



A QUARTER-CENTURY OF INDEPENDENT UKRAINE

DIMENSIONS OF TRANSFORMATION

Tadeusz A. Olszański

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THESES

1. As a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine became an independent state in an evolutionary, not a revolutionary way. Initially, the Ukrainian state was a continuation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, not only in terms of territory and population, but also of its structures and the functioning of the state. Independence came as a surprise; the country was not prepared for it in any area; nor did it succeed in making any radical breakthroughs in any field (apart from the symbolism of the state) during the 1990s. The new state was created by the transformation of existing structures and procedures; the way in which the state was created meant that there was no alternative to such a path. The process of change, however, proceeded much more slowly and was implemented with less determination than would otherwise have been possible if there had been consent from the elites and the public on the need for a radical break with Communism. Such consent, however, was absent: and until the year 2000 at least, the predominant trend was to make changes which were as small, incremental and cautious as possible.
2. The Ukrainian state faced a triple challenge. It had to change from being an autonomous territory with numerous characteristics of a state which was dependent and ruled by the parent structure of the Communist Party, into a sovereign, full-sized state with institutions which conformed to the international standards of democratic regimes. It also had to establish new economic policies, by introducing the standards and procedures of a market economy in place of the chaos (a system-less state) which prevailed after the collapse of the command-and-control economy panel of the final years of the Soviet Union. Finally, it had to adapt to those changes in the outside world which were largely the consequence of the end of the global confrontation between the Soviet bloc and the West.
3. The main challenges for independent Ukraine were constant pressure from Russia and the impossibility, and in many ways also the inexpediency, of breaking the bonds which were the inheritance of having been in one state organism. The interest of the West (be it the EU or the USA) in the Ukrainian state has never been active and determined enough to allow Kyiv to make a radical break with Moscow. In this light, Ukraine has since its independence adopted a 'multi-vector' policy, that is, of balance between Russia and the West, allowing it to gain short-term benefits from both sides. In 2014, Russia put an end to this policy by annexing Crimea and starting the war in the Donbas.

4. Ukraine has built up the basic institutions and procedures of a democratic system, although the party system is still underdeveloped and remote from European standards (as in other countries of the former Soviet Union). Attempts to introduce authoritarian rule have failed largely due to the opposition of the public, which has turned out to be much more democratic than the structures of the state and the parties. The Ukrainian democratic system is in many ways far from the standards characteristic of democracy in Western Europe or the United States, although it has come the closest of all the successor states to meeting those standards.
5. Ukraine managed to emerge from its deep economic downturn, lasting from the early 1990s until about the year 2000, after it established the basic institutions and procedures of a market economy. In shaping the new rules of the country's economic life, Kyiv worked without any predetermined plan, and thus in a frequently inconsistent manner, committing numerous errors. As a result, the economic policies adopted, as well as the domination of the massive industrial complexes inherited from the Soviet Union, led to the formation of a group of oligarchs, a 'grande bourgeoisie', which exerted a direct influence on the political institutions. The consequence of this was the monopolisation of many sectors of the Ukrainian economy, as well as a lack of opportunities for the development of small and medium-sized companies.
6. Kyiv's policy of caution, avoiding firm policy decisions, in socio-cultural matters has facilitated the creation of a supra-ethnic Ukrainian political nation. The deep linguistic-cultural divides resulting from old geopolitical divisions and the dominance of the Russian language in the Soviet period decreased with the rise in the percentage of citizens educated in the schools of the independent state, and the link between this differentiation and the state's historical regionalisation was weakened as a consequence of internal migration processes which had been taking place even before 1991. The war ultimately proved that the use of the Russian language does not preclude Ukrainian patriotism. The events of 2014, however, confirmed that Kyiv had failed to develop the instruments to bind the inhabitants of Crimea and the Donets Basin into the Ukrainian state.
7. One of the most important social changes that have taken place in Ukraine is that the majority of its citizens have become materially independent of the state, thanks both to the privatisation of the workplace and to the development of new, private enterprise. At the same time, civic behaviour as understood in the West has begun to develop, including structures of civil society,

although these are still limited mainly to the urban elites. The 'revolution of dignity' and the war have brought about a massive expansion of social initiatives (including among inhabitants of the provinces), which have revealed great potential for the self-organisation of Ukrainian society.

