GAPS AND OVERLAPS

Navigating through contested German-Russian-Ukrainian narratives

IDEAS FOR CHANGE

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Executive Summary

This report is the result of a German-Russian-Ukrainian[1] dialogue project which was designed and implemented by inmedio peace consult gGmbH (Berlin), the Institute for Law and Public Policy, ILPP (Moscow) and the Centre of Public Initiatives - Ideas for Change (Kyiv).

Using the Mediative Dialogue Approach developed by inmedio peace consult, 18 experts from academia, think tanks and NGOs as well as journalists and dialogue practitioners met in Berlin in November 2019. They analysed and reflected on German, Russian and Ukrainian narratives on what went wrong since the end of the Cold War regarding the deterioration of relations between the respective countries. The discussed narratives often reflect deeply held beliefs, which have their basis in individual and collective experience; at the same time they may have served to shape those beliefs as a result of state-led efforts aimed at manipulating public opinion. Understanding[2] how a narrative unfolded does not necessarily mean agreeing with it. However, the attempt to understand helps to prepare the ground for effective negotiations searching for ways out of the current crisis.

Using a timeline of historical and recent events as a starting point, our group agreed in an interactive process to focus on the following five topics which it considered most relevant for fostering an in-depth understanding of the narratives regarding Ukrainian-Russian-Western relations: Holodomor/the Great Famine of the 1930s and its impact on the idea of Ukrainian independence; 1991 – different perceptions on the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian independence; attempts and failures of cooperation with NATO; and competing narratives on Euromaidan, Crimea and Donbas.

This consensus paper shows the results of the respective group discussions reconstructing the narratives on those topics. The aim is certainly not to agree on one narrative. Rather, the aim is to help the societies concerned to better understand the differences between the existing narratives. This approach follows a rather long-term strategy. It does not provide a quick solution and is not meant to replace crisis management and the addressing of immediate problems. Instead, an in-depth understanding of the narratives can pave the way for more effective communication on possible sustainable solutions, which sooner or later must be found.

The project was funded by the German Federal Foreign Office under the programme “Expanding Cooperation with Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia”. It builds on a preceding German-Russian dialogue project conducted in 2018[3] as well as on previous dialogue efforts including involving Ukrainian and Russian NGOs.[4]

This report is available for download in English, Russian and Ukrainian under www.contested-narratives-dialogue.org.

1 It was jointly decided to name the countries in alphabetical order.

2 The term “understanding” is used in this document in line with concepts of conflict transformation and mediation. It refers to the extent to which an individual or group can relate to or emphasize with the sentiments, concerns, needs, wishes and fears underlying somebody’s position or action.

3 See inmedio/ILPP: *Russian-Western Blind Spots: From Dialogue on Contested Narratives to Improved Understanding* (2019) under www.contested-narratives.org.

4 E.g. the Civil Minsk Plus Initiative, www.civilmplus.org.

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Introduction

The crisis in and around Ukraine marks an important turning point in European security. The events in Crimea and Donbas since 2014 challenge the European security order as it was established in the end phase of the Cold War in 1989-1990. Almost five years after the violent outbreak of the conflict, the war in parts of eastern Ukraine still goes on and has led to more than 13,000 casualties as well as an enormous number of displaced people and massive physical destruction. If one looks closely at the roots of the conflict, it becomes clear that they are profoundly embedded in a much larger Russian-Western confrontation. In particular, it is not possible to understand the current tensions without having an in-depth look at the contrasting historical narratives to which different parts of the public in Ukraine, Russia and in the West subscribe.[5] The competition between radically divergent historical narratives on Russian-Ukrainian relations and on the evolution of European security since the end of the Cold War is a major stumbling block in the way of finding an effective way out of the current confrontation between Russia, the West and Ukraine and a return to diplomacy, dialogue and cooperative security. The perception and interpretation of the related events does not happen in a historical vacuum but is inherently shaped by narratives in which historical and political events, media discourses as well as personal/family experience are intertwined.

This paper is based on the understanding that a civil society dialogue, moderated in accordance with a mediative approach, is possible and needed in order to achieve a better understanding of the contested narratives and their respective gaps and overlaps. This can be done in parallel to the political process and can help to pave the ground for more constructive official negotiations.

The authors of this report, which was drafted in a consensus-based process, are a group of 18 experts from academia, think tanks and NGOs as well as journalists and dialogue practitioners. Besides their expertise in e.g. security, international affairs, sociology or discourse analysis, many members of the group have a Russian-Ukrainian family background. Many have been affected themselves by the events discussed in this report – be it the violence on the Maidan square in Kyiv, the war in Donbas, political repression or family separation due to the existing conflicts – or their ancestors have been victimized, e.g. by the Great Famine/Holodomor or the persecution under Stalin. The group was selected in such a way that different political beliefs and attitudes and professions from all three involved countries would be represented.

Our dialogue process started with a visual reconstruction of a timeline of events going back in history for more than 1,000 years. In an interactive process, it was agreed to focus on the following five events seen as most relevant for fostering an in-depth understanding of the narratives regarding Ukrainian-Russian-Western relations: Holodomor/the Great Famine of the 1930s and its impact on the idea of Ukrainian independence; 1991 – different perceptions on the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian independence; attempts and failures of cooperation with NATO; competing narratives on the Euromaidan of 2013/14 and the events in Crimea and Donbas since 2014.

5 It goes without saying that there is no monolithic "West". For a very nuanced analysis of Western narratives, see, for example: Wolfgang Zellner (ed.), *Security Narratives in Europe: A Wide Range of Views* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017). In our trilateral dialogue format Germany partly is seen as a representative of the "West" and partly we emphasize specific German narratives that help to explain German perspectives within the spectrum of "Western" opinions.

In intense group work, we reconstructed the most relevant narratives regarding those events, trying to grasp their inherent inner logic. We considered not only the mainstream narratives, but also the diverse variety of narratives held by different parts of society in the respective countries. This paper shows the results of these group discussions and outlines gaps and overlaps between the respective narratives.

The first chapter, on methodology, briefly outlines the main aspects of the specific approach to narrative work applied in this project, the Mediative Dialogue Approach. The subsequent chapters, ordered chronologically according to their historical reference points, outline the gaps and overlaps between the different narratives.

Holodomor or the Great Famine of 1932/33 is one of the most controversial events in Ukrainian/Soviet history. Ukrainian and Russian narratives as well as a German "non-narrative" which frame it as genocide, tragedy, a crime against humanity or propaganda, respectively, are outlined in Chapter 2.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian independence in 1991 trigger very strong and often contradicting emotions and political discussions in Ukraine and Russia because they are directly linked with the existential topic of identity. Paradoxically, this underlying issue of identity could be quite easily understood empathetically by both sides, as described in Chapter 3.

Attempts and failures of cooperation with NATO are at the heart of the Russian mainstream perception of being "encircled" and the Ukrainian frustration at "having missed the last train." Three main narratives, from Ukraine, Russia and Germany, are discussed in Chapter 4.

Gaps and overlaps between three main narratives regarding the Euromaidan of 2013/14, Maidan as a revolution of dignity, Maidan as a Western plot and Maidan as a fascist coup, are analysed in Chapter 5.

Our discussion about Crimea and Donbas, rather than analysing the conflicting interpretations of what happened, how and why, focused on developing an overview of the opposing approaches to conflict resolution and their respective patterns of argument. These are presented in Chapter 6.

Methodology – the Mediative Dialogue Approach

The dialogue forming the basis for the current paper was conducted according to a Mediative Dialogue Approach.[6] This approach creates a space for in-depth dialogue which, rather than consisting in a mere exchange of statements, focuses on learning about the other's point of view. It is guided by an appreciation of each participant's perspective and the acknowledgement that each has the right to be voiced and heard. Furthermore, facilitators have to be multipartial, stepping back from their own perspectives. They must be willing and able to understand each participant's view, while being aware that being willing to understand does not necessarily mean being in agreement.

The following aspects of the Mediative Dialogue Approach were important for determining process design and moderation in this project:

1. The approach is characterized by continuous work with a small group for a relatively long period of time (as opposed to typical conference-style events). In our project, we met with 18 participants for a workshop of five consecutive days in Berlin. This was preceded by preparatory workshops over a period of six months with even more participants in Berlin, Moscow and Kyiv. Such long-term engagement facilitates trust-building on a personal level and thus creates space for in-depth discussions.
2. The approach is process-oriented, meaning that also the methodology itself, the manner of proceeding both during and after the dialogue workshop, is openly discussed with the participants. Constantly adapting and backchannelling to the needs of the work process itself lets new insights and fruitful ideas evolve during the workshop. The absence of a rigid structure allows for flexibility, creative thinking and the incorporation of unexpected turns. At the same time, group work in the framework of such an open-ended approach is initially often fraught with uncertainty for participants and moderators alike. This is a challenge which needs professional handling in order to achieve a result in which everyone's perspective is reflected.
3. A mediative moderation, in contrast to traditional moderation, not only gives the floor to the different participants with the aim of promoting interaction and lively debates on specific topics. It goes further by focusing not only on the factual level, but also on the interpersonal level. The moderators/facilitators ask questions to understand the backgrounds of the statements, attitudes and perspectives of the participants. As this is only possible in small groups, we oftentimes split the participants into groups of three to eight persons for different tasks.
4. The approach builds on the consideration of the participants' personal and biographical backgrounds. Using systemic methods, such as sociometry, the process starts with an opening session in which participants are invited to share their personal motivation and biographical links to the topic and the geographical region of the conflicting narratives being considered. It is important to mention that this all must happen in a safe environment, starting with partner interviews in small groups consisting of three participants from different (national) backgrounds.

6 See also Kuschwitz/Sayko: On the Methodology – the Mediative Dialogue Approach, in: inmedio/ILPP (eds.): Russian-Western Blind Spots. From Dialogue on Contested Narratives to Improved Understanding, Berlin/Moscow 2019.

5. A core element of the Mediative Dialogue Approach is a facilitated change of perspective. Changing perspectives means that the participants can truly/honestly understand (maybe even feel) why other participants hold their points of view, with which they may not at all agree. This was achieved in our project using Conflict Perspective Analysis (CPA), a mediative method, which uses empathy to pave the way for a change of perspective[7], and the fishbowl method, in which the discussion of complex topics is facilitated by splitting the group into observers/ listeners and main speakers.
6. Reconstructing the narratives from a meta-perspective proved to be highly effective and fostered constructive discussion. Participants refrained from discussing what was wrong or right about the respective interpretation/portrayal of events. Rather, they outlined step-by-step the diverse interpretations by assuming the perspective of the different narratives one after the other. This approach does not negate differences but helps to find a way of describing and interpreting perceptions of events (and the creation of meaning that comes along with these perceptions) from a meta-perspective. This is a demanding task for participants and facilitators alike as it requires numerous changes of perspective.

The above-mentioned aspects of the Mediative Dialogue Approach reflected and underpinned the attitude of both the facilitators and the participants in this project.

7 For further information, please see: https://www.inmedio.de/sites/default/files/13_wue_Konflikt-Perspektiv-Analyse.pdf (in German) or www.inmedio.de/sites/default/files/Mediation_EN_LowRes.pdf.

Narratives on Holodomor or the Great Famine of 1932/33: Genocide, Tragedy, Crime against Humanity, Propaganda?

The Holodomor-narrative: the event, its forced amnesia and overlapping horror experiences

At the start of the 1930s the Soviet Union was in rapid transition from a political revolution to a social and economic one. The Bolsheviks were busy creating the working class (mainly from peasants). There was a great deal of starvation in 1932/33 in many places across the Soviet Union. The estimated number of casualties ranges from 3.2 to 4.8 million in Ukraine and from 6 to 8 million in the whole Soviet Union.[8]

There was some specificity as to how this problem was tackled by the central power within the national unit called Soviet Ukraine.[9]

The salient point of this narrative is the name Holodomor (Ukrainian neologism, literally *terror-famine*) which frames the event as a mass killing, murder by starvation, designed and inflicted by the top Soviet rulers on Ukrainian peasants. (The first large group of Soviet citizens sent to the Gulag were Ukrainian richer farmers – 300,000 *kulaks*.)[10]

Successful peasants started to be treated as "class enemies" for their disloyalty to the Bolshevik power and their massive resistance to collectivization: resistance against the loss of their property, against being deprived of their land. Extreme taxation and state grain requisitions came as a punishment. And then the food, all food supplies, were taken away from the farmers' households, as a further political move. On a parallel track, major repression was targeting the Ukrainian creative class, later labelled the "executed Renaissance". In 1932 Stalin himself used the word *golod* (starvation) in relation to Soviet Ukraine, ascribing it to politics, not economics – the sabotage of collectivization by Ukrainian nationalists was to be blamed. From the autumn of 1932, the border of Ukraine was sealed, peasants were forced to stay in the villages, their last cows or goats (along with other potential food) were taken away by brigades coming from the cities, and they were left isolated from the rest of the Soviet economy. As a result, up to four million people had died in the countryside by late spring of 1933.

The Holodomor predated the Holocaust on Ukrainian territory by nearly ten years, leaving a mostly clear and discreet remembrance of the suffering. It is also strongly associated with the feeling of "no help, no escape", as a result of the failure to stir Western governments to action. It was in Ukrainian Galicia (then part of Poland) that the international campaign for rescuing Ukrainian victims from starvation was waged and eventually lost. No one was allowed to make public news about mass starvation in the Soviet Ukraine and therefore no one from the outside was allowed to help.[11] That is why a more heterogeneous understanding is also needed, when the Holocaust narrative is returning to the scene of the crime.

8 Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton University Press, 2010), p.70.

9 For an overview of the historians' debate see e.g. Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (New York: Doubleday, 2017), pp. 320-362.

10 Гриневич Людмила. *Хроніка колективізації та Голодомору в Україні 1927-1933.* Том І: Початок надзвичайних заходів. Голод 1928–1929 років. Книга 3. Київ: Критика, 2012.

11 See also: Голодомор 1932-33 років в Україні: документи і матеріали. / Упор. Руслан Пиріг. - Київ: Видавничий дім "Києво-Могилянська Академія", 2007; Timothy Snyder, "Chapter 1: The Soviet Famines", Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin (Basic Books, 2010), pp. 55-58; Anne Applebaum, "Chapter 14: The Cover-Up", Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine, op. cit., pp. 296-319.

Pairing Holodomor and the Holocaust as pandemonic memories may cast some light on mnemonic emotions and cultural amnesia in the region. They both were blocked and kept invisible in the Soviet Ukraine and the USSR in general. Then they were detached from their actual places. Both atrocities were top-down arrangements: they were executed by local henchmen, but the question of collaboration was never openly raised in public in an all-Ukrainian discussion. There is only an image of victims, while the perpetrators have melted into the air. The starkness of the betrayal by neighbours and acquaintances is an afterthought. In both cases, the basic code of humanity was wrecked. The victims lost the dignity of death and any trace of their personal existence was obliterated. Their descendants were forbidden to mourn them. Survivors were ashamed or incapable to speak. Holocaust survivors were almost never interrogated about the Holodomor and vice versa. So, these two horrific memories of being part of the catastrophe of the same place mainly stayed apart in the coalition of silence.

