.

In March, Rosik and Lashevych were chosen to consider an appeal against the arrest of State Fiscal Service Chief Roman Nasirov, a loyalist of President Petro Poroshenko. Lashevych and Prysyazhnyuk on April 19 ruled to return Nasirov's passports and other documents, which had previously been seized to prevent him from fleeing.

Lashevych and Rosik in March also reduced the bail for Ruslan Zhurilo, a suspect in a corruption case investigated by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Dzyubin and Lashevych have ruled against ex-Deputy Prosecutor General Vitaly Kasko, Ukrop party leader Gennady Korban and lawmaker Ihor Mosiychuk — political opponents of Poroshenko.

Dzyubin visited the Presidential Administration in 2015 before ruling against Korban, according to the UNIAN news agency.

Lashevych was investigated in a case against ex-Kyiv Appeals Court Chief Anton Chernushenko, who fled in 2015 after being charged with interfering with the automatic system for allocating cases to judges. Lashevych is also accused of having ties to Poroshenko's gray cardinal and lawmaker Oleksandr Hranovsky, who has close ties among the prosecutors and lawyers but denies influencing law enforcement.
Judge Lytvynova was investigated over an alleged unlawful ruling in 2015, while Novak has been accused of numerous procedural violations.

Declared wealth

The judges' asset declarations have shown property that is at odds with their modest salaries.

Prysyazhnyuk owns two houses, three apartments, two cars and 7,500 square meters of land. His job in the Kyiv Appeal Court pays him $13,000 a year.

Novak, whose yearly salary is $9,000, owns with his wife a 12,000 square meter land plot in Kyiv Oblast, two apartments in Kyiv, and $16,500 in cash.

Lytvynova, who makes $11,300 as a judge, has two apartments and two houses. Dzyubin makes $11,700 a year, while he and his wife have three apartments and $43,000 in cash.

Sabotage by police

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry is trying to protect Berkut police officers.
For example, Kharkiv city police tried to get Honcharenko out under their responsibility, Zakrevska said.

Top officials of Kyiv police have also addressed the courts asking not to suspend Berkut officers, and the police have given positive recommendations to Berkut suspects.

Ex-Deputy Prosecutor General Oleksiy Bahanets has also accused Interior Minister Arsen Avakov and his aide Anton Gerashchenko of obstructing the prosecution of Berkut officers. Gerashchenko has praised some of the suspects for their service.

Suspected crimes

Police officers Honcharenko and Belov are accused of killing three people on Feb. 18, 2014. Honcharenko is also suspected of attacking protester Serhiy Didych, who was later killed in another incident.

"I have no hope that these crimes will be solved," Didych's widow Halyna Didych said. "Now we see the results — Kharkiv-born Avakov and his aide (Anton) Gerashchenko) are helping Kharkiv Berkut police members to avoid punishment."

Masteha and Voilokov are suspected of torturing protesters on Jan. 19, 2014. Honcharenko and Kostyuk have also been charged with assaulting human rights activist Kostyantyn Reutsky at a checkpoint in Kharkiv Oblast on Jan. 29, 2015.

Honcharenko has been officially recognized as a veteran of the war with Russia. Critics have dismissed his veteran status as fake, since he effectively fled to the enemy.

Previous runaways

About seven Berkut officers fled in February 2014, at a time when there was no proof of their involvement in EuroMaidan murders.

In April 2014, Berkut police commander Dmytro Sadovnyk — the key suspect in the EuroMaidan murders case — and two other Berkut employees were arrested.

In late July to August, prosecutors were preparing to arrest six more Berkut officers, but the suspects left the country after what critics believe was a leak of information from law enforcement agencies.

Sadovnyk fled the country after Pechersk Court Judge Svitlana Volkova released him from custody and put him under nighttime house arrest on Sept. 19, 2014.

Volkova had no right to release him, as Sadovnyk's arrest was to expire only on Sept. 26, 2014, according to the Prosecutor General's Office. Rank-and-file prosecutors wanted to arrest him after that, but the leadership of the Prosecutor General's Office refused to allocate a special forces unit to arrest him after he was released, Oleksiy Donsky, a top official at the prosecutorial department for trials in absentia, said in 2014.

Political influence?

Then-Prosecutor General Vitaly Yarema and his deputy Mykola Herasimyuk have been blamed for allowing Sadovnyk to escape.

Herasimyuk, who later became a parliamentary aide to lawmaker Hranovsky, was offered bribes to drop charges against allies of ex-President Viktor Yanukovych, and he

transferred $700,000 abroad in 2014, according to emails published by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. In 2014 he failed to help British authorities to investigate the case against ex-Ecology Minister Mykola Zlochevsky.

Since Yarema, who denied accusations of sabotage, was a loyalist of Poroshenko, the president has also been accused of being involved in the case, which he denies.

Volkova was known for her loyalty to the authorities. The case against Volkova, who is accused of making an unlawful ruling, has seen no progress.

Other fugitives

Meanwhile, two other Berkut officers fled in February 2015.

Currently, 23 former Berkut employees are wanted, and 14 of them have gotten Russian citizenship. Some of them formed a new Berkut police unit in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory of Crimea, while others are employed by Moscow's OMON riot police unit.

Lawyer Markiyan Halabala says there's little hope that Russia will extradite the Berkut officers, but there's a chance for a trial in absentia if the corresponding law is improved. However, the authorities have so far failed to amend the legislation on trials in absentia, which is currently at odds with international law.

Disgraced unit

At least 20 ex-Berkut officers charged with crimes, including five in Kharkiv Oblast, remain in Ukraine, with some released and others in custody or under house arrest. Of these, five are on trial on suspicion of murdering protesters on Feb. 20, 2014.

Though the Berkut unit, known for its brutality, was formally liquidated on Feb. 25, 2014, de facto it was simply renamed.

Most of the Berkut officers remained in the police, said lawyer Vitaly Tytych and ex-police vetting commission members Roman Sinitsyn and Olga Khudetska. But the Interior Ministry and the National Police have so far refused to divulge the number of Berkut officers who remained in their jobs.

Though ex-National Police Chief Khatia Dekanoidze initially planned a stricter vetting procedure for Berkut police, it has not been implemented, according to Sinitsyn and Khudetska.

According to them, some Berkut officers also "hid" by being transferred to the National Guard and Defense Ministry units, which did not have to pass vetting.