8. The young generation of Ukrainian citizens, people for whom the Soviet period and Communism are already 'textbook' history and not a matter of personal experience, today constitute a third of the adult population, and their proportion is rising each year. They have a new consciousness and a new kind of bond with the state as a present reality (and not, as their parents do, as a novelty).
9. Like the other post-Communist countries (apart from those with a Muslim tradition), Ukraine is experiencing a profound demographic collapse: in the years 1990–2013 its population fell by nearly 7 million. Although recent years have seen a rise in the number of births, the consequences of the decline in the 1990s cannot be made up. The situation is being aggravated by growing economic emigration on a massive scale.
10. The war imposed by Russia has demonstrated that the Ukrainian state, with all of its weaknesses, is capable of surviving and defending itself. The attempt to destabilise the entire state, and consequently to deprive it of real independence, has failed. The armed forces, which for a quarter of a century were neglected and even effectively dismantled between 2010 and 2013, have recovered surprisingly effectively. Although the war has shaken the economy, its complete collapse (as expected in Moscow) has been avoided. Ukraine has not become a 'failed state', and there is nothing like a 'total collapse' on the horizon. However, the state remains poor and ill-governed, and is failing to exploit its potential to the full.
11. The 'revolution of dignity' and the war that followed opened a new chapter in the history of Ukraine. Today, its future depends above all on the time and manner in which the war is ended, as well as on changes in the international environment (principally the policy of Moscow, Russian-American relations, and the impact of the new US administration on the development of world trade). However, irrespective of these questions, Ukraine will remain a democratic oligarchic-bureaucratic state for the foreseeable future, disinclined to implement radical reforms without pressure from the outside.

INTRODUCTION

On 24 August 1991, the *Verkhovna Rada* (Supreme Council, or parliament) of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic declared its independence, and on 1 December the nation ratified it in a referendum, at the same time electing the country's first independent President. Towards the end of December the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has been formally resolved, enabling the recognition of the independence of the former republics by the United States and other powers. In this way, for the first time in history, a Ukrainian state was established which did not from the outset have to fight a war for survival; indeed, it had complex structures deriving from the autonomy which had already existed.

The peaceful way in which it was created, with an undisputed territory and a civil administration already in existence, as well as a well-developed economy, was a huge asset. However, the essential weaknesses of the new state were largely the 'dark side' of those very strengths. Like the other Soviet republics, Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union, a strictly centralised state, and as such it did not have any of the central structures of a state (including a general staff, a bank of issue or most government departments), its economy was part of the whole Union's, and the vast majority of its businesses were dependent on suppliers from other republics. In addition, a significant (and the most up-to-date) proportion of the Ukrainian economy was a segment of the Soviet military complex, which was much more elaborate than necessary for the successor states.

Another weakness of the newly formed Ukrainian state was that its elites (with the exception of a handful of dissidents) were a product of the Soviet regime; they thought in terms of the Soviet political system and the command-and-control economy, they did not know the non-Soviet world or – in general – foreign languages. Finally, they had for decades been used to focusing on Moscow, expecting policy guidelines & decisions, as well as resolutions to questionable and disputed issues, to come from the capital. They were thus unprepared to take strategic decisions independently. What was worse, for decades the best members of Ukraine's Soviet elite advanced to Moscow, leaving the less capable and less ambitious behind in Kyiv. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, few of the '*nomenklatura* migrants' returned to Ukraine.

After almost a quarter-century of peaceful construction, interrupted in 2014 by the outbreak of war, Ukraine is indeed a weak state, but one which is well-established internally and internationally. No reasonable individual has called into question its right to exist or its place in the international community,

the democratic nature of its political constitution or the market-based nature of the economy. However, it is still a democracy in the course of its creation, which in more than one way is still far, especially from the standards adopted in Western Europe. Similarly, the economy of Ukraine still cannot reach the standards typical of the most developed countries.