People here were deprived of modern instruments to publicize and transmit their horror memories – archives, museums, libraries, photography, new books and films. Dynamic exchange between the cannon and the archive of public memory was clogged; the archive was destroyed or just never came into being. Traumatic stories connected to state mass violence remained untold.

Remembrance and politization of the Holodomor in contemporary Ukraine

The alienation and displacement of terror-loaded memory of the Holodomor was transmitted down for three generations. For almost 50 years official commemoration of the Great Famine of 1932/33 in Soviet Ukraine was unimaginable. The short-lived period of de-Stalinization in the early 1960s brought pioneering attempts to visualize the after-effects of the Holodomor and to transform them into literary narratives (for example, in Hryhir Tiutiunnyk's and Vasily Grossman's autobiographical writings). But individual attempts to fill lacunas in traumatized remembrance, to somehow reconnect with the shocking collective past, were soon banned by censorship.

By 1989 isolated communities of memory were all lost and much of the pandemonic testimony was actually re-imported from the diaspora. What followed was an attempt to promote the memory of the Holodomor into the national memory, in a top-down approach that peaked with President Viktor Yushchenko's adaptation and negative sacralization of it from 2005 to 2009. His state-supported appropriation was a reversal of the decades of silencing, an attempt to make the acknowledgement of the Holodomor victims' memory public and obligatory along with that of the Holocaust, to enact it as an official remembering, a *lieu de memoire* and to reinstall it as a primary anticolonial and all-Ukrainian awareness – "a nation united in commemoration". This brought a new wave of cultural production along with heated discussions about inheritance of guilt. The Holodomor's rapid promotion then had a rather polarizing effect on Ukrainian-Russian political positions and reinforced mental borders, making it clear that Russian society still was struggling with allowing the repressed past along with the associated questions of guilt and responsibility to surface. NKVD and KGB archives never opened to researchers. Unmourned victims, unpunished culprits and the toxic plume of atrocities engulf post-Soviet Russian statehood.

The Holodomor has begun to be understood and remembered yet differently after the Maidan. The slogan of the 2014 annual commemoration of the Holodomor, "Our freedom was slaugh-

tered by famine. Not destroyed in 1933 we are unbeatable today",[12] suggested an immediate link. The metaphor of assault on freedom (by starving free people to death) dominated the 2014 nation-wide mourning against the backdrop of war, sometimes called a war of independence from Moscow. Historians of the Holodomor have drawn public attention to the fact that Ukrainian farmers were not passive victims: the official commemoration has been refocused on the figure of the survivor and strategies of survival – solidarity and sharing. This affective disposition and the freshly shared trauma of the Maidan opened to present-day Ukrainians a direct link to the inherited trauma the 1932/3 famine. The Holodomor theme was not central to the unfolding events, but it popped up in many discussions.[13] The living memory of the Holodomor as an unpunished crime excluded the possibility that contemporary Ukrainians would embrace an idea of "*Russkij mir*". Recently, Ukrainian politicians have called on foreign countries to officially recognize the Holodomor as a genocide.[14]

The Great Famine narratives

The counter-narrative to that of the Holodomor refers to the events of 1932/33 as the Great Famine. This is the narrative being furthered by Russian authorities.[15] In addition, a more radical and a more moderate version can be identified.

This narrative implies that the famine was not a result of a government policy, but rather a result of natural causes[16] which were merely deepened by the extraordinary measures taken by the government. It is stressed that the measures were implemented with the same rigour[17] in all the agricultural regions of USSR.

What concerns the assessment of the policy, the official narrative does not go further than noting that the governmental measures were characterized by "tragic mistakes" that were admitted by the Soviet officials themselves already in 1933.

The Great Famine is labelled as "a common tragedy of Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs and other peoples of [the USSR]". Consequently, the narrative of Holodomor is labelled as an attempt to "play a nationalist card" and distort the historic facts rather than to restore justice.[18] From this point of view, the popular Ukrainian narratives mentioned above look like constructed or reinvented traditions and identities fabricated by political elites for very practical reasons, which can exist as long as they are necessary for protecting some current interests and for the purposes of an actual nation-building process in Ukraine.

12 http://holodomor33.org.ua/materialy-zahodiv-iz-vshanuvannya-zhertv-holodomoru-2013/ (12 Nov 2014, last accessed 17 Nov 2019).

13 "If Stalin's plan had been a success, there would be no Ukrainians in the 20th century. And we survived the Holodomor and stood many years of anti-Soviet underground. (…) We're very strong people, just that we don't know own strength". Забужко, Оксана. *Інтерв'ю. Країна*, 25 грудня 2014, №50(253), p.10.

14 "Rada asks democratic states to recognize Holodomor as genocide", Interfax Ukraine, 7.12.2016, https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/389113.html.

15 See, for example: "The famine in the USSR in the 1930s: the truth about the Holodomor", Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official Facebook page post, 24 November 2018, https://www.facebook.com/MIDRussia/photos/a.265191980246917/1562402713859164/; "Commentary of the Department of Information and Press of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding insinuations concerning the tragedy caused by the famine in the USSR in 1932-33", Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website, 22 February 2019, https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3540615.

16 The famine "happened, occurred" ("сильнейший голод разразился", "голод, поразивший [регионы страны]").

17 Note that the official narrative in describing the governmental measures uses words like "rigour", "rigidity" ("жёсткость"), without calling into question their reasonableness.

18 See also: Ивнитский Н. А., Голод 1932-33 годов в СССР. Украина, Казахстан, Поволжье, Центрально-Черноземная область, Западная Сибирь, Урал (Москва, 2009); Кондрашин В.В., "Голод 1932-33 годов - общая трагедия народов СССР: национально-региональный аспект", Советские нации и национальная политика в 1920–1950-е годы. Материалы VI международной научной конференции. Киев, 10–12 октября 2013 г. – Политическая энциклопедия; Фонд "Президентский центр Б. Н. Ельцина". – М.: РОССПЭН, 2014. – pp. 187–201.

The more radical version of the Great Famine narrative sees the Holodomor narrative as a tool of the Ukrainian government to promote its national identity at the expense of Russia, a tool of Ukrainian anti-Russian propaganda. This version of the narrative denies that Ukraine acts as an independent actor, stressing that it is just a puppet of "the West".[19]

A more moderate narrative would agree that the famine was man-made as a deliberate attempt the crush the *kulaks*' resistance against forced collectivization. Supporters of such a narrative hence are ready to label the famine as a crime against humanity. However, they would argue that is wasn't directed against Ukrainian as a national/ethnic group, and that it rather happened to target so many Ukrainians because Ukraine was so important for agricultural production. Thus the role of the *kulaks* was crucial because they were *kulaks*, not because they were Ukrainian. In Kazakhstan, for example, 1.45 million died, with some 38% the highest percentage death-toll on any nationality in the Soviet Union.[20] Hence the notion of genocide would be seen critically according to this narrative, while the labelling of the famine as a crime against humanity would be accepted. Interestingly, this narrative has some differences but also overlaps with the official Russian narrative and the radical one, as well as with the Ukrainian mainstream narrative. Many in Russia, though, would argue that the crimes of Stalin's regime cannot be interpreted as a "Russian responsibility".[21]

The Holodomor and Germany: a "non-narrative"

There is no particular public discourse about the different narratives regarding the Holodomor in Germany. Besides some very limited knowledge, there is not much awareness about any historical details. Thus, the absence of an own German/Western narrative about the Holodomor is the most obvious thing to note in this regard.

At the same time, for a number of reasons, an awareness is developing which can be described as a narrative in the making. The Ukrainian struggle for independence, the "colour revolutions" and the increasing tensions with Russia have triggered more interest for conflicting issues. Above all, the Maidan, Crimea and the armed conflict in Donbas have put Ukraine more clearly on the "cognitive map" of Germans, at least of those who are interested in politics. In this regard, the various conflicts between former republics of the Soviet Union and Russia about human rights violations in the distant and recent past have attracted some attention. From this perspective, the different narratives about the Holodomor appear as yet another conflict about disputed history and an example for the politicized nature of discourses about gross human rights violations.

This developing awareness does not constitute a particularly German narrative on the Holodomor, but it has the potential to be related to a very prominent German narrative: the Holocaust, the role of Germany as a perpetrator and its responsibility to deal with its historical guilt. This creates a dilemma:

19 This is not the official Russian narrative. See, for example, the following materials of the Foundation of Strategic Culture: "The evil tale of the "famine" was born in the United States", 3 March 2019, https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2019/03/03/zlaja-skazka-o-golodomore-rodilas-v-us-47711.html; "There was no war of Stalin against Ukraine", 11 August 2018, https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2018/08/11/vojny-stalina-protiv-ukrainy-ne-bylo-46596.html; "The collapse of the operation "Holodomor", 30 March 2019, https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2019/03/30/krah-operacii-holodomor-47897.html.

20 Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, Princeton University Press, 2010, p.76.

21 Underlying the debate are different interpretations of Stalinism, see e.g. A. Medusevskij, "Was war Stalinismus?" *Osteuropa* 2012, Heft 4 (April), 62. Jahrgang, pp. 53-61.

On the one hand, it is inadmissible for Germans to be ignorant of historical events that are somehow reminiscent of the crimes committed by Germans. It would be unthinkable from a German perspective not to pay attention to massive human rights violations, particular if these were considered a genocide. It is not an option to ignore any discourse about genocide because the mainstream narrative about the Holocaust lays upon Germans a major responsibility to prevent genocide. In the debate about the right or responsibility of NATO to intervene in the Balkan wars, for example, genocide prevention was one of the most important justifications for the use of military power.

This of course makes Germans very careful when it comes to disputed assessments of whether or not historical or current events could be considered genocides. Germans would tend to avoid challenging the genocide label, since they themselves were responsible for the biggest genocide in modern history.

On the other hand, this carries the potential for some blindness and/or silence when there is a danger of "using" a genocide narrative for political ends. The main reason for this is the desire not to be accused of "relativism". Any attempt to put the Holocaust into perspective and compare any kind of genocide with it would be the subject of heated discussions.

Arguably, this contributes to a taboo. In Germany, there is a long history of discursive steps in order to come to terms with its guilt and responsibility. There was a long phase of repression of self-critical reflection about the past and the process of raising awareness and political consciousness was painful and very conflictive. In fact, this process has never stopped and it is a driving force in many political decisions.

Against this background, it is hard to imagine Germany reminding any other nation to acknowledge its guilt and accept responsibility for a genocide. The German narrative does not allow for assuming the moral superiority to make a suggestion on how to deal with such an overwhelming responsibility. At the very least, this would seem to bear the stamp of self-righteousness or, even worse, an attitude of being "holier than thou".

Holodomor narratives and their importance for conflict resolution

From a conflict resolution perspective, the nature of the discourses and the disputes over Holodomor narratives constitute a major impediment for different reasons.

When looking at Ukraine, it becomes obvious that many Ukrainians perceive Holodomor as a major trauma. Even more important is the impression it does not get any or enough recognition. Since most, if not all, Ukrainian families feel affected by the Holodomor, it could be argued it has become an important factor for identity building. The perceived ignorance of the West and the experienced denial and relativization by Russia add to this process.

If the struggle for recognition and acknowledgement becomes central, the effect will most likely be an unwanted dependency on the alleged aggressor. This might be the case here – in Ukraine's striving to remind Russia, as the successor of the Soviet Union, of what is considered – although disputed – to be its historical guilt. Ukraine might get into an enforced asymmetric relationship with Russia. Politically speaking, it is "easy" from a Russian perspective to deny responsibility for crimes committed by the Soviet Union, even if there might be some shared perspectives about the "historical truth".

However, if a conflict gets increasingly more relevant for identity issues, it gets fuel for an escalation process. Different and conflicting issues can be negotiated. The more identity becomes an issue in a confrontation, the more difficult it gets to find a solution. The major reason is that in contrast to interests, identities cannot be negotiated. Once an individual, a group or a nation identifies an important issue as an identity factor, the potential solution to a conflict takes on an "all or nothing" aspect. Identities cannot be divided, split or given up – a compromise in any respect becomes a compromise for the identity as well. This is something that parties in a conflict usually try to avoid. Furthermore, in an escalated conflict, there is pressure on each individual within a given party not to question identity issues. Therefore, the pressure on members of one's own party not to be traitors by developing differentiated or opposing views will likely become a factor.

This makes it very tempting for politicians to politicize identity issues. If the Holodomor is a major trauma for Ukrainian society, it may function as a unifying factor in times of conflict. Even if it seems to be "natural" to remember historical crimes particularly in times of conflict and compare these to the current situation, this reinforces a pattern of victimization. The temptation in terms of politics is to use this in order to create a strong position. If politicians are successful in claiming they have helped to build a political position, which leads out of this asymmetric relationship, most likely they will gain political power.

The actual and potential effects are dramatic for any attempt at conflict resolution. A denial of a crime is certainly an escalating factor in conflict; the politicization of identity might have the same effect.

When looking at Germany, the described dilemma causes follow-up problems for the current tensions and conflicts. If there were a stronger German narrative in the sense of fully acknowledging the Holodomor as a genocide and declaring the current conflict as a way of preventing historical failures, Germany potentially would be perceived as an ally of Ukraine without any critical distance. It might be argued that neutrality is not an option here. However, in times of conflict, this makes a discourse on genocide very politicized and might not leave enough room for an objective and detailed evaluation. Narratives in this respect might now being perceived as the test piece for political solidarity. Again, this fuels acknowledgment with political factors – and therefore uses or misuses (depending on one's point of view) human suffering for political reasons.

Politically, for many reasons the Holodomor narratives as told in Ukraine do not play an important role for narratives told in Russia when it comes to reasoning about the current conflict. Some might argue this is a proof of the denial of any historical and actual responsibility. However, a big difference to the German "non"-narrative is the fact that Germany unescapable had to admit its guilt and responsibility in a historical dimension. Since Russia was never in that position, there is and was no reason to officially take responsibility for the Holodomor. In effect, this might add to the unwillingness to do so, particularly in a moment of conflict, where meaning-making is contested anyway.

In a general sense, peaceful solutions to any conflict can only be found if human rights violations are recognized and addressed by the aggressor. Dealing with the painful and violent past means acknowledging and taking responsibility for human suffering. In this regard, the narratives about the Holodomor play an important role in finding a lasting and just solution for the ongoing conflict.

However, there is a big danger of prioritizing acknowledgment of historical traumas over the pressing requirement to find solutions for current crises. With the good intention of fighting for justice, this may cause a too big threshold for compromises in order to stop ongoing human rights violations. This can even lead to the perpetuation of an ongoing conflict, with overall far worse effects and consequences: neither acknowledgement nor de-escalation but prolonging suffering, in particular of civilians.

Overall, the different narratives about the Holodomor cause a major dilemma: it is impossible to address the conflict without paying attention to it and doing justice to the suffering of people and societies. However, by doing so, the impasse to reaching a solution could be made unbreakable.

This means the complexity of the conflict increases dramatically and therefore the potential danger of perpetuating and prolonging the conflict is rising. We believe the one and only solution is a continued dialogue about the narratives – deconstructing the elements and reasons in the process of meaning-making of all involved is from our perspective the only way out.