#13

Russian-Prophylactic FSB "Ukrainian Saboteur" Charges in Occupied Crimea

by Halya Coynash
Human Rights in Ukraine
http://bit.ly/2seQEmH

There are chilling indications that a well-known academic arrested in Russian-occupied Crimea on wildly implausible 'diversion and sabotage' charges and prevented from seeing an independent lawyer has been pressured into 'admitting guilt', enabling a court trial without any proof being required.

With Russia's rosy promises about the future of Crimea under Russian occupation so glaringly at odds with reality, it's FSB or security service is continuing to fake terrorist or saboteur plots. These strengthen their position, while instilling terror, not least among those who know it's all pretence. Unlike the stories, the people arrested and imprisoned are real, but that's no problem when the prosecutor, courts and the media are all willing to play their roles. And when the FSB has learned dangerous ways of preventing the fallout from cases too obviously fabricated.

The lack of any acts of terrorism or sabotage is unfortunately not a major factor. Not if the FSB can avoid 'confessions' being retracted and conceal the torture used to extract them. They failed three years ago, with Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov and civic activist Oleksandr Kolchenko withstanding the torture, and Gennady Afanasyev later retracting his testimony in court. The attempt at a remake in August 2016 has so far only caused headaches. The torture marks on Yevhen Panov were clearly visible, making the fact that he was prevented from seeing a lawyer for two months of urgent concern. He was finally allowed to see a lawyer after the European Court of Human Rights intervened, and since then both he and Andriy Zakhtei have consistently denied all charges, and given harrowing accounts of the torture they were subjected to. The FSB has totally changed the charges against Ridvan Suleymanov, with these now scarcely linked to his televised 'confession'.

to arrest men who had never set eyes on each other, as alleged conspirators. They may well have regretted involving Yevhen Panov, whose family are safely in mainland Ukraine, making it more difficult to threaten retaliation against his family if he didn't 'cooperate'.

Both factors were 'rectified] with the next arrests in November 2016. On Nov 9, two internationally known academics and experts on the Black Sea Fleet - Dmytro Shtyblikov and Oleksiy Bessarabov - were arrested in Sevastopol together with a retired Ukrainian military officer Volodymyr Dudka. The FSB did not give names, but claimed the

men were “members of a sabotage – terrorist group of the Ukrainian Defence Ministry’s Central Intelligence Department” who were planning acts of sabotage on military and other infrastructure”. Two much younger Crimeans - Oleksiy Stohniy and Hlib Shabliy were arrested 10 days later, with this followed on Nov 24 by the arrest of Leonid Parkhomenko, a long-retired Black Sea Fleet captain. Nothing has been heard since of Shabliy and Parkhomenko, however Stohniy’s wife Oksana has just come to Kyiv and totally overturnedthe information presented on Russian television. Her husband was in fact seized at the Armyansk crossing into mainland Ukraine when trying to visit his daughter for her birthday. Although her husband and Shabliy gave ‘confessions’ clearly linked with the first three men arrested, Stohniy is now in custody on an entirely separate charge of ‘preparing weapons’. It is a totally incomprehensible charge given that searches were carried out of their home in his absence, as well as that of his parents and his work. Nothing was found in his home, and only computers were removed from the other places searched.

The FSB report on Nov 10, 2016 after the arrest of Shtyblikov, Bessarabov and Dudka, asserted that “a powerful explosive device, weapons and ammunition, special communications devices and other material evidence” had been found. Equally grandiose claims were made in May 2014 after the arrest of Sentsov and three other opponents of Russian annexation. Most were never mentioned again.

An FSB operational video was circulated to the Russian media, with this showing Shtyblikov being roughly pinned down and handcuffed by FSB officers, and then in his home. The camera focused on the Ukrainian trident, a Ukrainian flag on the wall, and Dmytro Yarosh’s ‘Right Sector’ business card. Russian channels told their viewers that this was from the nationalist movement banned in Russia, but chose to remain silent about the ‘Yarosh business card’s’ extremely specific history. The card had been first produced by Russia as ‘incriminating evidence’ in April 2014, after supposedly being pulled quite intact from a totally gutted out car. The absurdity of the claim led to an Internet storm of hilariously implausible ‘findings’ of the card.

The ‘incriminating’ weapons shown on the video appear to have been airguns, from Shtyblikov’s sporting hobby.

The only ‘evidence’ is thus videos produced with total disregard for procedure and, most importantly, in the absence of a lawyer.

The question of adequate legal representation has now become particularly critical as it appears that Shtyblikov is ‘admitting guilt’, with this meaning a separate court hearing where proof is not required. That in turn has implications for all three men, as Shtyblikov has been named the ‘leader’ of the so-called saboteur plot.

During the first month, it was only Volodymyr Dudka who was able to see an independent lawyer, not provided by the FSB. It is telling that Dudka retracted the previously provided ‘confession’ and said that it had been extracted through duress and threats to his family.

Shtyblikov has probably not seen an independent lawyer at all. Back in November, he supposedly rejected the services of Alexander Popkov, who had contracted an agreement with the Shtyblikov family. Popkov was not allowed to see Shtyblikov and hear this from him, which is a serious breach of procedural legislation. It is therefore unclear whether the person Shtyblikov has agreed should represent him was freely chosen.

It would be dangerous to get into conflict with the only lawyer Shtyblikov has, however his family's concern about the likely motives for his behaviour is easy to understand. They know the charges to be absurd, which raises worrying questions about what is making him admit to something he didn't do. They believe it likely that he is being placed under great pressure, possibly with threats of some sort to his family.
The same attempts to prevent independent defence have been seen in the case of Panov and Zakhtei, as well as with other Ukrainians seized and tried since Russia's annexation of Crimea. In all such cases, the people have since made it clear that the appointed lawyers were serving the prosecution, not them.

In this case, the situation is exacerbated by virtually total secrecy. Dudka's lawyer has said that she had to sign an undertaking not to divulge any information. It is known that Bessarabov now has a lawyer, but whether by choice or FSB appointment is unclear. Bessarabov's family are largely avoiding talking with anybody, including the other men's families, although the three men do know each other. For a decade until February 2014, Shtyblikov and Bessarabov worked together in the Nomos Centre for furthering research into geopolitical issues and Euro-Atlantic cooperation in the Black Sea Region. 46-year-old Shtyblikov was the Director of International Programs while Bessarabov, now 40, was Deputy Editor of the journal 'Black Sea Security'. 52-year-old Dudka was a former military sea captain, who retired for health reasons back in 2009. He then worked for the Ukrainian Emergency Services, using his professional skills to locate unexploded mines from WWII, and continued the same work for the analogous Russian agency after annexation. His son and infant granddaughter are very much the focus of his life, and he remained in Sevastopol because of them.