Despite the understandable dissatisfaction of Ukraine's inhabitants at the state of the country and, more difficult to understand, the impatience of external bodies that Kyiv has not met their expectations regarding the rate of transformation (although these expectations are not unanimous), there is no doubt that over the past 25 years Ukraine has achieved a great deal. It is true that many expectations remain unmet, especially those of Ukraine's own citizens (but these expectations were not identical either). But would it really have been possible, in such a short period of time, to achieve the level of economic and social development of the countries of Central Europe? And has Ukraine really missed many real, and not simply assumed opportunities? The answers to these questions depend largely on understanding what the starting point of Ukraine (and other post-Soviet states) really was, and how very different it was from the starting point of Poland (and other former Communist states in Europe).

*

The 'revolution of dignity' means that – similarly to the 'short 20th century' (1914–1991) – we may speak of a 'short quarter-century' for independent Ukraine (1991–2013). The protests which started in November 2013 close this chapter of its history; the revolution which they became, and the war that broke out as their consequence, open up a new stage, which it is not yet fitting to describe. Thus, in this text, we will discuss the changes that took place in Ukraine until 2013, and the last two years will be the subject of a separate chapter.

The aim of this study is not to provide a systematic description of the history of independent Ukraine, or an overview of all the aspects of the functioning of the Ukrainian state and society, but rather to describe how it was formed as a set of institutions, procedures and elites; how the departure from Communism proceeded and in which direction; and what kind of society was created in the 1990s and 2000s. Purely political processes – the successive elections, the governments and the Presidency, the legislative work and political protests – play little part in this narrative. Likewise, Kyiv's foreign policy will be only very briefly evaluated. After all, very considerable literature already exists on these topics.

A common fault in analyses of independent Ukraine, as of the post-Soviet area in general, is the treatment of Eastern Europe (according to the tradition of Russian historiography) as a specific microcosm whose internal dynamics have little or nothing to do with global processes. Hence the timeline which concludes this work will include mention of external events which have strongly affected Ukraine and its place in the hierarchy of the more developed countries' objectives and challenges.

The first chapter, which is primarily historical, will discuss the events that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of an independent Ukraine, especially those elements often forgotten today such as the abolition of the steering role of the Communist Party and the referendum of March 1991. Further chapters will deal with the following topics: the shaping of Ukrainian democracy as a set of institutions and procedures; the main elements of economic transition; the formation of the modern political nation; the transformation of the policies concerning state symbolism; and finally, the main elements of the self-transformation of society and the dramatic demographic situation in Ukraine. The next part contains a summary of how Ukraine emerged onto the international scene, as well as the issues of its internal diversity. The final chapter is an attempt to describe the changes that occurred as a consequence of the 'revolution of dignity' of 2014, and later, of the ongoing war; these processes are not yet complete, and as such will need to be approached differently than those of the previous quarter-century.

*

This text marks another attempt (after *Trud niepodległości* [*The labour of independence*], published in 2002) to describe the experience of independent Ukraine from the point of view of the knowledge and understanding of the world accumulated by the author during thirty years of dealing with Ukrainian issues (including as part of the OSW since the end of 1993). In part, out of necessity, this is not an analytical, but a historical work, and as such it sometimes passes beyond the OSW usual scope of reflection.

I. PRELIMINARIES OF INDEPENDENCE

The territory of Ukraine took its final shape in the years 1939–1954 after the territories annexed by the Soviet Union at the expense of Poland, Hungary and Romania were incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR, and after the transfer of Crimea, which had previously been part of the Russian SFSR. The Ukrainian SSR was formally a constituent of a federal state, with residual representation of its own at the international level: as a founding member of the United Nations, it was represented in most UN organisations separately from the Soviet Union.

After the period of post-war reconstruction and the era of Khrushchev's experiments, during which among other measures the development of private agricultural production was fought and stringent anti-religious policies were reinstated, during the Brezhnev era the Soviet state became bogged down in stagnation, which gradually revealed the inefficiency of its economy and the risks which that posed for the Soviet Union's military capacity. The 1979 intervention in Afghanistan morphed into a tedious, bloody war,¹ which the public did not understand and which, especially in the eyes of the younger generations, undermined Brezhnev's myth of the Great Patriotic War, one of the foundations of the Soviet Union's legitimacy.