1991 – Dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian Independence

Although the dissolution of the Soviet Union is in itself an undisputed fact, it triggers extremely different narratives. The narratives analysed here are narratives of today (2019), not of 1991.

Russian narratives

The dissolution: a catastrophe

Looking back from 2019 to 1991, we can clearly see the end of the Soviet Union as an event triggering contested narratives in contemporary Russia. Two distinct narratives can be identified. The official Russian narrative represents what happened in 1991 in a very negative way. It pronounces it a catastrophe. Already back in 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin characterized the dissolution of the Soviet Union as "the collapse" and the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century. This narrative emphasizes how after the fall of the USSR, many ethnic Russians appeared overnight to be outside of Russia, their motherland. "As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama. Tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside of Russian territory. Moreover, the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself".[22]

According to this narrative, this situation has led to various forms of deprivation suffered by Russian-speaking diaspora left outside of Russia. This has included deprivation of certain political (including voting) rights, especially as compared with the local "native" population. For example, the situation of the Russian so-called "non-citizens" in Latvia even became a concern for the UN Council of Human Rights. The latter confirmed that the Latvian governmental policy after the restoration of the country's independence was "to recognize as citizens only those persons who enjoyed citizenship prior to 1940 and their direct descendants. For all others, no regulations were in place, which left some 740,000 persons, mostly Russian speaking, without citizenship of Latvia or any other state, and thus stateless. A large number of citizenship requests by Russian-speaking residents were denied due to claims of links to the Soviet army".[23]

Regretting the collapse of the Soviet Union and economic hardships that came upon Russia after 1991, the Russian narrative describes the process of disintegration of the USSR as unfair, particularly because Soviet people spoke in favour of preserving the USSR in the 17 March 1991 Referendum, in which 77.85% of still Soviet citizens positively answered the question: "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics in which human rights and freedoms of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?"[24]

22 Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, April 25, 2005, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931.

23 See: Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/7/19/Add.3. 5 March 2008, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/623177?ln=en. The report recommended that "insofar as citizenship regulations are concerned, the Latvian government should revisit the existing requirements for naturalization with the objective of facilitating the granting of citizenship to non-citizens and implementing the commitments established by the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. (…) Additionally, the granting of voting rights in local elections for non-citizens who are long-term residents of Latvia should be considered by the Government".

24 Marie-Josée Sarotte and Serhii Plokhy, "The Shoals of Ukraine. Where American Illusions and Great-Power Politics Collide", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-11-22/shoals-ukraine.

According to the official narrative, today's Russian national and migration problems are "directly related to the destruction of the USSR – and, in fact, historically of a Greater Russia, which was formed at its core in the XVIII century".[25] While the Russian government did not negotiate the borders of the so called "historical" or "Greater Russia" with the former Soviet republics at the time of the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the USSR, it expected to preserve with them close "brotherhood relations". Dmitry Gorenburg, for example, has pointed out that the Russian term "the Near Abroad" *(blizhneye zarubezhye)* is associated with fraternalist narratives concerning brotherly links and paternalistic relationships by Russian leaders, who continue to consider former Soviet states, especially Ukraine and Belarus, as "naturally" belonging to Russia's cultural and political sphere of influence.[26]

Russia's self-perception that it "did its partners a favour" when it did not negotiate borders of the former Russian Empire after the end of the Cold War and collapse of the USSR (see the *Paris Charter,* signed by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990), can be seen as a "blind spot" in Western and Ukrainian narratives about Russia. Moreover, criticizing Russia for lack of assertiveness in world politics after the fall of the USSR in 2014, Putin noted: "Now, many years later, I heard residents of Crimea say that back in 1991 they were handed over *like a sack of potatoes*. This is hard to disagree with. And what about the Russian state? What about Russia? It humbly accepted the situation".[27] In their 2003 book, James Goldgeier and John McFaul noted that "even after December 1991… Russia's political and territorial definition, its very identity, was still uncertain. Overnight, millions of ethnic Russians living in the non-Russian republics became expatriates while ethnic minorities within the Russian Federation pushed for their own autonomy".[28]

The official Russian narrative about the collapse of the USSR as a story of Russia's frustration, exclusion, and even humiliation developed into the idea of Russia's loneliness in current world politics. For example, Vladislav Surkov, a former First Deputy Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration and the author of the famous 2006 concept of Russia as a "sovereign democracy", published an article in April of 2018 titled "The Loneliness of the Half-Breed", in which he called the slogan of Russian Tsar Alexander III, "Russia has only two allies: its army and navy", "the best-worded description of geopolitical loneliness, which should have long been accepted as our fate".[29]

While for Ukraine and other newly independent states, the collapse of the USSR can be seen as a fresh start, for the former Russian Empire its disintegration was largely perceived as a defeat, partially driven by the personal rivalry between the President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the newly elected (July 12, 1991) President of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Boris Yeltsin. According to Strobe Talbott, in Putin's eyes, the heaviest responsibility for the end of the Soviet Union "falls on the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was the prime mover of what he has called "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the twentieth century".[30] The blame placed on Gorbachev for the defeat of the Soviet Union is evidently an-

25 Vladimir Putin, "Russia: The National Question," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 January, 2012.

26 Dmitry Gorenburg, "MC Series: Security Insights, Number 42", Marshall Centre, November 2019, https://www.marshallcenter.org/MCPUBLICWEB/en/nav-fix-sec-insights/2803-art-pubs-sec-insights-42-full-en.html.

27 Vladimir Putin, Address by President of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 18 March, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

28 James Goldgeier and John McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia After the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), p. 36.

29 Vladislav Surkov, "The Loneliness of the Half-Breed", *Russia in Global Affairs,* 28 May 2018, https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/book/The-Loneliness-of-the-Half-Breed-19575.

other blind spot in the Western narratives about the events of 1991. Today the positions of Gorbachev and Putin on the collapse of the Soviet Union seem to be not so different. In all his public interviews, Mikhail Gorbachev interpreted the collapse of the USSR as a geopolitical tragedy, but he denied personal responsibility for that. In his recent book he emphasized his view, which strongly resonates with the Russian mainstream narrative, that this 'tragedy' was the consequence of a coincidence of three major processes: 1) the result of the coup against Perestroika (August putsch 1991), 2) the position of the national separatists in the republics and Yeltsin's alleged "treason", and 3) the position of some Western countries or political forces allegedly interested in the destabilization of USSR.[31]

The view that Russia's independence from the Soviet Union creates a weird "you-cannot-be-independent-from-yourself-feeling", can be interpreted as part of a narrative of identity crisis, due to the heavy burden of responsibility for the Soviet "colonial"[32] and ideological past. The latter identity crisis was aggravated by a feeling of incompleteness and loss, after Russia's "brother-Ukraine" started its quest for membership in EU and NATO.

Alternative narratives in Russia

In the early 1990s the dissolution of the USSR was narrated by Russian liberal parties as a victory of freedom and defeat of the totalitarian regime. It was seen as an achievement of which Russian could and should be proud: "I am also grateful to Russians for their courage and patience. They should take a great deal of credit for the fact that the world community is breaking with its totalitarian past," said Boris Yeltsin at the UN Security Council on 31 January 1992.[33] Among the achievements of society after the fall of the USSR were loosening of ideological control in culture and sciences, freedoms of speech (*Glasnost*), lifting of the iron curtain and opportunity to travel, full rehabilitation of the repressed victims of Stalin's regimes, introduction of capitalism and liquidation of food storages. With respect to the latter, even then the President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev in 2011 noted that "Russians of his age are probably the "happiest generation" for being able to appreciate how far the country has travelled since the empty shop shelves of the dying Soviet era".[34] However, today, in 2019 it's hard to call this "liberal" version of the story a full-fledged narrative, perhaps, because liberal parties have significantly reduced their influence both in public and international spheres, but also because many of their leaders approve the dismantling of the Communist regime, but regret the political and economic disintegration of the "big Motherland". Today even the leader of liberal party, "Yabloko" Gregory Yavlinsky, indicates that the collapse of the USSR was not a historical inevitability, but due to mistakes of the "country's leadership": "Personally, I did not want the collapse of the country at all. The USSR is my Motherland… I had no doubt that the Soviet system needed to be dismantled, and the Communist authorities had to come to an end for the sake of a democratic system and a market economy. But not only for Russia, but for everyone! For my whole big country! … Politically, the opportunity to build a renewed Union was lost in 1989-

30 Strobe Talbott, "The man who lost an empire", *The New York Review of Books*, 21 December 2017, reposted at: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-man-who-lost-an-empire/.

31 М. Горбачев, *В меняющемся мире*. (AST, 2018); Медушевский А.Н., "Политическая философия М.Горбачева и перспективы нового мирового порядка", *Сравнительное конституционное обозрение*, 2019, № 5 (132), pp.125-144.

32 The term 'colonial' referring to the USSR is highly controversial, for even many Western authors would argue that the Soviet Union was not a traditional empire like Great Britain.

33 "Text of Boris Yeltsin's Speech to the UN Security Council", 31 January 1992, https://apnews.com/e5458697cf06bbb518a9ffafffd650e5.

34 Quoted in: Leyla Boulton, "Reality of Life after Communism", Financial Times, 23 December 2011, https://www.ft.com/content/2a39d804-2cd3-11e1-b485-00144feabdc0.

1990. This happened due to the lack of a strategic vision of the situation among the country's leadership… Instead of all this, they organized *Belovezhskaya Pushcha*.[35] Instead they brutally and brainlessly destroyed everything."

"Why you, Ukraine?" The unexpected divorce narrative

This narrative in a way connects the two above-mentioned ones because it has overlaps with both. However, it has a different focus: it emphasizes that for many Russians, the Ukrainians' wish to separate came very unexpectedly because Russian-Ukrainian relations were seen as very positive before 1991. Supporters of this narrative would say that in late Soviet times, it didn't matter whether one was Russian or Ukrainian, there were lots of family ties and mixed backgrounds. Although paternalistic views on Ukraine (as the *little* brother) did exist in Soviet times, for many Russians in daily life it felt as just one country. Therefore, the separation came as an unexpected divorce and left many with no understanding of why? Some perceived it as a loss, some even as a betrayal by some politicians who manipulated public opinion in favour of independence for their own vested interests.

Ukrainian narratives

In Ukraine there are mainly two narratives concerning the dissolution of the Soviet Union. One focuses on the independence of Ukraine. The other puts the emphasis more on the new economic possibilities.

Dissolution of the USSR = Independence of Ukraine

The creation of an independent Ukraine is a main prism through which Ukrainian society looks at the fact of the Soviet Union's dissolution. The general focus is on Ukrainian "identity" as the focal point of a key narrative.

The decision on Ukraine's independence was supported by an overwhelming majority – 90.3% in the all-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991. (In the earlier referendum of the USSR on March 17, 1991, 70.2% of the Ukrainian SSR inhabitants voted to preserve the Soviet Union, but as a federation of equal sovereign republics. However, this referendum did not include the independent state issue. Compared to the other Soviet republics, the Ukrainian SSR had the lowest support for preserving the Soviet Union, even as a federation. However, this referendum was boycotted in some Soviet Republics, namely Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova, so its legitimacy has been questioned.)

The independence of Ukraine is perceived as a long-awaited result and a consequence of the centuries-old struggle for the opportunity to have an independent Ukrainian state. This is the process of Ukrainian identity. Also, independence made it possible for Ukraine to free itself from pressure and restrictions on Ukrainian culture, language, history etc. within USSR co-existence ("*USSR as prison of nations*"). This narrative considers Russian/Soviet policy vis-a-vis the republics as neo-imperialism and sees here the reason for the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

35 The park near Minsk where the treaty that effectively dissolved the USSR was signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and the Belarusian leader Stanislav Shushkevich in December 1991.

Gaining independence and Ukrainian identity created a new basis for forming relationships with the Russian Federation. Bilateral relations are the interaction of completely equal and independent partners. Ukraine (until 2014) and Russia are good neighbours. And Ukraine, from this point of view, did a lot to build and save constructive relations.

New opportunities for Ukraine

This key narrative is about advantages or new opportunities to get rid of negative Soviet past - political repressions and restrictions of human rights and property. This process became more obvious and widespread as a result of Gorbachev's policy - access to the taboo pages of Soviet history, freedom of speech, a new dimension of protecting human rights.

A significant part of this group of narratives is a positive perception of the favourable economic conditions created by the Soviet Union's collapse. The new economic opportunities of the liberal economy are associated with the rejection of the socialist system and the transition to market relations. On the one hand, private property and entrepreneurship are factors of the prosperity and equal opportunity for everyone. On the other hand, the opportunities for building new relationships between workers and authorities (specially for industrial regions). This can impact public policy and the protection of workers' rights through the political parties' help. It is also open borders for contacts with other countries. These are business contacts, education, tourism. Everything gives new opportunities for the development of Ukrainian society in different fields: public, socio-economic, cultural, etc. The West is perceived as a reliable partner. The West is also perceived by Ukrainians as a neutral judge – particularly in the contemporary conflict.

The metaphor regarding the Ukrainian-Russian "family" is perceived with great irritation and disdain. "*If Russia is the older brother, I have already grown up*." However, more doubts than ever regarding "kinship" have appeared due to the armed conflict. "*Maybe we weren't ever connected*."

Western / German narratives

In Germany and the West, perceptions differ widely over the question of whether or not the dissolution of the Soviet Union marks the end of the Cold War. On the one hand, the dissolution is seen as the final victory of the West ("By the grace of God, America won the Cold War." as George H. Bush stated in his State of the Union speech in January 1992),[36] the final victory of capitalism (in the sense of Francis Fukuyama's "End of History") or as proof for the victory of freedom[37] (as documented in the opening remarks of NATO General Manfred Wörner in July 1990: "The Cold War belongs to history. Our Alliance is moving from confrontation to cooperation. We are building a new Europe, a Europe drawn together by the unfettered aspiration for freedom, democracy and prosperity.")[38]

36 George Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union", 28 January 1992, https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/3886.

37 See Lee Edwards and Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *A Brief History of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2016).

38 "Opening Statement to the NATO Summit Meeting", 5 July 1990, https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1990/s900705a_e.htm.

On the other hand, the opposing perception insists that the end of the Cold War had already taken place before the dissolution of the Soviet Union (that it had already ended with the Charter of Paris and the NATO declaration in 1990) and therefore these are two distinct events. As Richard Sakwa states: "The dissolution of the communist system was conflated with the disintegration of the Soviet Union into a single narrative, even though they were two distinct processes."[39]

Independently of this fundamental question, there are in general in Germany and the West two distinct narratives about the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

End of the Cold War

This narrative takes a very favourable view of the numerous declarations of independence in the post-Soviet space and Eastern Europe. ("Freedom won" as US-President Bush said about Poland in his Proclamation 6333 of 10 September 1991). Especially from today's vantage point, the collapse of the Soviet Union is seen in this narrative as newly gained freedom and the possibility for a fresh start offered to many countries. This story is close and sympathetic to the narrative "Dissolution of USSR = independence of Ukraine" and quite indifferent to the question of how the dissolution was experienced in Russia.