The families of all the men are frightened to speak publicly, fearing the consequences to the men or to themselves.

It is imperative that Shtyblikov receives proper legal defence now and that the prosecution is forced in open trial to prove its claims against all three men. This is very clearly what the FSB are trying to avoid with it worryingly easy to imagine the frightening pressure which the men are facing.

#14

Backlash Grows Against Ukraine's Attempts to Block Russian Social Media

by Isobel Koshiw
Eurasianet.org, 22 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2qDeveC

Isobel Koshiw is a Kyiv-based freelance journalist writing about politics, business and the war.

The Ukrainian government has descended to the Kremlin's level with its decision to censor Russian-owned social networks and websites, according to human rights advocates.

Services such as Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki, as well as the popular Yandex search engine have been targeted as part of a Ukrainian cyberspace-blitzkrieg on Russian-controlled content. The order, signed by the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, has caused chaos, even barring a widely-used Russian accounting program.

Officials in Kiev say the restrictions are needed to fight Russia's propaganda machine and to prevent its security services from spying on the millions of Ukrainians who use Russian-owned sites.

But by resorting to internet censorship, Kiev is "emulating Russia's repression" says Kenneth Roth of U.S.-based Human Rights Watch in a Twitter post.

The Ukrainian government maintains it had to take tougher measures because of concerns that the Kremlin is expanding hacking and other information-war activities worldwide. It is a reversal of past policy.

While it barred Russian television broadcasts several years ago — since the Kremlin first began stirring up the conflict in eastern Ukraine — President Poroshenko and his officials had been trying to use Russian-controlled sites to get their message out. It was hard to ignore them, as almost 80 percent of Ukrainian internet users are signed up to Vkontakte. Odnoklassniki is Ukraine's second most popular social network after Vkontakte.

Both sites though belong to Mail.ru which is owned by the Kremlin-friendly oligarch Alisher Usmanov. Vkontakte's founder, Pavel Durov, sold his last shares in 2014 after losing a battle with the Russian security services over access to the accounts of EuroMaidan protesters using the site.

Now though, President Poroshenko says he is logging off, ordering the nearly 21 million Ukrainian users of those two sites to do likewise. In what he called his last Vkontakte post, he said: "with the global scale of Russia's cyber attacks, including in the recent French

elections, the time has come to take more decisive action."

But it puts Ukraine into a select club, along with China, Turkey and Russia, that bans certain social networking sites. The blocked sites were added to a list of hundreds of companies and individuals already banned by Ukraine in sanctions which were renewed by Ukraine's National Security Council in April.

The secretary of the council, Oleksandr Turchynov, said social networking sites had been included because the Russian security services were using them to collect information illegally.

"These sites are even being used as recruitment networks for Russian security services and many other related problems," Turchynov said.

Announced with little warning, the internet ban has sparked widespread disruption and criticism. An estimated 80 percent of Ukrainian companies use a Russian accounting program called 1C that is now officially off limits. And the Yandex search engine is Ukraine's second most popular after Google.

Maksym Stepenko, who runs a Vkontakte group called "NoModels" which relies on traffic-based advertising, told Coda that the ban could "destroy" his Ukrainian market, which makes up nearly a third of his 280,000 followers.

The ban could also have deadly consequences in eastern Ukraine, according to Bellingcat journalist Aric Toler, who said on Twitter that both residents and the authorities rely on Vkontakte posts to disseminate the latest reports on the fighting.

Journalist-turned-lawmaker Mustafa Nayyem wrote on Facebook that the ban won't work. "Such measures in the fight against propaganda only benefit the enemy," Nayyem wrote, noting that in separatist-controlled territories media outlets are already mostly under Russian or separatist control.

"We're talking about our citizens, our GDP, employment and the most important part of the economy — medium and small businesses that can't afford to develop their own software."

Nayyem's parliamentary ally, Svitlana Zalishchuk, accused the president of using the ban to deflect attention from his failure to prosecute the allies of former Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych. It does nothing, she said, to counter lawmakers who spread pro-Kremlin messages from the protection of Ukraine's parliament.

In any case, pro-Kremlin voices will increasingly move to Facebook, predicted Artur Orujaliyev, founder of a tech news website called of Ain.ua. "I wouldn't be surprised if soon the authorities want to block Facebook too," Orujaliyev told the Ukrainian Media Network.

It is hard to cut off access entirely — and some Russian sites are still accessible through Kyiv Star and Volia, two of Ukraine's largest internet providers.

As news of the ban made headlines, Vkontakte sent its Ukrainian users a link to a website where they could download their account information and a message saying,"We love our Ukrainians users and want you to always stay connected with your friends and loved ones."

The Ukrainian authorities intentionally gave no warning in order to avoid retaliatory Russian cyber attacks and for an "element of surprise," said Valentin Petrov of Ukraine's National Security Council to Hromadske TV.

But then, just hours after Poroshenko signed the decree, his office reported a cyber-attack on his website, using Vkontakte and Yandex.

#15
New Fighting in Ukraine's Language War

by Thomas de Waal
Carnegie Europe, 29 May 2017
http://ceip.org/2rOPx08

De Waal is a senior fellow with Carnegie Europe, specializing in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region.

"I have no desire to become a soldier in this war of words," Ukraine's best-known novelist Andrei Kurkov wrote in 2012. He was reacting to the furor over a law instituted by former president Viktor Yanukovych that elevated Russian to the status of a regional language in Ukraine.

Kurkov writes mainly in Russian but was a supporter of the Maidan protests of 2013 that overthrow Yanukovych and turned Ukraine towards Europe. His was a plea to keep language politics out of the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv.

Unfortunately that plea is unheard and Ukraine's language wars are restarting. A bill requiring 75 percent of national television broadcasts to be in Ukrainian has just been passed by the Rada. It follows a very unpopular move by President Poroshenko to ban Russian-language social media websites, such as Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki.

Next up for discussion is draft legislation that seeks to ensure "the functioning and use of Ukrainian as a state language in all spheres of public life in the whole territory of

Ukraine."
At first glance, this may look uncontroversial. Of course, the Ukrainian language, which spent decades as the poor cousin of Russian in its own country, needs to be promoted and supported. But there is a lot of devil in the detail in terms of how this should happen. Many Ukrainian citizens who are not necessarily devotees of Vladimir Putin or the Russian state and regard themselves as Ukrainian patriots are still bilingual or prefer Russian to Ukrainian. These people will regard any attempt to make them give up speaking their native language as an attack on their fundamental rights.