1. *Perestroika and sovereignisation*

In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the party and the Soviet state, with the mission of reforming and thereby strengthening the state. His policies of *perestroika* (reconstruction) and *glasnost* ('openness')² faltered almost immediately as a result of the ill-conceived anti-alcohol campaign, which boiled down to a cut in the volume of production and availability of alcohol, and decreased the state's budget revenue by at least 10%. A year later, the Chernobyl disaster occurred, forcing the state to allocate huge financial and labour

¹ The military operations which continued from December 1979 to February 1989 involved 160,000 soldiers mobilised from the Ukrainian SSR and claimed 2,400 Ukrainian lives (of the total number of 14,500 casualties on the Soviet side) and left more than 8,000 Ukrainians injured (out of a total of 54,000 injured on the Soviet side), including 5,000 permanently disabled. These are official figures and are probably understated.

² This is an inaccurate translation: before the revolution of 1917 *glasnost* meant the range of information allowed through the process of censorship. Cf. Слюсаренко А. et al., *Новітня історія України*, Київ 2002, p. 518. It should be noted that *glasnost* was officially proclaimed only in 1987, after the Chernobyl disaster.

resources to the rescue operation.³ These two events – the thoughtlessly planned and conducted campaign against alcoholism, which unleashed the people’s massive potential for private enterprise as they started to illicitly produce and sell alcohol, and the Chernobyl disaster which, among other consequences, greatly contributed to Ukraine’s national revival – may have sealed the fate of the plans conceived by Gorbachev and his aides.

In summer 1988 Gorbachev abolished the steering role of the party, granting independence to the state authorities (the soviets, or councils of people’s delegates, and their executive committees). The party apparatus, which had been effectively governing the state, thus became marginalised, while the councils were assigned a task which they were unprepared to handle. At that moment, the fate of the Communist system was sealed, but the Soviet state still stood a chance of surviving. However, the moment the Communist party has lost its grip on society, the Soviet leadership no longer held control of the dynamics of social processes.

In November 1988, the Estonian SSR became the first to declare *suverenitet*, and in March 1990, the Lithuanian SSR adopted its Act Reinstating Independence. When the Russian Federal SSR declared *suverenitet* in June, the snowball was set in motion: declarations of this special kind of ‘intra-Union independence’ were adopted not only by Union and autonomous republics, but also by some oblasts, which had never enjoyed any administrative independence.

Ukraine declared *suverenitet* on 16 July 1990, defining itself as a ‘sovereign national state’ (albeit not a socialist state), and formulating an agenda to create a *de facto* independent state with full-fledged state bodies, its own taxation and customs systems and its own armed forces. Nonetheless, its declaration of *suverenitet* was not an act of secession, as some believed that keeping ties with Moscow was inevitable,⁴ while others treated the move as an element of political

³ For more information about the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, see: P. Sekuła, *Czarnobyl. Społeczno-gospodarcze, polityczne i kulturowe konsekwencje katastrofy jądrowej dla Ukrainy*, Kraków 2014, and for a more journalistic perspective, see: T. A. Olszański, *Od czarnobylskiego ognia spłonęło wielkie imperium*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2006, nr 18, as well as T. A. Olszański, *The shadow of Chornobyl. Ukraine thirty years after the disaster*, *OSW Commentary*, 22 April 2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2016-04-22/shadow-chornobyl-ukraine-thirty-years-after-disaster>

⁴ This bears an interesting similarity to the early days of the Ukrainian People’s Republic of 1917, which first proclaimed its statehood in a federative union with revolutionary Russia and proceeded to proclaim formal independence only after the latter imposed a war on it.

gamesmanship intended to lay the ground for the next step. Shortly afterwards, the *Verkhovna Rada* (parliament) of Ukraine elected in 1990 began passing bills to implement the provisions of the declaration. Objectively, Ukraine was moving towards full independence, even though not everyone was aware of that.