Gorbachev's resignation

In this narrative the dissolution of the Soviet Union in itself is regarded with ambivalence or even indifference. It puts emphasis on Gorbachev's resignation. From a German perspective, the politics of Russia was very personalized and Perestroika less a mass movement than a "fragile flower" that needed its founding father Gorbachev. Therefore, December 25, 1991 remains in the collective memory not so much because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union but because of Gorbachev's resignation the very same day. This is due to the fear that without Gorbachev, all the positive changes in the world could easily be undone and the "wind of change" could very soon evaporate. The event of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the independence of many post-Soviet states, such as Ukraine, and the consequences for Russia are very much pushed to the background.

Even if partly forgotten today, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, as Goldgeier and McFaul put it, "was considered a mixed blessing by some Western capitals. For the many officials in the Bush administration, the collapse of the Soviet Union presented not so much an opportunity as a danger, a danger that everything the administration had achieved with Mikhail Gorbachev would go up in a puff of smoke."[40]

Today, there is one major narrative in Germany (and the West) that also needs briefly to be mentioned: seen from a distance of almost 30 years, the dissolution of the Soviet Union seems not to be a big deal. Neither the impact on Ukraine nor that on Russia are sufficiently understood in this narrative.

39 Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 17.

40 James Goldgeier and John McFaul: *Power and Purpose, op.cit.*, p. 60.

Collection of blind spots:

- In the West, it is often forgotten that at the beginning the support for independence of post-Soviet countries (other than in the Baltic states) was far from strong. In August 1991, US President Bush told the Ukrainian parliament in Kyiv: "Freedom is not the same as independence."[41]
- Those who have good memories of Ukraine-Russia relations in Soviet times often neglect that paternalistic views did exist.
- Those who see the mistreatment of dissidents etc. by the Soviet authorities as anti-Ukrainian or part of neo-colonialism tend to overlook that it was directed against Russians and others to a certain extent as well.
- The fact that Russia didn't insist on renegotiating the borders, and the complicated issue of around 15 million Russians living overnight outside the borders of Russia, is often a blind spot outside Russia.
- The fact that Russia had to take on the burden of the debts of the Soviet Union while Ukraine could financially start afresh is often a blind spot outside of Russia. On the other hand, it is often overlooked in Russia that in return for this Russia received Soviet foreign assets.[42]
- The events of the negotiations about the future of the nuclear weapons based in Ukraine[43] constitute blind spots in Russia, Ukraine and the West: "Current narratives in all three countries that (…) historically misleading. In the U.S., the impeachment controversy features almost total amnesia about the extraordinary contribution to US national security made by Ukraine's decision to disarm, removing over 1,900 strategic weapons targeted at the US. In Russia, the new nationalist discourse dismisses the Nunn-Lugar cooperative threat reduction as forced disarmament, forgetting that the consolidation of the Soviet nuclear legacy in Russia directly served Russia's security interests. In Ukraine, nostalgia for nuclear status is on the rise, fuelled by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. The enormous costs that would have been incurred by Ukraine (diplomatic, financial, environmental, and more), had nuclear weapons been retained in the 1990s, is ignored."[44]

41 Quoted in: Marie-Josée Sarotte and Serhii Plokhy, "The Shoals of Ukraine", *op.cit.*, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-11-22/shoals-ukraine.

42 The resulting negotiations were extremely difficult because the republics insisted that they should not be responsible for a debt that had not benefited them. The Russians understood that they would have to assume all of it, which they eventually did, in exchange for an agreement with the other republics that Russia would get Soviet foreign assets (for example, embassies and other properties). See James Goldgeier, John McFaul, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

43 With its independence, Ukraine "inherited" approximately 1,900 nuclear warheads and 2,500 tactical nuclear weapons, becoming overnight the third-biggest nuclear power in the world. The US position was clear: "A Yugoslavia-type situation with 30,000 nuclear weapons presents an incredible danger to the American people—and they know it and will hold us accountable if we don't respond." James Baker concluded: "Strategically there is no other foreign issue more deserving of your attention or time." Quoted in Marie-Josée Sarotte and Serhii Plokhy**,** "The Shoals of Ukraine", *op.cit.*, (https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-11-22/shoals-ukrainehttps://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-11-22/shoals-ukraine). After long negotiations, Ukraine signed the Budapest memorandum in January 1994. In exchange for handing over all nuclear weapons to Russia, Ukraine received assurances of territorial integrity. See: U.S. National Security Archive, "Nuclear Weapons and Ukraine: Briefing Book No. 691", 5 December 2019, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nunn-lugar-russia-programs/2019-12-05/nuclear-weapons-ukrainehttps://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nunn-lugar-russia-programs/2019-12-05/nuclear-weapons-ukraine.

44 Conclusion based on recently released documents of the U.S. National Security Archive https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-11-22/shoals-ukraine.

- The problem of Russian identity, the question of what exactly it should be independent of, and the burden of Stalin's crimes is often a blind spot outside Russia. On the other hand, the fact that Russian independence also could be considered by Russia as liberation from a totalitarian past and an opportunity for a fresh start is often a blind spot in Russia.

Conclusion

On a meta-level, the very different narratives regarding the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian independence can be easily explained by the fact that even when talking about the very same event, the Ukrainian and the Russian focus is on very different objects. Whereas the focus of Ukraine is on its independence, the Russian focus is on Russia and the question of the near-abroad.

The reason why this topic triggers extremely different narratives and emotions is the fact that it is directly linked in Russia and the Ukraine with the existential topic of identity. Even if the very complicated event of the dissolution of the Soviet Union triggers especially in Ukraine and in Russia very strong and often contradicting emotions, the underlying issue of identity seems to be paradoxically quite easily understood empathetically by both sides. A bridge of understanding could be the deliberate effort to step into the other's shoes in order to realize the huge emotional difference between what the dissolution of the Soviet Union means for each of the sides.

Although it might be helpful to use family patterns for representing the relationship between Russia and Ukraine in order to make it easier to step into the other's shoes, this is problematic insofar as the exact family pattern that accurately represents the relationship is in dispute, and is in fact seen differently in the different narratives (e.g. as a divorce, as a split between two brothers – or they weren't brothers in the first place).

Mainstream Narratives concerning NATO and EU Enlargement

The below table shows three currently existing mainstream narratives concerning NATO and EU enlargement. They are of relevance to the current situation insofar as they present, on the one hand, arguments that hamper conflict resolution (gaps) or, on the other, arguments that might serve as windows to further discussion in order to explore a path for solving the current conflict. Specifically, the divergent views on the NATO-Russia founding act, the Kosovo conflict, as well as the Russia – Georgian war and the strong move towards NATO by Ukraine in the summer of 2014 define the development of the current relations in the triangle Ukraine-Russia-Germany.

	Ukraine	Russia	Germany
1990		The original post-Cold War narrative on security cooperation in Europe anticipated Russia's close cooperation and possibly integration with NATO. Official and peaceful cooperation between Russia and NATO commenced in 1991. One of the core aspects of Russia's narratives related to NATO is that the Americans promised to Gorbachev during their negotiations about the reunification of Germany that NATO would not move beyond the borders of Germany, if Gorbachev allowed Germany to reunite. In practice, however, a half of Central and Eastern Europe are NATO members by now. Hence, in Russia's eyes, the Americans seem to have broken their promise and are not to be trusted.	For the majority of German politicians, NATO enlargement was the key factor for the stabilization of new democracies. This was a value-based question for Germany, rather than a question of security. The Charter of Paris provided the key to the German arguments. "The era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended. We declare that henceforth our relations will be founded on respect and co-operation. (…) In this context we fully recognize the freedom of States to choose their own security arrangements." The latter included to accepting the will of nations to become NATO members.
1994	In the mid-1990s, Ukraine's cooperation with NATO was a part of the multi-vector diplomacy pursued by Leonid Kuchma, the second president of independent Ukraine. By such means, Kuchma tried to achieve Ukraine's inclusion into a variety of multilateral fora. A series of political steps aimed at developing various axes of Ukraine's relations with the outside world included the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership with Russia (1997), the endorsement of a round of talks with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and a NATO-Ukrainian Charter on a Distinctive Partnership (1997).	In 1994, relations deepened as Russia joined the Partnership for Peace programme.[45]	
1997		In 1997, Russia and NATO signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Secu-	The 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act was about creating a dialogue platform where NATO

45 See the account of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher's meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin on 22 October 1993, in which Christopher is quoted as saying "the decision has been made to press ahead with the Partnership for Peace, which would be open to all and without pushing some countries ahead of others. Hearing this statement as a response to his concern about expansion, Yeltsin quickly asks Christopher to confirm his impression – "Yeltsin […] asked if he understood correctly that all countries in CEE and NIS would be on equal footing and there would be a partnership and not a membership." Christopher replies, "Yes that is the case, there would not even be an associate status." A relieved Yeltsin exclaims, "This is a brilliant idea, it is a stroke of genius." National Security Archive, "Secretary Christopher's meeting with President Yeltsin, 10/22/93, Moscow", https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//dc.html?doc=4390822-Document-08-Secretary-Christopher-s-meeting-with.

Ukraine	Russia	Germany
At the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the mainstream narrative in Ukraine was that the county should increase its cooperation with NATO, while NATO for its part should increase its cooperation with Ukraine. This desired rapprochement was not perceived as anti-Russian, because Russia, having established relations with NATO in 1991 and having signed the Russia-NATO Founding Act in 1997, seemed to have plans for even closer cooperation with the Alliance.	rity, which discursively established the narrative that Russia and NATO no longer saw each other as adversaries and committed themselves to the principles of democracy and collective security: "to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all people".[46] However, in the Russian mainstream narrative, the Founding Act soon transformed into a humiliating betrayal, because while Russia expected to become a fully-fledged member of the Alliance, it was instead given a marginal and inconsequential position, which, in Russia's eyes, was an act of exclusion rather than inclusion. The inclusion of the former Warsaw Pact states and the republics of the Soviet Union into NATO in the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s was also perceived as an exclusion of Russia.	could speak with Russia but do this in one voice, as in NATO+1. Hence, the act was a gesture of inclusion. But, as Russia was not a NATO member, Russia should not have a say in the internal NATO decision-making process.[47] The Baltic states and Poland were seen as the main drivers for NATO enlargement. The shift of the Clinton-Administration from a "step-by-step NATO accession for all" (Partnership for Peace) to full membership for some and the complex (internal) reasons for this shift had not been widely discussed in the German public at that time. German discourses were rather focused on the German reunification process, the Balkan wars and the Ruanda genocide and partly underestimated the relevance of NATO-Russia-relations.
Poland, which joined NATO in 1999, was a model country for Ukraine with regard to the post-communist transition. However, in this narrative, Ukraine unlike Poland did not manage to join NATO quickly enough, and later on had to cope with the perception that "it had missed the last train."		Some NATO members were against the inclusion of the former USSR republics (with the exception of the Baltic states) because it was perceived to be an interference that could irritate and threaten Russia. Thus, the inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia would not improve their respective security, but rather diminish it. I.e. this would not stabilize these new democracies, nor would it increase the security of the existing NATO members.

1999

46 NATO, Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, 27 May 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm?selectedLocale=uk.

47 The Founding Act states: "... neither the Council nor anything in the Act will provide NATO or Russia, in any way, *with a right of veto over the actions of the other* nor do they infringe upon or restrict the rights of NATO or Russia to independent decision-making and action". For a discussion of the varied reception of the Founding Act, see: Jack Mendelsohn, "'The NATO Russian Founding Act", *Arms Control Today*, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-05/features/nato-russian-founding-act.

Ukraine	Russia	Germany
NATO's 1999 operation in Yugoslavia was an important nodal point in Ukraine's perception of and relations with the Alliance. During the Kosovo conflict, official Ukraine sympathized with the Serbs, but not with Milosevic. Ukraine's firm position, however, was that the Kosovo conflict should not and could not be resolved by military means. There was also a broad consensus that something needed to be done about Milosevic's policies towards the breakaway region. At the same time, NATO's air raids in Serbia came as a complete shock. Nevertheless, the majority of Ukrainians believed that these events could not negatively affect their country – Belgrade was too far away in the public perception. Following NATO's controversial policies against Belgrade and Kosovo's secession from Yugoslavia, Ukraine did not officially recognize Kosovo until today, because, politically speaking, Ukraine was on the same page with Russia at that time. Since there were enough problematic territories in and around Ukraine that could be affected by the Kosovo precedent, Ukraine was not keen on supporting proclamations of independence, and it sided with Russia's position on Kosovo in multilateral international fora. **2001** In 2001, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Uzbekistan (which later withdrew) signed the Charter of GUAM, the Organization for Democracy and Eco	During NATO's 1999 operation in Yugoslavia, Putin was a chairman of the National Security Council. In that position he publicly claimed that Russians should be afraid of NATO, because the Kosovo story was potentially explosive and could affect Russia directly. The issue of respect and involvement in global political processes was still important for Russia, however. So, Russia believed it to be important to participate in the Kosovo conflict and did not want to be under anyone's command. When it was offered to take part under NATO's command, it entered Kosovo and seized Pristina airport, which was widely publicized and received very positively in Russia, as an act of independent and assertive foreign policy and an example of military prowess, which had been missing from the image of the Russian army since the failure of the first Chechen War. However, strategically speaking, the Pristina incident remained largely inconsequential. On the level of the official discourse, the Kosovo incident left a bitter aftertaste, because Russia was perceived to be weak, as it could not properly react militarily, thereby betraying the Serbs, who were Russia's close partners. Viewed against the existence of the CIS, spearheaded by Russia,	In the political discussion over Kosovo, Russia was neither a factor, nor seen as an actor. NATO attempted to include Russia on the operational level. It was included into the conflict militarily. The incident at Pristina airport showed the problem of not integrating Russia in the process. It was important for NATO not to give Russia a sector, due to the fear of the split of Kosovo. In Kosovo, NATO engaged in a war, thus playing the offensive function for the first time in addition to their stabilization function. The aim was to stop Milosevic's ethnic cleansing in Kosovo by either influencing his will or his capabilities. Despite the problems arising over the Pristina airport incident between the strategic commander (SACEUR) and the operational commander (COM KFOR), the military operation ended in NATO's view successfully, with a ceasefire and a return of the Albanian refugees. The window for a political settlement was opened.