The draft law on the state language, if passed, would explicitly draw new battle lines in Ukraine on the basis of nationality. Article 8 contains the rather disturbing formulation of "citizens of Ukraine whose ethnic origin is not Ukrainian." Article 51 proposes the somewhat sinister institution of a "control commission" whose "language inspectors" would monitor whether Ukrainian was being used in public offices, school classrooms, and university lecture halls and would see those who were caught using Russian punished by law.

Two of the law's main initiators-parliamentarians who have progressive profiles on a number of other issues, Oksana Servit of the Samopomich group and Hanna Hopko, who is chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee-have said that widespread usage of the Russian language undermines Ukrainian statehood. Another member of parliament, Ivan Krulko from the Batkivshchyna faction, has argued that "it is necessary for the development of the country, which should break away from Russia."

But maybe the opposite is true. Currently, many Ukrainian teachers and professors switch back and forth from Ukrainian to Russian, depending on the language preferences of their students or the requests of parents. It is an open secret in Kyiv that the city has very few formal Russian-language schools but many classes are conducted in Russian when parents ask for it informally.

This informal bilingualism, where Ukrainian remains the formal language of the state but Russian gets used on an ad hoc basis, has facilitated a clear trend whereby Ukrainian is becoming more and more the default language of the country. A poll conducted in May 2015 showed that almost 60 percent of the population prefer to speak Ukrainian as their language of everyday communication, a much higher number than two decades ago.

If the truce in the language war is now over, Moscow is certainly ready to restart its side of the conflict. Any moves to formally discriminate against Russian language use gets such wide coverage in Russia that it verges on the hysterical. In February 2014, a brief attempt by the Rada to repeal the Yanukovych-era language law helped provide cover for the Russian narrative for the annexation of Crimea shortly afterwards. With characteristic hyperbole, one Russian parliamentarian, Frants Klintsevich, called the new draft bill a case of "linguistic genocide."

When I visited Kyiv and Odessa in early May, most people who I sounded out about the

new draft law responded with weary black humor. The most common sentiment was that Ukrainian politicians resort to language battles to mobilize their core supporters and to disguise their lack of policies on the issues that really concern the public, like corruption and economic inequality.

One university lecturer, who is paid 150 euros a month, told me she manages to make the current arrangements work, switching back and forth between Ukrainian and Russian to accommodate the wishes and knowledge of her students. But she said that if "language inspectors" were ever instituted, her professional life would become needlessly much harder and she would have less time for the real educational challenges she faces. "Give us a normal salary and we will teach in Chinese!" she said.

#16
New Ukrainian Legislation about Religion

Will Finalize Divorce Between Kyiv and Moscow
by Paul Goble
Window on Eurasia, 18 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2qBXXqK

Two pieces of draft legislation about religious organizations in Ukraine scheduled to be taken up by the Verkhovna Rada today will do far more to complete the divorce between Ukraine and Russia than any other step Kyiv has taken so far. And not surprisingly, Moscow and its agents in Ukraine are aghast.

The first draft law gives to parishioners the right to decide on their own whether they want to change from one jurisdiction to another and requires the registration of those believers, two steps that Yekaterinburg commentator Aleksey Shaburov will strike at the foundations of the Moscow Patriarchate's empire in Ukraine (http://bit.ly/2rmKns3)

On the one hand, giving parishioners the legal right to change from one jurisdiction to another will allow Ukrainian Orthodox to decide to leave the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, something Moscow explicitly forbids without its approval.

And on the other, the required census of parishioners will allow for the determination of just how strong each of these jurisdictions is in Ukraine. The Moscow church has more parishes and bishoprics, but the Ukrainian one has larger and more rapidly growing church organizations, something Moscow routinely denies.

The second draft law, Shaburov says, "hits the Moscow Patriarchate still more strongly." It introduces limitations on the activities of churches whose leadership is situated "in 'an

aggressor state." In the current circumstances, that church is the one subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate.

If this bill is passed, he continues, "the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate will be required to get the agreement of the Ukrainian authorities for appointments to senior church positions and for invitations issued to "foreign," again in this case, Russian, "religious officials."

Further, and still more of a challenge to Moscow, the draft law says that if it is found that a church with headquarters abroad is cooperating with terrorists, "that is, with the LNR and DNR, then, according to Saburov, "that religious organization can be banned," at least in principle.

Such regulations will put before the Moscow Patriarchate's church in Ukraine a stark choice: "either to live under such restrictions or to seek autocephaly, that is, complete separation" from Moscow. Neither is something that the Moscow church or the Kremlin is prepared to accept as legitimate and inevitable.

Yesterday, Patriarch Kirill appealed to foreign leaders the UN secretary general "and even the Pope" to take steps to block Ukraine from adopting these measures. Today, the Moscow media echoed his points (e.g., http://bit.ly/2qGec4k, http://bit.ly/2q4DcjT).

Moscow hardly has the moral right to issue such appeals, Shaburov says. It has invaded Ukraine and no victim of aggression can be expected to tolerate the kind of actions the Moscow church on Ukrainian territory has routinely taken. And Ukraine is doing no more than Russia, a country Ukraine hasn't invaded, has done with respect to religion.

Indeed, the commentator continues, "Ukraine has not done anything that the Russian authorities would not have done," although Moscow will deny that and many may accept its denials as credible.

At the same time, Shaburov says, "it may seem sad that instead of becoming a European country, Ukraine is converting itself into an analogue of the Russian Federation." But "for Russians, this represents a chance to view itself from the side: We in the eyes of the world in recent years have looked exactly as Ukraine now looks in ours."

That could provide the Moscow Patriarchate with a valuable lesson, the commentator concludes, as could the inevitable consequences for it of becoming too closely integrated in the state machine to serve its religious purposes. Unfortunately, Shaburov says, there is no reason to expect that these lessons will be learned.

#17
Netherlands Ratifies EU-Ukraine Treaty

by Peter Teffer
EUObserver, 30 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2s9PFoy

The Dutch senate has approved ratification of the EU-Ukraine free trade and association agreement on Tuesday (30 May), bringing to a close a political saga that started over a year ago when Dutch voters rejected the deal in a referendum.