***Suverenitet*, not sovereignty**

The declarations of *gosudarstvenny suverenitet* adopted by the Soviet, union and autonomous republics (and even some oblasts) in the years 1990–1991 were not about the intention to establish independent states, but rather about remaining within the Soviet state as members of a genuine – and not a sham – federation. Moreover, at least at the formal level, they called for the implementation of the principles laid down in the Soviet Union’s constitution which, in Article 76, described the union republics as ‘sovereign Soviet socialist states’.⁵ Therefore, even though the word means ‘sovereignty’ in Russian, it should not be translated this way in the present context because ‘sovereignty’ means full legal and international independence, the right to pursue an independent foreign policy and to issue currency. The emancipating Soviet constituents did not aspire to any such status. Moreover, not all the entities which declared *suverenitet* subsequently declared independence.

In October 1990, the process of Ukraine’s *sovereignisation* gained new momentum in the wake of the so-called ‘Revolution on Granite’, a fourteen-day protest staged by several hundred students in central Kyiv. The protesters’ main demand was for Ukraine to break off its negotiations on the new Union treaty, i.e. to opt for independence. The protesters were supported by mass demonstrations staged by the inhabitants of Kyiv (one of which brought together around 100,000 people). After Prime Minister Vitaliy Masol stepped down (as demanded by the protesters), the mass disintegration of the party committees still functioning followed, and large numbers of people quit the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Komsomol. The simultaneous weakening of censorship made it possible to give increasing exposure to Communist crimes, especially the *Holodomor* and the mass killings in Bykovnya near Kyiv.⁶

⁵ The constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as adopted on 7 October 1977, <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/77cons03.html#chap08>

⁶ The *Holodomor* was a catastrophic famine of during the years 1932–1933, which according to reliable estimates claimed between 3 million and 3.5 million lives in Ukraine, and which is commonly believed to have been provoked, or even planned by the Soviet leadership.

The 'Revolution on Granite' was a turning point: at that time, the advocates of independence (secession) started to slowly but steadily gain the upper hand. This was also significant for another reason: it established the symbol and standard formula of protests in Ukraine, i.e. tent pickets in the central square of Kyiv, which at that time was called the October Revolution Square, and today forms the southern part of Independence Square.⁷ That fact was noticed only in 2014, when the 'Revolution on Granite' started to be referred to as the First Maidan (the predecessor of the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2014). The hunger strike was joined by many students at the start of their careers, who later became noted Ukrainian politicians, intellectuals and social activists, including Oles Doniy, Markiy Ivanov, Vakhtang Kipiani, Solomiya Pavlychko, Taras Prokhasko, Oleh Tyahnybok and Oksana Zabuzhko.

In March 1991, Gorbachev called an all-Union referendum on "preserving the USSR as a reformed federation of sovereign republics", which was intended to gauge support for the draft new Union Treaty. Kyiv added its own question to the referendum, which concerned "remaining within the USSR under the Declaration of *Suverenitet*", and the leaderships of the three Galician districts attached questions concerning the full independence of Ukraine. The first two questions were not alternatives,⁸ and the third one effectively transformed the referendum in Eastern Galicia into a plebiscite.

According to official figures, the turnout on 17 March was 83%. 70% of voters responded 'yes' to the first question, and 80% replied 'yes' to the second one; that is, around half of those who voted responded affirmatively to both questions. In Eastern Galicia 88% voted for full independence while boycotting the other two questions (which means that in the remainder of the country support for 'renewing the federation' must have been even higher). Advocates

In Ukraine it is officially regarded as an act of genocide and constitutes an important factor in the country's national identity. Around 100 thousand victims of the NKVD terror during the years 1937–1938, as well as around 1,700 Poles, mainly military and police officers murdered in 1940, are buried in the forest near Bykovnya (east of Kyiv). However, contrary to what was commonly believed in the late 1980s, Bykovnya was not the site of the crime, but only a burial area for the victims of killings in other parts of Kyiv.

⁷ It is possible that this form of the protest had been inspired by a similar action taken by Greek Catholic priests who staged a hunger strike in the Red Square in Moscow in May 1988, although the protesters themselves have actually referred to the protests by Bulgarian students in 1989 and the protests in the Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China.