Ukraine	Russia	Germany	
nomic Development. In official circles, this organization was viewed as a counterweight to the CSTO.	the creation of GUAM in 2001 was sometimes presented as an attempt to curb Russia's influence in the area, and a purposeful anti-Russia strategy supported by the United States. Despite such a perception, Russia managed to maintain stable and friendly relations with some GUAM members (e.g. Azerbaijan).		
2002 was the year in which Ukraine's leadership (Kuchma) announced that Ukraine wanted to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union by 2003-2004 and then fulfil the conditions for becoming an EU member by 2007-2011.	Ukraine's Orange Revolution of 2004 was largely presented as having been instigated, or at least facilitated, by the West, i.e. the US and its allies.		2002
In 2004, NATO membership became a divisive issue in the internal Ukrainian political debate and a tool of fearmongering in some regions of eastern Ukraine. Such political usage of the narrative about NATO's imminent interference into Ukraine's internal affairs was closely connected to Viktor Yushchenko's memory politics. As part of this new turn in the mainstream political discourse, the Ukrainian government rehabilitated certain political actors (e.g. Stepan Bandera) and re-emphasized certain political events (e.g. the Holodomor), thereby creating favourable discursive conditions for the possibility of presenting NATO as a tangible intruder and a threat in Ukraine's pro-Russian areas.	Whether as a conscious strategy of preserving the regime, or as a symptom of the elites' genuine concern about Western intrusion into Russia's sphere of influence, the image of coloured revolutions became the most widely used scarecrow in the Russian official discourse. This perceived threat has established itself so firmly that it is still being used today, presenting an illustrative example of Putin's anti-revolutionary stance that initially revealed itself already in the very beginning of his presidency and gradually solidified into a hegemonic discursive position of all Kremlin's officials.		2004
Putin's 2007 Munich speech, which had a confrontational tone and contained open criti-	Putin's 2007 Munich Speech was a watershed moment for Russia's relations with NATO and the West. In the speech, he openly criticised NATO's hypocrisy, as well as all the vices of the unipolar world order. Since then, Russia's official rhetoric towards NATO has been either moderately or openly hostile. At the same time, politi-	Putin's Munich Speech in 2007 was interpreted as an aggressive and divisive speech. In Germany it led to disillusionment concerning the NATO-Russian relationship. It was considered to be a rupture by Putin of the NATO-Russian partnership. The EU Eastern Partnership was a consolidated EU response to	2007

	Ukraine	Russia	Germany
2008	cism of NATO's hypocrisy, got Ukraine worried about the possibility of unpredictable actions from Russia's side. Consequently, NATO membership started to turn into a security issue. During NATO's Bucharest summit of 2008, American and Polish presidents voiced full support for Ukraine's membership bid. France and Germany voiced moderate opposition. As a result, it was stated that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO; however, no specific membership action plan was offered. In the mainstream Ukrainian political discourse, NATO membership turned into a full-blown security issue after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008.	cal commentators have argued that the Munich speech was rather weak in doctrinal terms, because it did not propose a possible architecture of the post-unipolar world order.[48] Russia's campaign in Georgia in 2008 was solely provoked by Georgia's attacks against South Ossetia, and Russia needed to intervene as a responsible great power that had an obligation to maintain peace in the region, but also as an actor who acted in self-defence. The official narrative for justifying Russia's intervention in Georgia is that of a moral duty to defend Russia's compatriots, however loosely defined. The same narrative was later used during the accession of Crimea and the war in Donbas.	the Georgian conflict. Within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Germany within the framework of the EU wanted to second political and economic reforms in order to support stability, democracy and prosperity in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. For Germany, the idea of the encirclement of Russia by NATO promoted by Moscow is Russian paranoia, and for some it is only propaganda.
2009	In 2011, when Viktor Yanukovich was elected as president, he withdrew NATO membership as a security issue from the domestic debate. The latter shifted towards EU association. "Euro-Atlantic integration/aspiration" turned into "European integration." Soon, however, the Eastern Partnership project, originally inaugurated in 2009, started to be perceived as a disappointment and a joke. Ukraine's officials were seemingly underwhelmed by this half-measure.	Russia perceived the Eastern Partnership, inaugurated in 2009, as a potential threat. In combination with NATO enlargement, which was perceived as a potential military threat to Russia, the possible Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was viewed as an economic threat to Russia-Ukraine trade relations. Many officials saw NATO and the EU as the two sides of the same coin (i.e. Western intrusion into Russia's sphere of influence). Thus, Ukraine's potential association with the EU was seen as automatically creating the possibility of further NATO enlargement.	

48 Глеб Павловский, "Консенсус ищет столицу. Московский консенсус", *Русский Журнал* 6, 2015, http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Konsensus-ischet-stolicu.

Ukraine	Russia	Germany
After Russia annexed Crimea and instigated the war in Donbas in 2014, President Petro Poroshenko gave a strong pro-NATO push within Ukraine's domestic political discourse. Poroshenko's successor, Volodymyr Zelensky, has officially proclaimed continuity in Ukraine's policies towards NATO, but he does not seem very interested in the issue of Ukraine's membership in the Alliance.	The 2014 accession of Crimea was largely framed as a defensive move that was meant to prevent a Russia-NATO security crisis and the substitution of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol by NATO forces.	Despite the Munich Speech and the war in Georgia, Russia-NATO cooperation continued and even increased until 2014. Russian military actions in February and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 led to a disruption of the idea of cooperative security. The mainstream political view in NATO currently is that without Russian fulfilment of the preconditions concerning Ukraine, NATO should not engage with Russia on a military-to-military level.

2014

Conclusion

The overall evolution of narratives from the Paris Charter to the present demonstrates the growing lack of trust between the three actors, rooted in different interpretations of NATO and its mission. Schematically, for Germany NATO has been the foundation of stability in Europe since the Second World War. For many in Ukraine, NATO membership seems to be a precondition for European integration and an instrument of protection against a real or perceived Russian threat. For Russia, it is an instrument of USA domination in Europe, building on alleged US-exceptionalism. In the course of our efforts to understand the inner logic of the narratives from the different perspectives, some potential points of understanding became clear to us (without, however, causing us to give up on our own individual positions). For example, it became understandable that Russia sees itself to be alienated from European security and sees the spirit of 1989/90 broken. At the same time it is also understandable to say from a Western perspec-

tive that there was no coherent anti-Russian agenda, no formal promise broken, and that NATO enlargement was meant (at least by many relevant supporters) to serve stability rather than undermine Russia. It is understandable that for Ukraine, attempts to cooperate with NATO were not anti-Russian in the early phase, but that now the perception exists that it was unfairly left in a situation of having missed the last train. It is also understandable to a certain extent that Germany, against the background of its having being at the frontline of the Cold War, heavily exposed to the threat of nuclear escalation, has a desire for rapprochement with Russia.

Based on the narratives outlined above, one can identify the following current key opposing positions:

Germany: NATO's priority should be the deterrence of Russia versus the priority should be put on dialogue. The provision of security to Ukraine should be the common interest of NATO members, but should not include membership versus NATO enlargement should continue, because NATO provides stability and this should be in the best interest of Ukraine and of Russia. All nations should adhere to the European Security structure (the Charter of Paris).

Russia: the mainstream narrative is that NATO has developed into a threat to the very existence of Russia. Thus, NATO must be actively deterred and it must be prevented that BUMAGA countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) become NATO members. A minority view is that Russia should actively engage with NATO and the "West".

Ukraine: NATO should be the security provider for Ukraine against Russia. This has become official policy. Some nationalist groups would argue that NATO is a block of enemy states that want to ruin the Slavic countries. A third position is that neutrality should be pursued for the sake of the unity of the country.

Conflicting Narratives on the Euromaidan 2013/14

Narrative 1: "Euromaidan as a Revolution of Dignity"

This narrative describes Euromaidan as a grass-root movement started by civil society in Ukraine in response to President Yanukovich's sudden renouncement of the signing of an Association Agreement with the European Union as well as to the numerous cases of corruption, violations of human rights and flouting of the rule of law which the regime in general had demonstrated previously. According to this narrative, the Euromaidan was a follow-up to the Orange Revolution of 2004 and other "coloured revolutions" in the post-Soviet states, which protested against corrupted, undemocratic and pro-Russian elites and tried to give a new start to liberal reforms.

Starting as a peaceful demonstration of civic activists and students in November 2013, the Euromaidan reached a first peak in the March of Millions on 8 December after young people were cruelly beaten by militia on November 30/December 1. It became a real revolution, the "Revolution of Dignity", in January/February 2014. The violence, starting from this first incident and continuing during the dramatic events of the winter of 2013/2014, is described as being provoked and initiated by the current authorities and militia troops, especially the "Berkut". Resistance became radicalized when Yanukovych pushed through "dictatorship" laws on 16 January, 2014[49] and when the first Molotov cocktails appeared on the square on19 January. The Maidan became a militarized camp after the first death on 21/22 January and ended as a killing field and makeshift cemetery from 18 to 21 February, 2014.[50]

This narrative emphasizes that the Revolution of Dignity united numerous groups of people regardless of the region of origin, ethnicity, native language, gender or social position. Significantly, the first victims from the Euromaidan side were a Russian-speaking ethnic Armenian, Serhiy Nigoyan,[51] and the Belarusian Mikhail Zhiznevskyi.[52] Other victims, referred to as the "Heavenly Hundred", were representatives of different regions and professions.[53] Emphasizing the bottom-up mobilization and self-organization of citizens is one of the main parts of the narrative. The general motto broadly used at the time was: "I'm a drop in the ocean", illustrated by the numerous examples of how small- and medium-sized businesses and average people provided assistance to the protesters. Car owners and taxi drivers provided their services for free, while different people voluntarily joined groups who provided medical, legal and humanitarian aid, cultural and informational support – and even spiritual support by clerics of different confessions.

49 "Dictatorship" laws were a group of ten laws which were considered to restrict constitutional freedoms (such as the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of movement, the right of NGOs to operate freely) and were aimed at suppressing the Euromaidan movement. They were contrary in substance to the foregoing Ukrainian constitutional tradition, but quite close to current Russian regulations establishing the status of NGOs as that of "foreign agents", constraining the right to strike, private car processions and demonstrations. When these laws were rapidly voted in by the Verkhovna Rada in violation of parliamentary procedures and regulations, it caused a new wave of protests all over Ukraine. See also: "Anti-protest laws in Ukraine", *Wikipedia,* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-protest_laws_in_Ukraine.

50 "Five years on, Ukrainians ask if the Maidan revolution was really worth it", *Independent,* https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-maidan-revolution-anniversary-protests-kiev-russia-eu-a8640111.html.

51 See: "Serhiy Nigoyan", *Wikipedia,* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serhiy_Nigoyan.

52 See: "EuroMaidan's victims include five killed, many injured and missing", *Kyiv Post,* https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/euromaidan/euromaidans-victims-include-five-killed-many-injured-and-missing-335932.html.

53 "List of people killed during the 2014 Ukrainian revolution", *Wikipedia,* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_killed_during_the_2014_Ukrainian_revolution.

The key message, that the Ukrainian people were standing up for European values and democracy, was supported by Western leaders[54] and diplomats, numerous journalists,[55] scholars[56] and intellectuals, as well as by representatives of Ukrainian diasporas all over the world. Demonstrations and campaigns in support of the Euromaidan took place in EU capitals and large cities of the USA, Australia and Canada.[57]

Another fact often mentioned in the frame of this narrative is that the Revolution wasn't led by any particular political leader or party. Oppositional MPs and politicians emerged as the main interlocutors that negotiated on behalf of the protesters on the Maidan with President Yanukovych to end the standoff. Each negotiation was considered fruitless, especially due to the fact that the foremost demand of the protesters was for Yanukovych to resign, and he would not. Parallel negotiations between the Yanukovych government and European and US diplomats also took place, with similar results.[58] This fact explains why after the Euromaidan no party won a majority, neither in the Verkhovna Rada after the early parliamentary elections held on 31 October 2014, nor in local councils after the local elections in 2015.

This narrative firstly appeared within civil society and was later adopted by authorities and politicians. On 21 February 2014, the Ukrainian parliament officially recognized the perished protesters as victims. On 1 July, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the law "On Amendments to Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine On National Awards of Ukraine", re-establishing the order of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. On 21 November 2014, by decree of President Poroshenko, the perished Ukrainian protesters of the Euromaidan were posthumously awarded the title Hero of Ukraine.

Later on, some initiatives took shape following the Maidan – the "Museum of the Maidan" and the "Museum of Liberty" were established. Their joint efforts have resulted in the creation of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred National Memorial Complex – Museum of the Revolution of Dignity.[59] Also, the Kyiv Council renamed part of Institutska Street to Heavenly Hundred Heroes Avenue. Since November 2014, the Day of Dignity and Freedom is celebrated in Ukraine, commemorating both the Orange Revolution of 2014 and the Revolution of Dignity of 2013/2014. So, the narrative on the Euromaidan as a Revolution of Dignity that started from the grassroots and demonstrated the will to freedom of the Ukrainian people has become widespread in Ukraine. It is shared by the incumbent President Volodymyr Zelensky[60] and Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk,[61] supported by EU representatives and Western leaders and reflected in academic articles and reports by analytical centres.

54 See, e.g.: "Obama warns Ukraine of consequences if violence continues", *Reuters*, 19 February 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/19/us-ukraine-obama-mexico-idUSBREA1I1WQ20140219.

55 Andrey Kurkov, "Ukraine's revolution: Making sense of a year of chaos", *BBC News*, 21 November 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30131108.

56 *The Struggle for Ukraine* (Chatham House, 18 October 2017), https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/struggle-for-ukraine.

57 "Euromaidan", *Ukrainian Canadian Congress*, https://ucc.ca/euromaidan/.

58 "How it all happened", *EuroMaidan Press*, 2 February 2016, http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/02/20/the-story-of-ukraine-starting-from-euromaidan/2/.

59 Website of the National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and Revolution of Dignity Museum, https://maidanmuseum.org/en/node/319.

60 "Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Ukrainians know how to defend their dignity and fight for freedom in deed", 21 November 2019, President of Ukraine Official website, https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/volodimir-zelenskij-ukrayinci-ne-na-slovah-znayut-yak-zahish-58473.

61 "Oleksiy Honcharuk: The Revolution of Dignity laid the foundation for Ukraine of today", Ukraine Government Portal Official website, 21 November 2019, https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/revolyuciya-gidnosti-zaklala-fundament-ukrayini-sogodnishnoyi-oleksij-goncharuk.

Narrative 2: "Coloured Revolutions – Western interference in post-Soviet space

"Puppets" of the West

The main idea of this narrative is that the 2014 protests were a coup d'état. The Euromaidan was a new stage of the "colour revolutions" influenced by the West. This narrative considers all the "colour revolutions" to have been prepared and financed by the Western powers. At the least, it considers t that the West used a mass movement for its own interests.

The "Western hand" rules the "puppet" politicians in Ukraine, who prepared and organized the "colour revolutions", since they had no chance of coming to power by means of the legal electoral process – this narrative exist mostly in Russia and in parts of Ukraine.

Viktor Yanukovych was a legally elected president, and Petro Poroshenko did not have enough public support to win the elections – this is the argument of the narrative. That – in addition to the geopolitical motives of the Western actors – is what moved Yushchenko and his allies, with the help of Western money, to prepare and organize the Euromaidan. Also, on the emotional level, this narrative reflects the fear of being manipulated by the Western powers. The "colour revolutions" are insulting events for the representatives of this narrative.

The participation of European ministers of foreign affairs in the Maidan in 2013 is seen as a sign of Western meddling. The "Washington curators" influenced the situation in Ukraine after the "colour revolution" and the Euromaidan, since the Ukrainian politicians are dependent actors.[62] The Western world tries to pull many post-communist states into its sphere of influence, by promoting "liberal and democratic" ideas and values.