Almost two-thirds of the senate voted for ratification, with opposition coming mostly from far-left and far-right parties.

It was already anticipated that a majority of senators would vote in favour, following a debate last week.

The vote of the centre-right Christian Democratic Party was crucial, after they had opposed ratification in the lower house of the parliament.

During this year's election campaign, the lower house christian-democrat leader, Sybrand Buma, had threatened to "throw" the EU-Ukraine agreement "in the bin" if he became prime minister.

But his colleagues in the senate voted differently. Only three of twelve christian-democrat senators voted against.

"We make our own consideration," said senator Ben Knapen, a former minister for EU affairs.

He noted that the country's EU allies were counting on the Netherlands to ratify the treaty signed in 2014 – it was the only EU country that had not yet done so.

"Reliability and dependability are crucial characteristics for a small country that has to rely on its European surroundings," said Knapen.

The vote was attended by caretaker prime minister Mark Rutte (Liberals) and foreign affairs minister Bert Koenders (Labour), for whom the outcome must come as a relief.
Citizen-enforced referendum

Two years ago, the two houses of the Dutch parliament had already approved ratification.

But in October 2015, a group of citizens used a new Dutch law that allowed them to force the government to hold a non-binding referendum about a recently passed bill.

The vote was held in April 2016, and the Ukraine treaty was rejected by 61.1 percent of those who showed up to vote – with a low turnout of 32.2 percent.

Although the referendum was non-binding, the Dutch political establishment decided they needed to "take the outcome into account".

Centre-right Liberal prime minister Rutte did not want to flat-out ignore the results, or push ratification through, and set out to find a third option.

Explanatory declaration

At an EU summit in December 2016, he found it: the Dutch leader convinced his 27 counterparts to support a text that explains what the treaty is about.

The declaration noted, among other things, that the treaty does not guarantee EU membership to Ukraine, and that the Netherlands is not obliged to provide Ukraine military assistance.

Rutte said that the declaration would address the concerns of the No voters in the referendum, although opposition parties that campaigned against the treaty disagreed – as the treaty itself has not been amended.

With the senate's vote, the ratification process has been completed for the entire EU. However, the treaty had already been applied provisionally.

Meanwhile, the centre-right MP, Buma and his party, failed to become the largest at March's elections. This means he stands little chance of becoming prime minister and can forgo on his promise to "bin" the treaty.

However, it is unclear which parties will make up the next government, following two failed attempts at a four-party coalition.

Quick Juncker

The European Commission was quick to respond.

Just minutes after the vote, it sent a press release with a comment from EU commission president Jean-Claude Juncker, who during the referendum campaign had said a No vote would trigger a "continental crisis".

"Today's vote in the Dutch senate sends an important signal from the Netherlands and the entire European Union to our Ukrainian friends: Ukraine's place is in Europe," Juncker said on Tuesday.

#18
Corruption Inc.

by Sergii Leshchenko
Zeit Online, 5 May 2017
http://bit.ly/2sh1HMb

Corruption from parliament to the president: Petro Poroshenko abuses his power, strong-arms the media and sabotages reforms in Ukraine.

In the last three years, my country has witnessed the ouster of authoritarian President Viktor Yanukovych, the occupation of part of its territory and the death or injury of tens of thousands of its citizens. It was corruption which weakened Ukraine's army and made the country easy prey for Russia. Corruption has caused Ukraine's national currency to plummet and deprived millions of a social safety net and jobs. The dramatic events taking place in our country, here on the eastern edge of Europe, have forced us to fight for honest politics in Ukraine on a daily basis.

Two and a half years ago, I became a member of the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, after a 14-year career as an investigative journalist. I reported on politics from the outside, and was prepared to be confronted with a harsh reality. Nevertheless, I was shocked by the cynicism I encountered. I call the Ukrainian parliament the largest business club in Europe: Buy yourself membership, and although you'll occasionally need to press a voting button, your main prize -- an opportunity to get rich via the redistribution of state funds -- will be hidden from the public's watchful eye.

It's the Ukrainian version of a startup: Invest a few million dollars in a dirty election campaign and after a few parliamentary terms you'll be a multimillionaire with a private jet and yacht. This is what happened to one corrupt politician, Vitaliy Khomutynnik. Reaching this level of financial success doesn't require you to be a business trailblazer or an innovator, you just need to agree to administer the Ukrainian budget. The brightest stars in Silicon Valley could only dream of those kinds of earnings.

Inside the parliament building, the air is thick with corruption. Even two and a half years after taking my oath of office, I still struggle to get used to it. I sometimes hear MPs discussing business in the legislative chamber. Although the constitution forbids it, it is considered normal to combine business and politics, even in the current convocation of the Rada. This is most strikingly apparent during parliamentary sessions on the budget, which last until 5 a.m. so that all political centers of influence can satisfy their corrupt interests. The government even manages to garner the votes of so-called opposition parties. One such party, headed by rabid populist Oleh Lyashko, votes for the budget as regularly as clockwork -- in exchange for this, a company belonging to a member of the party receives 20 million euros from the budget to manufacture fire trucks.

Last year, our parliament adopted a revolutionary law on state party financing analogous to legislation which has been on the books in Germany since the 1960s. I drafted this law, which was one of a litany of demands made by the European Union in exchange for the introduction of visa-free travel. The underlying principle, which I spoke up for in parliament, was that state money would be given out in exchange for transparent party finances. As I presented the law, I could see resistance from the kleptocratic politicians. They used their influence to change the legislation, and now parliamentary parties receive money from the budget that do not adhere to financial transparency.

Thus the political waters remain muddied one and a half years after the law's adoption; new arrivals try to survive in the midst of corrupt predators. The main problem is that President Poroshenko took the side of the old politicians who abuse their power for their own profit. By sabotaging the reforms, our leaders slow the progress, but it is irreversible – much like the Ukrainian people's decision to back European values during the Euromaidan Revolution of 2014.

Meanwhile, it is becoming increasingly apparent that President Poroshenko's intention to run for re-election in 2019 is not only slowing down the pace of reforms by making him less willing to implement unpopular measures, but causing anti-corruption achievements to be rolled back.