⁸ It seems that many politicians in Kyiv seem to have believed otherwise; cf. Л. Кравчук, *Маємо те, що маємо. Спогади і роздуми*, Київ 2002, р. 73 and В. Литвин, *Україна: політика, політики, власть*, Київ 1997, р. 202.

of dismantling the Soviet state thus gained a powerful, albeit not fully conscious, mandate from the voters.

At that stage, most Ukrainians still could not imagine the transformation of their republic into an independent state. Change was commonly expected, but it was not entirely clear what that should involve. The Soviet Union was the existing reality, familiar and obvious, and many considered the USSR, rather than the individual republics, to be their home country. The independence option was prevalent only in Galicia and in parts of Volhynia, where a revival of early 20th century traditions of independence was underway (at that time focused mainly on the tradition of the Ukrainian *Sich* Riflemen, who fought alongside the Austrian army against Russia) and where the people cheered on the aspirations of the Baltic states. Moreover, supporters of independence controlled the city and district councils in those regions, which is why they were able to add their own, local question to the all-Union referendum.

It was presumably even more important that in the spring of 1991, the *nomenklatura* did not think it had any interest in the dissolution of the Soviet state, but realised it could benefit from its controlled decentralisation, which would transfer more powers, but not necessarily more responsibilities, to the republic-level structures. Hence, the entire propaganda machine was harnessed into building support for the ‘reform’ option against the Soviet-conservative option, which was still strong as large sections of Soviet society (especially the older generations) wished for a return to the old order in which they felt secure. However, history continued to accelerate.

2. The path to independence

Immediately after his talks with Gorbachev in Moscow on 1 August 1991, US President George Bush delivered a speech in Kyiv in which he openly opposed the idea of dismantling the USSR and backed plans for its reform in the spirit of the ongoing negotiations between the Union’s central leadership and the republic authorities, known as the ‘Novo-Ogaryovo process’. Even more importantly, he announced that the United States would not support an independence struggle fought in the name of “suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hatred”.⁹ The speech, which went down to history as the ‘Kiev Chicken speech’,¹⁰ was

⁹ The speech had been written by Condoleezza Rice, at that time the president’s special assistant for international security, and the US Secretary of State from 2005 to 2009.

¹⁰ The phrase was coined by the *New York Times* columnist William Safire as late as 2004.

primarily a manifestation of the United States' fears that the Yugoslav scenario could repeat itself in the Soviet Union (the Slovenian independence war had ended just a month before, and the bloody Serbian-Croatian conflict was already flaring up). It also testified to the influence that the writings of members of the Ukrainian diaspora and other authors convinced that ethnic conflicts were the main 'driving force of politics' had on the American understanding of the situation in the Soviet Union. Washington apparently did not realise that the nationalisms emerging in the Soviet Union were expressions not of ethnic conflicts (with the exception of the Baltic states and the Caucasus), but rather of the ambitions of the local *nomenklaturas*. It is also true that the fate of the Soviet Union was not yet sealed in the final days of July 1991, and it was in the interest of the United States to preserve its unity at least in the military sense (most importantly, as a partner in the nuclear disarmament process and in efforts to control nuclear technology).

At that time, the negotiations of the new Union treaty were essentially complete: the draft treaty provided that the Soviet Union would be transformed into a Union of Sovereign States in which the central Union authorities would keep a large (effectively dominant) role. The treaty effectively envisaged a 'Soviet Union 2.0'. This was irreconcilable with the Ukrainian and Russian declarations of *suverenitet*, and the chances that it would be signed were slim. Kyiv was playing for time as it declared that it needed to verify the new treaty's compatibility with the declaration of *suverenitet* (the two documents were incompatible at first sight), and perhaps wanted to delay the decision until after the Ukrainian presidential elections scheduled for 1 December. Gorbachev was in a hurry, though, and it was decided that Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan would sign the treaty on 20 August 1991.

The Communist conservatives (from Gorbachev's own circle) responded by attempting a putsch on 19 August 1991, although this was done so ineptly that suspicions arose that it may have been Gorbachev's own provocation.¹¹ Facing a strong reaction from the RSFSR president Boris Yeltsin, supported by the people on the streets of Moscow, those behind the putsch quickly capitulated. One reason why it could not have succeeded was the belief, deeply ingrained in the minds of the *nomenklatura*, that the security apparatus should under no circumstances gain an advantage over the party and Soviet structures.