> *"This is a traditional political tool for some nations, aimed at destruction of statehood and sovereignty of a foreign country, conducted under the excuse of democratization. In reality, almost any country where a colour revolution is launched eventually descends into chaos and falls under external management."*

Secretary of the Security Council Nikolay Patrushev[63]

According to this narrative, "colour revolutions" always produce a turbulent and unstable situation, which means only protest and radical changes, but not sustainable and progressive political development. Revolution means radical changes, but not reforms. "Colour revolutions" are a means of USA interference in independent states, making their sovereignty "fragile".

> *"They [independent states – ed.] realize that concepts like peace, independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty tend to be increasingly fragile today. They need to be protected. The last 20 years have taught them that a state can only be secure if its military is well-equipped and armed with the most advanced air and missile defence systems. The US does not sit idly and is employing other tactics including a broad range of techniques developed for hybrid wars and colour revolutions."*
>
> *Alexander Fomin, Russian Deputy Defence Minister*[64]

62 Among other arguments this builds e.g. on the statement by Victoria Nuland, then United States Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, that the United States had spent more than US$5 billion for the democratic transition in Ukraine: Victoria Nuland, "Remarks at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation Conference", 13 December 2013 (https://web.archive.org/web/20140112180202/http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2013/dec/218804.htm). In a leaked phone call Nuland also made clear who her favorites for becoming the next President of Ukraine were: "Yats" but not "Klitsch": "Ukraine crisis: Transcript of leaked Nuland-Pyatt call", *BBC News,* 7 February 2014, (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26079957 It is a direct intervention into the sphere of Russian national interests).

63 'No chance of color revolution in Russia' – security chief // RT. 19 May, 2017. URL: https://www.rt.com/russia/388907-no-chance-for-color-revolution/

The political leaders on the Maidan did not have any public support, except from a minority and small radical groups. These small groups seized the power. That is why the people may feel themselves to be used by the Ukrainian and Western politicians. Since the necessary conditions for the protest movements did not exist in these countries, including Ukraine, all the protest movements must have been paid – otherwise, why would people go out? Viktoria Nuland proposed food for Maidan activists, and showed the open support of the West. The charity George Soros Open Society is accused in this narrative of inciting colour revolutions to install governments friendly to the United States – from the Serbian 'Bulldozer Revolution' in 2000 to the Ukrainian uprising in 2013.

The treaty on the regulation of the political crisis was signed on 21 February 2014. Yanukovych said that the Western leaders betrayed him. The killing of people on the Maidan is interpreted as a Western ploy to make the Maidan results irreversible by provoking even stronger protests. Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine are "victims" of colour revolutions.

"When violent protests shook Kiev in 2013, Western analysts and leaders quickly threw their support behind the anti-government 'revolution' — but after weeks of Yellow Vest protests in France, the reaction has been very different". [65]

After the Euromaidan, the West gained strong influence over the Ukrainian government. Citizens of Western countries took places in government and some big enterprises. As a result, Maidan "criminal" forces came to power; that is why Russia was not going to have any negotiations with them.

The real peoples' initiative and alternative to the paid Euromaidan was the Anti-Maidan movement. At the same time, the goal of the Anti-Maidan movement is to protect Russia from destructive revolutionary changes. The representatives of this narrative feel themselves betrayed by Ukraine and the Western countries and accuse them of a politics of double standards.

"They (USA – ed.) are using various means of political and economic pressure; they launch colour revolutions and even direct military invasions. The rhetoric centred on 'protection of democracy' can hardly fool anyone now. The reason behind such operations by the USA and their allies is their desire to maintain their dominant position in the world. As far as the export of democracy is concerned, it only brings other peoples chaos, disasters and wars."

Valentina Matvienko, Head of the Russian Upper House[66]

So, a "colour revolution" pushes a country toward a fragile statehood. In Russia, the Russian authorities control the situation in the country and will not allow a 'colour revolution' scenario planned by foreign special services to happen. Further arguments of this narrative claim that the dismissal of Yanukovich was unconstitutional and that the lack of a proper investigation of the shootings on Maidan creates suspicion that is was actually initiated by protesters themselves. Another thread of this narrative would accuse the EU of presenting an 'either-or' option reading cooperation with EU and with Eurasian Union, which had to be rejected by Yanukovich and thus indirectly triggered the pro-European protests and respective escalation.

64 Sovereignty has become 'fragile' in world full of US interference – Russia's top military official // RT. 22 April 2019. URL: https://www.rt.com/news/457242-moscow-security-conference-sovereignty-threats/

65 Danielle Ryan, "Revolution in Ukraine? Yes, please! Revolution in France? Rule of law!", *RT*, 3 Dec, 2018, https://www.rt.com/op-ed/445475-france-protests-hypocrisy-media/.

66 "'Playing with fire': Upper House speaker blasts Washington's attempts to dominate foreign nations", *RT*, 15 September 2017, https://www.rt.com/russia/403424-playing-with-fire-upper-house/.

Narrative 3: "The Maidan was a fascist coup d'état"

According to this narrative, the protests in Kyiv that would become known as the Euromaidan may have begun peacefully as a non-violent protest, but they soon grew to become a militant coup d'état by the right-wing fascist organizations Svoboda and the Rights Sector (Pravy Sector[67]), who effectively seized control as the militant tactical leadership of the demonstrations.

In this narrative it is pointed out that the political party Svoboda, which was founded in 1991, has never made a secret of its neo-Nazi ideology, calling itself the "Social-National Party" until 2004. Oleh Tyahnybok, who has led the party since 2004, was ousted former President Viktor Yushchenko's parliamentary faction for a speech calling for Ukrainians to fight against a "Muscovite-Jewish mafia" - using two highly insulting words to describe Russians and Jews. The grave danger this fascist party presents to Ukraine is demonstrated by the fact that it has even infiltrated the Ukrainian government, winning 37 parliamentary seats in the Verkhovna Rada in 2012. In the transitional government of 2014 that came out of the Maidan, three minister posts were held by Svoboda party members. (In the 2014 parliamentary elections, however, Svoboda results were low and in 2019 they won only one constituency seat.)

The Right Sector is an umbrella organization for ultranationalist right-wing groups that share an anti-Russian, anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant ideology. Its members used intimidation and brute force reminiscent of Hitler's "brownshirts" when they attacked the police, stormed government buildings and beat government sympathizers on 17 January 2014.

Historical roots

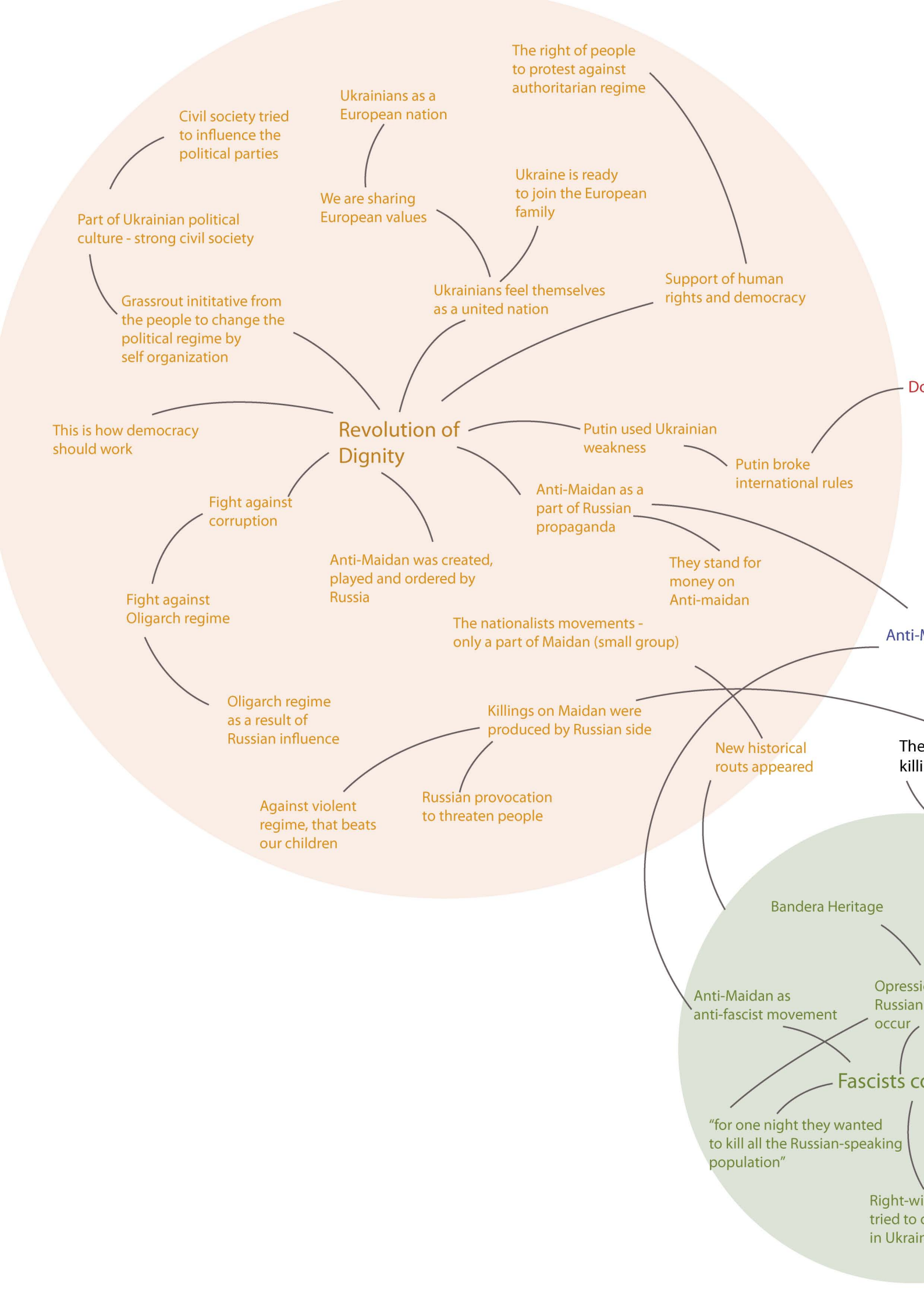
The images of Kyiv burning and streets filled with thugs evoke the horror of the atrocities committed in Ukraine during World War II by collaborators with Nazi Germany when it began its invasion of the Soviet Union under the name Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941. The far-right groups that gained control of the Euromaidan shared reverence for the infamous Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera, and his so-called Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). With the arrival of Nazi soldiers in Ukraine, Bandera declared an independent Ukrainian state and was supportive of the Nazi extermination and forced relocation of Jews, Tatars, Roma people, and Poles in Ukraine. Despite all of Bandera's crimes, he is still considered a hero in Ukraine. Euromaidan must be seen as an attempt by these fascist groups to fulfil the dream of Stepan Bandera – a Ukraine free of Russians, Jews, and all other "undesirables".

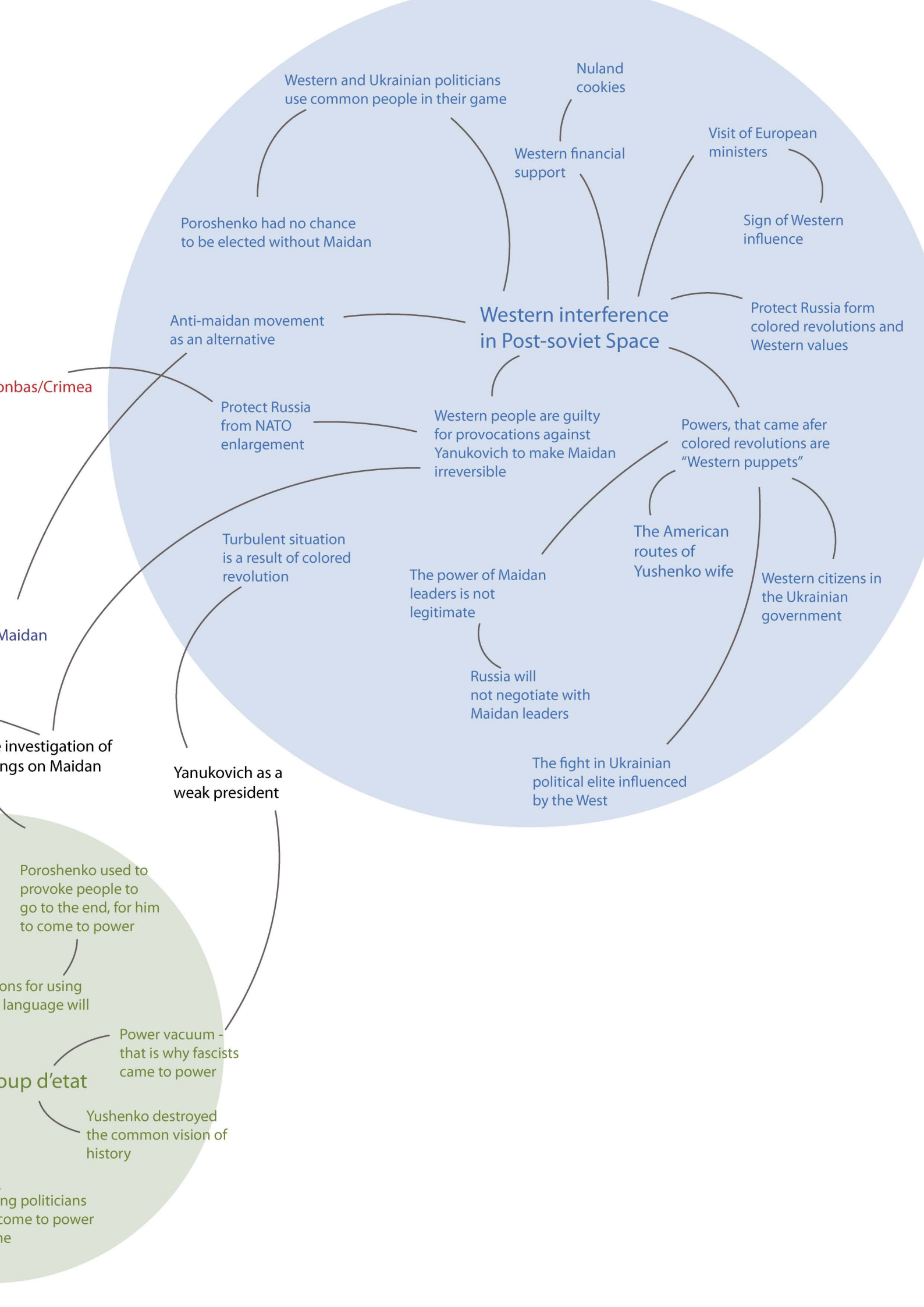
> *The right to peaceful protest, democratic procedures and elections exist for the sole purpose of replacing the authorities that do not satisfy the people. However, those who stood behind the latest events in Ukraine had a different agenda: they were preparing yet another government takeover; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites executed this coup. They continue to set the tone in Ukraine to this day."*
>
> *Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation*[68]

According to this narrative, the rise of right-wing extremism in Ukraine cannot be seen, let alone understood, in isolation. Rather, it must be examined as part of a growing trend throughout Europe (and indeed the world) – a trend which threatens the very foundations of democ-

67 The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation found the Pravy Sector extremist organisation, http://www.supcourt.ru/stor_pdf.php?id=622816

68 "Putin's Address to the Russian Federation Council, 18 March 2014", http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.