In his campaign, Poroshenko has resorted to the same tried-and-tested methods I witnessed as a journalist in the late 1990s under authoritarian President Leonid Kuchma. These include the consolidation of the police and justice authorities, the muzzling of critical reports on television, the wide-ranging use of funds of questionable provenance and the slander of political opponents.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) is currently under President Poroshenko's control, its role having grown considerably since the start of the armed uprising by pro-Russian militants in eastern Ukraine. The security agency now has no qualms about monitoring civic activists, independent journalists and opposition politicians, and is actively involved in resolving business conflicts. This has led a younger generation to help uncover the secret service's illegal activities, as a result of which the independent National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU), for example, launched an investigation into the activities of Pavlo Demchyna, one of the deputy chiefs of the security service.

The Prosecutor General's Office is also under President Poroshenko's control. It is run by Yuriy Lutsenko, his crony and the former parliamentary leader of the president's political party, BPP Solidarity. After a year under his leadership, the office remains unreformed and partisan, and some members of staff bypass the prosecutor general altogether, deferring instead to friends of the president. Young politicians and investigative journalists regularly act to expose covert influence on the Public Prosecutor's Office, which has led to the resignation of three prosecutors general in only three years.

The embryonic State Bureau of Investigation, a security agency, may also fall into the president's hands by the election. Both favorites in the race for the agency's leadership post are fully under the president's thumb. Two other newly created bodies – the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office – also fall under the influence of the presidential administration.

NABU is the only truly independent body. It recently caused a political sensation by arresting the head of the State Fiscal Service, Roman Nasirov, a man close to the president. Knowing that there will eventually be an anti-corruption investigation into his associates, the president is now waging a multifaceted, behind-the-scenes war to discredit NABU. We have spent the last month in parliament hindering the presidential administration's attempts to appoint a partisan auditor to NABU, which could result in the dismissal of its leader. We were only able to prevent this from happening thanks to the courageous and unprecedented joint efforts of anti-corruption politicians, civic activists and Western diplomats.

There have also been continuing efforts to consolidate the media behind the president. He secures the loyalty of oligarch-owned television channels through jointly concealed corruption networks, as in the energy sector, for example, where Poroshenko, through the state's control over a regulatory authority, created the conditions allowing Donetsk clan founder Rinat Akhmetov to earn exorbitant profits. The current authorities can also control the parts of the mass media belonging to associates of the runaway President Yanukovych by blackmailing them with threats of closure or the imposition of huge fines. That said, complete censorship is no longer possible in Ukraine, as independent social networks and online television channels have become the main source of information for a significant section of the population.

Given his control over the security forces and media, Poroshenko has a considerable competitive advantage over his rivals. Using information gathered by the secret services, campaigns are mounted to discredit all activists, journalists and state employees who investigate state corruption. Even the workers who author false news reports and adopt fake online identities at the Ukrainian equivalent of Olgino, the notorious Russian troll factory, have been called upon to help mount attacks on the government's opponents. Little-known websites regularly produce false reports about anti-corruption forces living the high life and publish photoshopped images of supposedly compromising events. These fake news stories then get broad coverage after complicit "experts" and pro-government politicians comment on them.

The latest example is the introduction of a new requirement for civic anti-corruption activists to electronically declare their assets and earnings. The law, modelled on Putin's bill against foreign agents, was adopted with the express aim of muzzling independent voices. I believe it will have the opposite effect, and the pro-government ideologues behind it will only succeed in turning part of society against them.
The current president remains vulnerable to public opinion. His plummeting ratings have forced him to heed the opinions expressed on social networks and of the protestors.

He has recently been forced to make concessions, reverse unpopular decisions and even speak out publicly in favor of social initiatives.

Poroshenko's central error was his attempt to go against the tide of history. The fight against corruption has become an international phenomenon -- from Romania to South Korea, from Brazil to Indonesia – and a politically fashionable movement in Ukraine after the Euromaidan Revolution.

The current president now faces a choice. He can spearhead that movement. The alternative is to launch a Russian-style witch hunt, attacking civic activists and anti-corruption bodies and to try to salvage plummeting poll numbers. Any Futher financial support to Ukraine should be contingent upon major reform, including a new electoral law and the creation of an anti-corruption tribunal.

#19
New Book

Everybody Loses
The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia
Samuel Charap and Timothy J. Colton
IISS Adelphi Papers 460
Distributed by Routledge
ISBN 978-1138633087
http://bit.ly/2rdBONK

Disorder erupted in Ukraine in 2014, involving the overthrow of a sitting government, the Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula, and a violent insurrection, supported by Moscow, in the east of the country.

This Adelphi book argues that the crisis has yielded a ruinous outcome, in which all the parties are worse off and international security has deteriorated. This negative-sum scenario resulted from years of zero-sum behaviour on the part of Russia and the West in post-Soviet Eurasia, which the authors rigorously analyse. The rivalry was manageable in the early period after the Cold War, only to become entrenched and bitter a decade later. The upshot has been systematic losses for Russia, the West and the countries caught in between.

All the governments involved must recognise that long-standing policies aimed at achieving one-sided advantage have reached a dead end, Charap and Colton argue, and commit to finding mutually acceptable alternatives through patient negotiation.

#20
New Book

The Political Economy of Independent Ukraine
Slow Starts, False Starts, and a Last Chance?
Oleh Havrylyshyn
Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 978-1-137-57689-7
http://bit.ly/2rdCcfr

Marking the 25th anniversary of Ukraine as a sovereign nation, this book traces its economic transformation since 1991. Post-communist transition has been a highlight of recent history, and Ukraine stands out as one of its most interesting and puzzling cases. Havrylyshyn offers the first comprehensive treatise on the entire period, providing a thorough description of the slow evolution of economic reforms, exploring how and why performance in this regard fell far behind the leaders in transition. Testing several conventional hypotheses, the author argues that while Russian imperialism may form part of the explanation, the self-serving interests of domestic elites and new oligarchs may be even more important. Radically revising the traditional argument that reforms were delayed to allow nation building, this book contends that it was due more to the interests of the non-lustrated elite, who needed time to become the new capitalists.

#21
New Book

Communism and Hunger:
The Ukrainian, Chinese, Kazakh, and Soviet Famines in Comparative Perspective
Edited by Andrea Graziosi and Frank E. Sysyn
CIUS Press
ISBN 978-1-894865-47-0 (paper)
http://bit.ly/2qCabft

In this volume, leading specialists examine the affinities and differences between the pan-Soviet famine of 1931–1933, the Ukrainian Holodomor, the Kazakh great hunger, and the famine in China in 1959–1961. The contributors presented papers at a conference organized by the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium in 2014.