The right of people to protest against authoritarian regime
Ukrainians as a European nation
Civil society tried to influence the political parties
Ukraine is ready to join the European family
We are sharing European values
Part of Ukrainian political culture - strong civil society
Support of human rights and democracy
Ukrainians feel themselves as a united nation
Grassrout inititative from the people to change the political regime by self organization
This is how democracy should work
Revolution of Dignity
Putin used Ukrainian weakness
Putin broke international rules
Fight against corruption
Anti-Maidan as a part of Russian propaganda
Anti-Maidan was created, played and ordered by Russia
They stand for money on Anti-maidan
Fight against Oligarch regime
The nationalists movements - only a part of Maidan (small group)
Oligarch regime as a result of Russian influence
Killings on Maidan were produced by Russian side
New historical routs appeared
Against violent regime, that beats our children
Russian provocation to threaten people
Bandera Heritage
Anti-Maidan as anti-fascist movement
"for one night they wanted to kill all the Russian-speaking population"


Western and Ukrainian politicians use common people in their game
Nuland cookies
Western financial support
Visit of European ministers
Sign of Western influence
Poroshenko had no chance to be elected without Maidan
Western interference in Post-soviet Space
Protect Russia form colored revolutions and Western values
Anti-maidan movement as an alternative
onbas/Crimea
Protect Russia from NATO enlargement
Western people are guilty for provocations against Yanukovich to make Maidan irreversible
Powers, that came afer colored revolutions are "Western puppets"
Maidan
Turbulent situation is a result of colored revolution
The American routes of Yushenko wife
The power of Maidan leaders is not legitimate
Western citizens in the Ukrainian government
Russia will not negotiate with Maidan leaders
investigation of ngs on Maidan
Yanukovich as a weak president
The fight in Ukrainian political elite influenced by the West
Poroshenko used to provoke people to go to the end, for him to come to power
ons for using language will
Power vacuum - that is why fascists came to power
oup d'etat
Yushenko destroyed the common vision of history
ng politicians come to power
ne

racy. "Nazism is again coming to us from Europe," says Mikhail Myagkov, one of Russia's leading historians of the Second World War and a professor of history at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations, where most of Russia's top diplomats are educated. "The bacilli of Nazism have not been destroyed. Unfortunately, they have infected, among other countries, our brotherly nation of Ukraine."[69]

Gaps

Russia: In the Russian mainstream media, the narrative of the Maidan as a fascist coup is part of a larger narrative which sees a growing trend throughout Europe and the world of right-wing extremism that threatens the very foundations of democracy.

Ukraine: In eastern Ukraine, the narrative of Euromaidan as a fascist coup fall on fertile ground, evoking the fears and traumas of World War II atrocities. By contrast, Kyiv has consistently denied the role of fascist elements in the Euromaidan. In fact, both Svoboda and the Right Sector lost in the early parliamentary elections in October 2014 which gave the Ukrainian government and civil society good grounds for challenging the narrative on the far-right parties' impact.

The West: While denying the Russian narrative of a fascist coup as exaggerated, Western sources at the same time downplay Kyiv's narrative of an almost complete lack of fascism – acknowledging a rather small fascist/far right presence within Maidan – however without significant influence, according to official German statements and mainstream media discourses.

Overlaps

The narrative of Euromaidan as a fascist coup overlaps with that of Euromaidan as a Western plot. Many members of the Right Sector responsible for the violence on Euromaidan went on to join the fascist-sympathetic volunteer paramilitary organization the Azov Battalion.[70]

Some German and US experts point at overlaps or "bridges" between the narratives by e.g. posing the question whether - even if well-intended - the presence of Western politicians on the Maidan was a mistake in hindsight[71], by emphasizing the complexity and unpredictability of the dynamics between different actors on the Maidan at that time[72] or by acknowledging the ambivalence of external funding of NGOs with respect to its supposed political neutrality.[73]

69 Quoted by Simon Shuster, "Russians Rewrite History to Slur Ukraine Over War", Time, 29 October 2014,https://time.com/3545855/russia-ukraine-war-history/.

70 Azov's symbol is similar to the Nazi Wolfsangel. The Azov Battalion achieved notoriety not only by successfully fighting in numerous battles in the war in eastern Ukraine, but also by being declared guilty of war crimes, including mass looting from civilian homes, targeting of civilian areas with artillery and small arms fire and rape and torture. See: UNHCR, *Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine 16 February to 15 May 2016*, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/Ukraine_14th_HRMMU_Report.pdf.

71 Wolfgang Ischinger, *Welt in Gefahr* (Ullstein, 2018).

72 Inmedio/ILPP (eds.), *Russian-Western Blind Spots*, *op.cit.*

73 David Ignatius, "Innocence Abroad: the New World of Spyless Coups", *Washington Post*, 22 September 1991, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1991/09/22/innocence-abroad-the-new-world-of-spyless-coups/92bb989a-de6e-4bb8-99b9-462c76b59a16/; Renate Flottau et.al., "Die Revolutions-GmbH", *Der Spiegel*, 14 November 2005, http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43103188.html.

From Contested Past to Unclear Future: Mapping the Approaches to Conflict Resolution in Crimea and Donbas

It is hard to deny that the issue of Crimea and conflict in Donbas are precisely the topics that spurred the Ukrainian, German and Russian participants of this dialogue project to embark upon the reconstruction of conflicting narratives. However, this chapter differs somewhat from the previous ones in that it focuses not directly on the narratives about Crimea and Donbas. Ultimately, all the historical episodes discussed above are addressed in key narratives explaining the reasons for the conflict that has been ongoing since 2014. Here, we try to look not so much into the past as into the present and future, *considering not the narratives themselves but different positions and views on the prospects for resolving the conflict*.

This text summarizes the ideas expressed by project participants during the working sessions at the seminar in Berlin, with small subsequent additions. The discussion of issues related to Crimea and Donbas took place in a brainstorming mode. The task of Ukrainian, German and Russian participants was to reconstruct the main positions without trying to rigidly attribute them to certain political actors. Thus, we would like to stress that our observations are by no means comprehensive, and we do not pretend to present the whole variety of positions. Rather, we seek to discover the most distinctive arguments for each generalized position, and then to analyse the terms by which these arguments are articulated.

How to discuss Crimea and Donbas issues: together or separately?

The fact that Crimea and Donbas were united in one topic, with the participants in the dialogue being asked to dwell on the most acute questions, is far from accidental. We need to start with the fact that the very idea of separating the issues relating to Crimea and Donbas is sensitive for Ukrainian society, just as for Russian society it is sensitive to unite the issues. One of the biggest concerns here is that if these two agendas are discussed separately by the international community, there is a risk that the problem of Crimea will gradually recede into the background, which is unacceptable for the Ukrainian side. In contrast, there is a position according to which considering these two issues in conjunction is unproductive from the point of view of resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine. This point of view is articulated, in particular, by Russian experts in the field of international relations, who count on understanding from Western partners.[74] Such a position is based on the assumption that the return of Crimea to Ukraine (even in the long-term perspective) is not an option due to the fact that "the topic is excluded from the Russian agenda."[75] Therefore, its discussion will only block the possibility of pragmatic negotiations with the Russian leadership. Indeed, in the discourse that dominates

74 The aggregated position of Russian experts on this issue can be found here: *A Conflict of Moscow and Kyiv: A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation. Materials for the 10th Expert Meeting, 18-21 August 2019, Cadenabbia, Italy* (Kyiv: Razumkov Centre, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2019), http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2019_Donbass_Italy_Eng.pdf.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

Russian domestic politics, the inclusion of Crimea into the Russian Federation is characterized as a correction of a historical mistake,[76] and therefore any attempts to challenge the lawfulness of this decision in the Russian public sphere are marginalized.[77]

At the same time, one of the workshop participants expressed doubt that in Ukraine there is a fully consolidated position regarding the discussion of the issues of Crimea and Donbas together. In official statements, especially on the international level, Ukrainian representatives emphasize the importance of territorial integrity as a whole, not dividing Crimea and Donbas. But there are some experts and politicians who support the idea of discussing Crimea and Donbas separately, since doing otherwise slows down the process of resolving the military conflict and the reintegration of Donbas.[78]

Be that as it may, while the Russian leadership resorts to the historical background and explains what happened in Crimea as a reaction to the "anti-constitutional coup," recalling the need to "protect the Russian-speaking population" and the "will of the Crimean population" to join Russia, there is a consensus among the Ukrainian side and most Western states that any historical or political arguments are irrelevant when international law is violated. Despite the dissatisfaction of the Russian authorities with the term "annexation," – not to speak of "occupation", the term used officially in Ukraine – the Russian side is unable to convince the international community of the possibility of a different interpretation.

At the same time, European experts, in particular German, are more likely to express doubts that the Crimean problem can be resolved in the short run.[79] Despite the fact that such a position proceeds from the absolute unacceptability of Russia's actions, it nevertheless presumes a more wait-and-see than an "offensive" tactic to tackle this issue. However, the Ukrainian leadership doesn't intend to accept such an approach. This fact is confirmed, in particular, by the calls on Western partners to tighten sanctions against Russia.[80]

76 On December 4, 2014, in his address to the Federal Assembly, Vladimir Putin emphasized that "the historical reunification of Crimea and Sebastopol with Russia finally happened. This has a special importance for our people, our country, because our people live in Crimea, and the territory is strategically important. It is a sacred source of our multi-faced but unified Russian nation." Cited in: "Putin defies West over Ukraine and 'sacred Crimea'", *Euronews*, 4.12.2014, retrieved 03.12.2019, https://www.euronews.com/2014/12/04/putin-defies-west-over-ukraine-and-sacred-crimea.

77 On the peculiarities of Russian legislation, in accordance with which those who call for the return of Crimea to Ukraine could be prosecuted, see here: "Kak v Rossii presleduiut za prizivi vernut' Krim Ukraine?", *Meduza.io*, 19.04.2016, retrieved 03.12.2019, https://meduza.io/cards/kak-v-rossii-presleduyut-za-prizyvy-vernut-krym-ukraine. Moreover, many leaders of the Russian opposition have spoken out ambiguously regarding the prospects for the return of Crimea to Ukraine. See: Hess, M. & Pigman, L., "For Navalny, Foreign and Domestic Policy Are One", Carnegie Moscow Center, 21.05.2018, retrieved 03.12.2019, https://carnegie.ru/commentary/76403.

78 See: "Разрушенный Донбасс Россия вернет, он ей не нужен, — Леонид Кравчук", *Факты*, 10 January 2019, https://fakty.ua/292228-razrushennyj-donbass-rossiya-vernet-on-ej-ne-nuzhen---leonid-kravchuk?fbclid=IwAR2WWcfxa9MFuX2Aj4PTFw2jcPigyXQJKjOGat026uzTDTv8VTj0WPZZspA; Юрий Бутусов, "Игорь Коломойский: 'Зеленский – это матрос Железняк. Если 'слуги народа' будут бл#довать, их распустят через год'", *Censor.net*, 27 August 2019, https://censor.net.ua/r3144950?fbclid=IwAR1kY7xdCZDmByY5xwJ1KbIMzVLWO2HqfHJy5CfnU-qB2Vn3Ouzi1yCz-nQ; "Антон Кориневич: 'Російська Федерація намагається змінити демографічну карту Криму'", *LB.ua,* 22 November 2019, https://lb.ua/news/2019/11/22/442826_anton_korinevich_rosiyska.html?fbclid=IwAR0MwoIwjjOWCLN-9X_3N5HG1ofqO4O5yo0qg9r9UFsMeh--350jjUjaf2I.

79 See: *A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation, op.cit.*, p. 243.

80 Here is the statement that Volodymyr Zelensky made during the meeting with the representatives of the US Administration and the US Congress on May 20, 2019: "The United States is a powerful and serious partner for Ukraine, first of all, in overcoming the aggression of Russia. We will not be able to overcome Russian aggression in Donbas and Crimea alone. Therefore, we need your help. I would like to urge you that the United States keeps increasing sanctions against the Russian Federation". Cited by: President of Ukraine Official website, 20.05.2019, retrieved 03.12.2019, https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-ukrayini-volodimir-zelenskij-obgovoriv-iz-predstav-55517.

Despite the various views on the prospects for resolving the Crimean problem in general, there are several aspects of the situation that can hardly be postponed indefinitely by the international community. International NGOs regularly report human rights violations in Crimea, which, according to the Ukrainian side, require action from international organizations. Special attention is paid to the violations of human rights against the Crimean Tatars. From January 2017 to June 2019, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 186 FSB searches in Crimea, of which 140 were conducted in the homes of Crimean Tatars and in Tatar community-based organizations.[81] At the same time Moscow is presenting what it sees as support to the Crimean Tatars by constructing a Mosque.[82]

Conflict resolution in Donbas: three key positions

In the case of Donbas, it is much more difficult than in the case of Crimea to single out the distinct approaches to conflict resolution, since there are many interpretations of the very notion of "Donbas" and, accordingly, of who exactly are the conflicting parties. However, during the workshop discussions, the Ukrainian, German and Russian participants agreed on identifying three key positions, each of which has a number of variations. The main criterion for classification was the attitude to the Minsk agreements, as well as interpretations of how these agreements should be implemented.

"The Minsk agreements should serve as the basis for conflict resolution"

The first position is that the Minsk agreements should serve as the basis for conflict resolution. In turn, it has three different interpretations. The first of these interpretations is based on the thesis that conflict resolution requires more internationalization. Such an approach will require the manifestation of substantial political will from both the Russian and Ukrainian sides. The fact is that at the time of writing, the Ukrainian side supports the idea of introducing a comprehensive UN peacekeeping contingent to Donbas, consisting of military, police and civilian personnel, i.e. the formation of an international transitional administration[83] under the auspices of the UN. In relation to the same point, the participants of the workshop discussed the possible actions of Western countries and, in particular, the EU. It was mentioned that in case of fulfilling the described scenario and holding elections in Donbas under the supervision of the OSCE, the EU could provide financial support for restoration of the region's infrastructure. Russia, however, insists that the UN mission should be located only across the so-called "contact line" and ensure the protection of OSCE observers.[84]

81 The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recognized 42 victims of political persecution in Crimea, most of them pro-Ukrainian activists, affiliated with Crimean Tatar organizations, as well as journalists. See: *Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine: Report of the Secretary-General* 2/10/2019 https://undocs.org/en/A/74/276. To learn more about human rights violations monitoring in Crimea, see: "Human Rights in Crimea. Rollback three centuries", *Crimea SOS,* https://crimeamap.krymsos.com/eng/map.html.

82 "Putin invites Erdogan to opening of Central Mosque in Crimea", *TASS Russian News Agency*, 18 March 2019, https://tass.com/politics/1049209.

83 "Міжнародні тимчасові адміністрації", see: Дуцик Д., Черниш В., Вороніна В., Рюче Н., Мороз І., Паперняк О., Калупаха І., *АБВ. Збройний конфлікт в термінах (Путівник для України),* (Kyiv: Міністерство з питань тимчасово окупованих територій та внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2019), p. 34.

84 *A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation, op.cit.,* p. 222.

Nevertheless , on 11 September 2017 Putin voiced a different view in his telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel: "Russian President Vladimir Putin has signalled his willingness to look into the idea of deploying UN peacekeepers to eastern Ukraine not only along the conflict line separating Ukrainian government forces and Russia-backed separatists, but also in other areas where monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) work. The Kremlin said Putin made the comments in a phone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on September 11th."[85]

Hence it remains unclear under what conditions Russia is ready to accept the proposal for international control throughout the whole territory of Donbas. The argument about the gradual lifting of sanctions as a kind of incentive for Russia to agree to these conditions does not yet seem convincing. For one thing, for Ukraine this would mean that the EU had agreed to separate the issues of Crimea and Donbas.

Participants of our workshop highlighted the following points in connection with the discussed approach: "negotiations are necessary"; "de-demonization of conflicting parties"; "special status would guarantee rights of the people"; "amnesty issues need to be clarified and addressed". However, a lot of difficulties immediately arise here. A recent survey of the Ukrainian expert community conducted by the Razumkov Centre showed that the majority of its members do not consider it possible to coordinate the introduction of UN peacekeepers with the "DPR/LPR", believing that such negotiations should be conducted directly with the "Kremlin masters" of the so-called "republics".[86] At the same time the leaders of DPR/LPR try to proclaim their own agenda. Thus, the stumbling block in the promotion of this scenario is conflicting understandings of the subjectivity of the conflicting parties. Since Russia has consistently positioned itself as an actor who is "not a party to Ukraine's internal conflict",[87] and the Ukrainian leadership denies self-proclaimed republics of political agency, it is rather difficult to imagine how the abovementioned negotiations will be held. Moreover, according to the same survey of the Razumkov Centre, most of the interviewed Ukrainian experts disagree with the idea of granting amnesty to everyone who took part in the hostilities in Donbas. In any case, the respondents were confused by the vagueness of the wording which appears in Article 5 of the Minsk agreements.[88]

Another interpretation of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, highlighted during the discussion, is that no additional measures are needed, "Minsk" has to be implemented as it is. Such an approach implies that the arrangements reached by the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia in the format of the "Normandy Four" are sufficient to resolve the acute phase of the conflict. The problem, however, is that both the Russian and Ukrainian officials believe that these agreements are not implemented due to the fault of the other side. Russia accuses the Ukrainian side of not having adopted laws stipulated by the Minsk agreements regarding the "special status" of the "uncontrolled" territories of Donbas, the amnesty for the "defenders" of so called DPR/LPR and "special rules" for the election of local authorities.[89] The

85 "Putin Says UN Peacekeepers Could Be Deployed Throughout Ukraine Conflict Zone", RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, 11 September 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-putin-un-peacekeepers-merkel-border-osce/28729481.html.

86 *A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation, op.cit.*, p. 222.

87 Cit. in: *The Russia-Ukraine Conflict in the Context of Geopolitical Changes. Materials for the Trilateral Expert Meeting 27-28 February 2017, Berlin*, (Kyiv: Razumkov Centre, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2017), p. 115. https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=1406fad9-206c-005d-7452-ac3d2982b8e5&groupId=252038

88 *A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation, op.cit.*, p. 219.

89 See: Цедилина Е. В., "Минский гамбит президента Зеленского", *Россия и новые государства Евразии. 2019. № III (XLIV)*, pp. 62-78. https://www.imemo.ru/files/File/magazines/rossia_i_novay/2019_03/Minskiy_Tsedilina.pdf

position of Ukraine is that a peacekeeping mission will not be effective without the removal of "all foreign military personnel, mercenaries, their weapons and equipment" from the region and the establishment of international control over the Russian-Ukrainian border.[90] Thus, for each side the first step has to be taken by the counterpart.

The third position regarding the Minsk agreements is that Ukraine was forced to accept "Minsk", and that it is not the solution of the whole conflict in the southeast of Ukraine. Proceeding from this logic, "Minsk" should remain as a ceasefire agreement, but the political part, which actually refers to the provision of "special status" to the uncontrolled territories of Donbas, is unimplementable. Zelensky's announced intention to discuss the flaws in the Minsk document in the "Normandy format" could be interpreted in this vein.[91]However, such a position, given the aforementioned reluctance of Russia to agree on a deployment of a UN mission outside the "contact line", leads more to freezing the conflict than to resolving it.[92]

"Separation from Ukraine is complete, reintegration not possible" versus "Special status for the Donbas is not needed"

Along with this, the workshop participants highlighted two other generalized positions that contravene the idea of the Minsk agreements as the basis for resolving the conflict. One of them was formulated as follows during the group discussions: "Separation (of the self-proclaimed republics) from Ukraine is complete, reintegration is not possible anymore." This approach was divided into three interpretations, coming from fundamentally different political perspectives. The first one is that it makes no sense to re-integrate "separatists". This approach proceeds from the argument that it is too expensive for the Ukrainian state to bear the burden of reintegration of a region with a disloyal population. However, it would be an omission not to mention that if such an attitude exists in Ukrainian society, then, according to opinion polls, it still takes a relatively marginal position.[93]

Another version of the position according to which reintegration is impossible was attributed by discussion participants to the leadership of the so-called DPR and LPR. According to this version, the authorities of the self-proclaimed republics do not see the possibility of reunification with Ukraine after warfare. They proceed from the fact that

90 See: "К проблеме Донбасса подходят миротворчески. Представители России и Украины разошлись во взглядах на формат возможной миссии ООН", *Коммерсантъ №175*, 21.09.2017, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3416307?from=doc_vrez. This position was confirmed on October 15, 2019 after a meeting of the Minsk Contact Group by the press secretary of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine, Daria Olifer. See: "Владимир Зеленский слушает тишину. Президент Украины считает дни до саммита «нормандской четверки», *Коммерсантъ №190,* 17.10.2019, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4127140.

91 "Зеленский заявил о недовольстве минскими соглашениями", *Коммерсантъ,* 10.10.2019, retrieved 4.12.2019, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4119958.

92 *A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation, op.cit.*, p. 241.

93 Of course, there are differences, depending on the region of Ukraine in which the polls are conducted. See: Alexseev M., "How Do Ukrainians Want to End the Donbas War?" PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 555, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/how-do-ukrainians-want-to-end-donbas-war; Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, "The Ways of Achieving Peace in Donbas: Public Attitudes, Expectations and Concerns", https://dif.org.ua/en/article/the-ways-of-achieving-peace-in-donbas-public-attitudes-expectations-and-concerns.

the protection of the population of Donbas is possible only through independence from Kyiv, which carries a "nationalist threat" for the inhabitants of the region. In brief, this version is encapsulated in the slogan "Donbas has made its choice," which is supposedly shared by the leaders of the DPR and LPR. And there are also some attempts to integrate into Russian Federation, which are not officially supported by Russia itself.

The third interpretation of the narrative according to which the separation from Ukraine is complete suggests that the "republics" should become part of Russia. When this interpretation was discussed by the workshop participants, a reference was made to the argument that Russia already bears the economic burden related to Donbas. Without going into details about how popular such a position is in Russia, on the one hand, and in the 'LPR/DPR' on the other, the presence of some scepticism in the camp of the supporters of the accession of Donbas supporters was mentioned in the discussions. This was formulated as follows: "The Novorossiya project has failed."

Finally, the position that casts doubt on the primacy of the Minsk agreements can also be detected from the opposite perspective. It is based on the premise that special status for the Donbas is not needed, since the "republics" are de facto "occupied territories," while de jure they are parts of a sovereign Ukrainian state. At this point we return to the problem that was already mentioned in connection with the obstacles to the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Russian influence on Donbas is proclaimed by the Western and Ukrainian leaders, but is not depicted in Minsk agreements. If we proceed from the statements of the leadership of Ukraine, both the old and the new presidential administrations, the "republics" are not recognized as independent players; they are believed to exist only due to support from the Kremlin. In this sense, an important discursive shift has occurred in Ukrainian law-making since January 2018. This shift is caused by the adoption of the law "On the peculiarities of State policy on ensuring Ukraine's State sovereignty over temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions."[94] In this law, for the first time during the whole conflict, Russia is named an "aggressor," (in relation to Donbas) and the "uncontrolled territories" are categorized as "occupied." Until 2018, the Ukrainian authorities depicted "DPR" and "LPR" as "terrorist organizations" to the international community, hoping that Russia would not want to be ranked among states that support terrorism.[95] Now the whole framework has changed – the current legislation directly defines "DPR/LPR" as Russian-led "occupation administrations".[96] Based on this understanding, acquiescence related to the granting of "special status" to the uncontrolled territories[97] would benefit the "aggressor." At the same time, the Russian side is suspicious of the term "decentralization," which, according to supporters of the view that Kyiv does not comply with the Minsk agreements, allows the Ukrainian authorities to replace power sharing with the regions by small symbolic concessions.[98]

94 "On the peculiarities of State policy on ensuring Ukraine's State sovereignty over temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions", Міністерство закордонних справ України, 22.01.2018, retrieved 04.12.2019. https://mfa.gov.ua/ua/news-feeds/foreign-offices-news/62541-on-the-law-of-ukraine-on-the-peculiarities-of-state-policy-on-ensuring-ukraines-state-sovereignty-over-temporarily-occupied-territories-in-donetsk-and-luhansk-regions

95 *A Window of Opportunity, the Status Quo, or a New Round of Escalation, op.cit,* p. 239.

96 "Окупаційна адміністрація", see: Дуцик Д. et.al., *op.cit.*, p. 37.

97 Which, according to the interpretation of the Minsk agreements by one Russian expert, presupposes "granting to local authorities in Donbas the right to form courts, prosecutors and 'militia' detachments", see: Цедилина Е.В., *op.cit.*, p. 71.

98 The latter refers to the use of the Russian language in public administration and "partial amnesty for those who have not committed serious crimes", according to official Kyiv. Cit. by Цедилина Е.В., *op.cit.*, p. 71.

Conclusion

As we tried to single out different approaches to Crimea and Donbas, we saw that the most essential splits are evident. These can be traced back to the divergent interests of the actors involved, and the gaps between their worldviews. Of course, sometimes "in-between" approaches can be detected, which combine elements of those which we highlighted. However, finding an approach that would satisfy all or even major interest groups remains extremely hard. What complicates things further is the connection between the issues of Crimea and Donbas, which some would be willing to maintain and strengthen, but others would be eager to cut completely. In the spectrum of views on Donbas conflict resolution, the Minsk agreements looks like the natural middle way between the extremes. But our analysis also revealed doubts about the future of the Minsk-based solutions, both within and outside of Minsk-supporting groups. If Minsk is ever to succeed, it would most probably require a serious update, providing clarification on a vast number of points. Some of the options for such an update have already been vividly discussed in the experts community and more of this debate might be coming. It is up to politicians, though, to look at the available steps and to demonstrate their will and ability to end the hostile conflict, and then move again to the negotiating table to address in a cooperative way the much broader set of issues relevant to the peacebuilding process.

Generalized positions on Crimea and Donbas: typical arguments

Crimea

Crimea and Donbas must necessarily be discussed together	Crimea and Donbas must be discussed separately	It makes no sense to discuss Crimea
"If Crimea and Donbas get separated, Crimea will be forgotten by the international community."	"If Crimea is linked to the Donbas, Russia will be demotivated to contribute to conflict resolution."	"Crimea was a reaction to the anti-constitutional coup, Russia was morally obliged to protect the Russian-speaking population."
"The Russian military presence in Crimea should be addressed."	"The topic is excluded from the Russian agenda, and its discussion will block the possibility of pragmatic negotiations with the Russian leadership."	"No debate/negotiation will change anything with regard to Crimea anytime soon."
"Human rights violations against Crimean Tatars shouldn't be overlooked."		"Khrushchev made a mistake in giving Crimea to Ukraine."
"Political prisoners should not be forgotten."		"Crimea is a sacred source of our multi-faced but unified Russian nation." (Vladimir Putin)
The Crimea case is a violation of international law		
"Annexations had not been performed in Europe after World War II."		
"International legal acts and political agreements have been violated."		
"Historical or political arguments should not trump international legal arrangements."		

Donbas

Separation from Ukraine is complete, reintegration not possible			The Minsk agreements should serve as the basis for conflict resolution			Special status for the Donbas is not needed
“It makes no sense to re-integrate ‘separatists’.”	“The “republics” are independent states; they don’t want to re-integrate.”	“The “republics” should integrate with Russia.”	“More internationalization of the conflict resolution is necessary.”	“‘Minsk’ has to be implemented as is.”	“‘Minsk’ has been forced upon Ukraine.”	
“Nobody wants to pay for the recovery of Donbas.” “‘Minsk’ is dead.” “Donbas voters could poison Ukrainian political life.” “Donbas should be separated by a wall form the rest of Ukraine in case they do not want to reintegrate.”	“Donbas has made its choice.” “Donbas means the ‘republics’ and territories of Donetsk/Luhansk oblasts controlled (‘occupied’) by Kyiv.” “Consequences of warfare will divide the ‘republics’ and Ukraine further.” “Rights of Donbas population can be secured through in-	“The Russian-speaking population in Donbas is exactly the same as in Crimea.” “Russia already bears the economic burden related to Donbas.”	“Political will is crucial (since Ukraine denies the LPR/DPR political subjectivity, and Russia does not recognize itself as a party to the conflict).” “International monitoring/support is needed for Ukraine-Russian border control.” “Elections in the Donbas should be organized by the OSCE.” “Transitional justice means the formation of an interna-	‘Minsk’ is an agreed compromise, it does not require any amendments.” “For each side, the first step has to be taken by the other side.” “The UN mission should be located only across the contact line in order to ensure the protection of OSCE observers.”	“‘Minsk’ should remain as a ceasefire agreement, but the political part is unimplementable.” “ ‘Minsk’ should one day be substituted by a more balanced agreement.”	“Donbas is Ukraine. If Ukraine is sovereign, special status is not needed.” “The so-called "republics" are de facto occupied territories.” “The voting rights of Donbas inhabitants could be reduced for the transitional period.” “No special regimes for language or history interpretation.”

Separation from Ukraine is complete, reintegration not possible			The Minsk agreements should serve as the basis for conflict resolution			Special status for the Donbas is not needed
	dependence." "Kyiv is controlled/ influenced by the West." ""Republics" protect the Russian-speaking population against radical Ukrainian nationalists."		tional transitional administration under the auspices of the UN." "Human security issues should be prioritized, to be solved in parallel with military and political aspects." "Amnesty issues need to be clarified and addressed." "Special status can serve as a guarantee of the Donbas population's safety." "The EU could provide financial support for restoration of the Donbas infrastructure." "Gradual lifting of the sanctions would be a stimulus for Russia to contribute."			"No amnesty for crimes in the conflict." "Pressure on Russia (i.e. sanctions) should be increased." "Donbas as a political entity doesn't exist: the "republics" persist because of the support of their Kremlin masters."

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