The first three articles deal with famine within a single state or Soviet republic and the remaining three offer comparative perspectives. Nicholas Werth examines the dynamics of the economics and politics that led to the famines in the USSR and the Holodomor in Ukraine. Sarah Cameron explores the dynamics of and scholarship on the Kazakh famine.

Zhou Xun characterizes the Great Famine in China as the largest in history and discusses sources she has assembled in the periods when the authorities permitted at least limited access. Lucien Bianco, a specialist on China, and Andrea Graziosi, a scholar of the Soviet Union, provide complementary discussions of the similarities and differences between these man-made famines. Niccolò Pianciola applies a transnational approach in looking at the large Central Asian steppe and the nomadic societies to explore famines in a geographic zone crossing political boundaries.

Thanks to increased access to archives and the efforts of the international scholarly community, we now have a sense of the dynamics, demographic impact, and consequences of the great political famines of the twentieth century, unleashed by Communist parties endowed with centralized planning mechanisms that they believed they could control and manipulate. In exploring the commonalities and specificities of the massive famines produced by the two largest Communist states, the authors also set forth numerous hypotheses and agendas for future research.

#22
New Book

Beau Monde on Empire's Edge
State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine
Mayhill Fowler
University of Toronto Press
ISBN 9781487501532
http://bit.ly/2r5kNa4

In *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge*, Mayhill C. Fowler tells the story of the rise and fall of a group of men who created culture both Soviet and Ukrainian. This collective biography showcases new aspects of the politics of cultural production in the Soviet Union by focusing on theater and on the multi-ethnic borderlands. Unlike their contemporaries in Moscow or Leningrad, these artists from the regions have been all but forgotten despite the quality of their art. Beau Monde restores the periphery to the center of Soviet culture. Sources in Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Yiddish highlight the important multi-ethnic context and the challenges inherent in constructing Ukrainian culture in a place of Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and Jews. *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge* traces the growing overlap between the arts and the state in the early Soviet years, and explains the intertwining of politics and culture in the region today.

#23
New Report

The Donbas – Two parts, or still one?
The experience of war through the eyes of the regional population
Gwendolyn Sasse
ZOIS Center for East European and International Studies (Berlin)
http://bit.ly/2rg6w9f

A ZOiS survey conducted in the Donbas in December 2016 provides insights into life and attitudes across the frontline between the Kyiv-controlled Donbas and the occupied territories, the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR). The two-part survey reveals the differentiated public opinion in the DNR/LNR and similarities in views shared across the frontline.

#24
New Report

Donbas in Flames
Guide to the Conflict Zone
Editor: Alina Mairova
Authors: Mykola Balaban, Olga Volyanyuk, Christina Dobrovolska, Bohdan Balaban, Maksym Maiorov,
Security Environment Research Center "Prometheus", L'viv
Supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
100 pages

This publication is the result of work of a group of authors of various competencies: investigative journalism, politology, geography, and history. Written as a kind of vade mecum, this guidebook will familiarize the reader with the precursors, problems, terminology, and characteristics of the war in the Donbas. The book is targeted at experts, journalists, and representatives of international missions working in Ukraine. It will also interest a wide range of readers trying to understand and develop their own opinion on the situation in the east of Ukraine.

The report can be downloaded in Ukrainian http://bit.ly/2qBYhSO and in English http://bit.ly/2rjn960.

#25
Select Recent Academic Publications on Ukraine

Heather Coleman, Yaroslav Hrytsak, Tamara Hundorova, Oleksandr Zaitsev, and Myroslav Shkandrij. 2017. "A Roundtable on Myroslav Shkandrij's Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929–1956," *Canadian Slavonic Papers 59* (1-2), 131-152. http://bit.ly/2s9DeJa

Mai'a K. Davis Cross, Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski, eds. 2017. Special Issue: "Europe's Hybrid Foreign Policy : The Ukraine-Russia Crisis," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (1), 3-152. http://bit.ly/2rg6D4u

Mykola Makhortykh and Maryna Sydorova. 2017. "Social Media and Visual Framing of the Conflict in Eastern Ukraine," *Media, War & Conflict*. Online. http://bit.ly/2rR4y1B

Kimitaka Matsuzato. 2017. "The Donbass War: Outbreak and Deadlock," *Demokratizatsiya* 25 (2), 175-200. http://bit.ly/2qvABUY

#26
AAUS Prize Winners

AAUS List, 8 May 2017

This past Saturday, May 6, 2017, the AAUS held its customary semi-annual business meeting at the ASN convention at Columbia University in New York. Our sincere thanks to Myroslava Znayenko for her help with organizing and running the meeting. At the meeting, the new group of AAUS prize winners was announced.

Best Article Prize: Christine Worobec, "The Long Road to Kiev: Nineteenth-Century Orthodox Pilgrimages," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, vol. 30/31, 2014-2015

Best Book-Length Translation Prize: Reilly Costigan and Isaac Wheeler, for their translation of Serhiy Zhadan's *Voroshylovhrad* (Deep Vellum Press, 2016)

The prize committee for Best Book in the fields of Ukrainian history, politics, language, literature, and culture chose to recognize 3 books (2 co-winners and 1 honorable mention):

George Liber's *Total Wars and the Making of Modern Ukraine, 1914-1954* (U. of Toronto Press, 2016) has been chosen as the winning book in history and politics.

Andriy Danylenko's *From the Bible to Shakespeare: Pantelejmon Kuliš (1819-1897) and the Formation of Literary Ukrainian* (Academic Studies Press, 2016) has been chosen as the winning book in language, literature, and culture.

Maxim Tarnawsky's *The All-Encompassing Eye of Ukraine: Ivan Nechui-Levytskyi's Realist Prose* (U. of Toronto Press, 2016) has been chosen as an honorable mention for the book prize.

Our heartfelt congratulations to all the winners!
Top of Form

On behalf of the AAUS Board,
Vitaly Chernetsky
AAUS President
Bottom of Form

#27

The Filmmaker Holding Putin's Feet to the Fire

by Richard Porton
Daily Beast, 27 May 2017
http://thebea.st/2qC1dyT

After helming the Ukrainian revolution doc 'Maidan,' Sergei Loznitsa is back at Cannes with 'A Gentle Creature'—a disturbing portrait of contemporary Russia.

CANNES, France – It's difficult to imagine a grimmer cinematic portrait of Vladimir Putin's Russia than the one depicted in Sergei Loznitsa's A Gentle Creature, which premiered as a competition entry in Cannes on Thursday.

Loosely based on a Dostoyevsky short story, the film, which starts out naturalistically and gradually transmogrifies into a surrealistic political fable, recounts the horrific saga of an unnamed woman whose package to her imprisoned husband is returned to the local post office. When the distraught woman decides to set out on a journey to visit this man incarcerated in Siberia for a crime that is also unnamed, she finds herself caught up in a bureaucratic labyrinth. Abused by strangers and unable to elicit even a modicum of empathy for her plight from the authorities, she is the ultimate victim of an unfeeling society.

Born in Belarus, Loznitsa spent his formative years in Ukraine when it was part of the Soviet Union and is usually referred to as a Ukrainian director. A Gentle Creature marks his fourth outing at Cannes. My Joy (2010) and In the Fog (2012) were also competition

entries while Maidan, his critically acclaimed documentary on the Ukrainian Revolution, was unveiled as a "special screening" at the festival in 2014.

Loznitza is known for his political outspokenness, a trait that is on conspicuous display in the following interview. He needed little prompting to express his contempt for the Russian government, Donald Trump, and bureaucratic stupidity.

The review of A Gentle Creature in The Hollywood Reporter observed that many Americans will be surprised that the film, which depicts a cruel, even bestial country, is set in contemporary Russia, not the Soviet Union. Are you trying to say that not much has changed since the Soviet era?

Practically nothing has changed. If we're talking about the system of governance, for example, there now exists a parliament that's completely powerless and doesn't make any decisions at all. We also have a president who is basically a placeholder—holding the place until the next presidential term while we await a real president. You'll recall the previous period, in 2008, when Dmitry Medvedev and Putin swapped jobs; Medvedev wasn't a real president. Everyone knew that Medvedev didn't make any real decisions. You have a situation where there are fake institutions that imitate the function of genuine institutions. That's exactly the situation you had in the Soviet Union. There's no respect for human rights.

Or the rights of journalists?

After laughing heartily, Loznitsa replies: A media exists that is allowed to print and broadcast—but only to the extent that they are controlled by a central authority.

And what did you think of the photographs captured by the Russian media of Sergey Kislyak cavorting with Trump in the Oval Office.

Any methods are allowed to create a scandal. In a way, this undermines trust in any political authority. It undermines trust in general. One has to be very clear about the ultimate purpose. If you haven't read Anne Applebaum's Iron Curtain, you should. She describes the process of the destruction of civil society by the Soviet Union in Poland, East Germany, and Hungary. And now the same sort of thing is going on in the United States. They want to destroy the electoral system and prove that anyone can be elected. It undermines the whole idea of democratic elections and proves that it basically doesn't matter who's elected. Evil has one basic characteristic. When it's successful, any result works in its favor. You really can't do anything about it, even though you should make an effort to resist it.

Do you the photos taken at the White House point to an attempt by Russia to destabilize the U.S. government?

You have to ask: Why was this photo taken? It was a breach of security. Who's in charge of the White House and the government? It's the president, who broke the code of conduct and did something that was forbidden. Every such action erodes respect for the president and the government. The president embodies the American system of government and this sort of mistake invites manipulation from the outside. What I want to know is: What did they buy Trump with? Of course, he doesn't need money. But there must be something that they can offer him that he needs or doesn't have. There's something in his personality that allows him to be manipulated. If you recall, the secrets of nuclear warfare were revealed to the Soviet Union via the United States in the 1950s. If you read interviews with [the late American physicist] Richard Feynman, you realize that it wasn't that difficult to do. He tells stories about opening his colleagues' private safes and finding this information.

You've remarked that you couldn't have filmed A Gentle Creature in Russia. Does that refer to the film's content or merely matters of financing?

I would have been able to shoot the film in Russia, but I wouldn't have been able to finance it in Russia. This film is a co-production of five countries and two private investors. With each country that supported the film, there are spending obligations. We found a compromise and shot in Latvia. It's eastern Latvia, which is populated mainly by ethnic Russians and Russian speakers. We shot in Daugavpils, a Latvian city with Russian architecture and all of the trademarks of a Russian city. But it's part of the European Union and on European territory.

Although A Gentle Creature is based on a Dostoyevsky short story, the satirical jabs at Russian bureaucracy also recall Nikolai Gogol's work.

Yes, absolutely. And not only Gogol—throughout the film, there are actually various references to many Russian writers from different eras. One example is the nineteenth –century Russian satirist, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin. There are many manifestations of the same phenomenon from different eras. It's a very rich mythological space. Russian filmmakers have a huge pool of references that they can use for inspiration. There are also musical inspirations—the work of Shostakovich, for example.

And cinematic references?

There are many references to Hitchcock. The opening doors can be considered a tribute to Vertigo. And the scene in the beginning where the heroine is dressing is reminiscent of the opening of Psycho. And the rape scene is a direct quotation from the great Russian director Aleksei German's film, Khrushtalyov, My Car!

The female representative of an organization promoting human rights is depicted as farcically ineffectual. Is this your commentary on actual NGOs in Russia?

It definitely reflects what I think about the work done by such organizations. There are no independent social or civil organizations in Russia today. There was a law passed a few years ago that required any human rights organization or NGO operating in Russia to be registered as a foreign agent. You could say that the passage of this law castrated these organizations. Or perhaps they castrated themselves. There's a code of conduct concerning what these groups can or cannot do; no one can overstep the boundaries established by the authorities. A couple of years ago, one of these organizations wanted to screen Maidan, my film on the Ukrainian uprising. Soon after, they came back to me and said there was a change of plan and they wouldn't be able to screen the film. They told me that it wasn't the right time to screen the film and Maidan was never screened. So it's difficult for me to see these groups as real human rights organizations!

You were born in Belarus and we hear in the U.S. that the human rights situation in that country is even worse.

I only spent six months of my life in Belarus. I feel that Belarus these days is a kind of experimental laboratory for Russia. From an economic vantage point, they're completely dependent on Russia. Politically, they're also extremely dependent on Russia. This summer, when Russian troops might enter Belarus, this dependence could in fact be formalized.

Getting back to Maidan, do you feel completely pessimistic about the situation in Ukraine?

Unfortunately, the war is still going on. There haven't been any breakthroughs. The power structure remains the same. But the people who made the revolution in Ukraine remain the same. Their passion remains—and this is the only factor that prevents the authorities from completely reverting to corruption. My only hope lies with the Ukrainian people. Once the process of change has started, it's impossible to stop it.

UKL 481, 30 May 2017

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