¹¹ Cf. Литвин, *op. cit.*, p. 207–209. The author was assistant to the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine at that time.

Kyiv responded cautiously. The *Verkhovna Rada*'s speaker Leonid Kravchuk and his circle remained silent during the putsch, or waited and issued insignificant declarations.¹² They did not have many other options, as Kyiv was surrounded by strong Soviet Army forces. It was only after Gorbachev came back to Moscow (albeit not to full power, which was clear almost from the start) that Kravchuk decided to back the supporters of full secession. On 24 August, the *Verkhovna Rada* almost unanimously proclaimed independence and called a referendum, scheduled for 1 December, to confirm this decision. It was taken because the outcome of the referendum held in March had to be invalidated somehow, and the Ukrainian leadership may also have wanted to gain some time to seek a formula for a 'civilised' dissolution of the USSR.

In autumn 1991, the Ukrainian *nomenklatura* threw its weight behind the decision to choose independence, and made every effort to make sure that the outcome of the December referendum attested to universal support for that option. Not because the idea of independence reflected the inner convictions of the *nomenklatura* members: in most cases, they simply believed that it was the right thing to do at that time, and were accustomed to implementing directives from Kyiv without asking questions – for these were the same people and the same structures (without the dissolved party committees) who just a few months before had orchestrated massive popular support for Ukraine's continued membership in the Union. Moreover, they did not clearly understand how independence would differ from *suverenitet* (or even what the latter meant, for that matter). Many presumably believed that some form of a close, quasi-state relation between the former Soviet republics would be preserved (and large sections of the public must have thought the same). Finally, it is worth noting that in December 1991, independent Ukraine was already a fact, and the independence vote was effectively about endorsing the new reality (both for the *nomenklatura* and the voters). While back in March the question had been 'What kind of change do you want?', in December people were asked whether they agreed to the change that had already taken place.

The Soviet *nomenklatura* of Ukraine therefore amplified the influence of the pro-independence formations and ensured that the independence option ultimately got the support of 90.3% of voters, which, given the turnout of 84.2%,

¹² It should be noted, however, that at that time Kravchuk was not yet president, but merely chairman of the *Verkhovna Rada*, a collegial body, as a result of which his mandate and real capacity to act were much weaker than those of Yeltsin, who was already the fully-fledged president of the RSFSR.

corresponded to 76% of all eligible voters¹³. The moment the referendum results were announced, the dissolution of the Soviet Union became inevitable. Nobody in the world could take such a unanimous expression of a large nation's will lightly. Neither could Gorbachev, who had to scrap the new Union treaty project, work on which had continued all the time, and accept the decisions taken by the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus to dissolve the Soviet state – decisions effectively amounted to a bloodless and flawlessly conducted *coup d'état*. In late December 1991, Gorbachev left the Kremlin, and the Western powers, willing or not, had to recognise the independence of the Soviet Union's successor states, including Ukraine.

When proclaiming independence, Ukraine opted for continuation instead of a decisive break with the past. It did not bring itself to dissolve the *Verkhovna Rada* which had been elected in 1990, nor to immediately implement a provisional constitution (it turned out that the amended 1978 Soviet constitution would remain in force for another five years, albeit in theory only to the extent it was compatible with the declaration of *suverenitet*). The country still had a Soviet system of government (based on the principle of indivisibility of state power, even though the declaration of *suverenitet* provided for separation of powers and local self-governance), and the economy was still operating according to the command-and-control model (which had become ineffectual). The fundamental problem of independent Ukraine could be defined in the words of the Ukrainian poet and political activist Petro Osadchuk who said: "Ukraine quit the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union did not quit Ukraine".¹⁴

As a result, for several years Ukraine became engulfed in complete legal chaos: the old norms, which were glaringly incompatible with the new reality, were informally 'dormant' (but could always be invoked if needed), and clear regulations were replaced by opaque rules. Suddenly relieved of the supervision of party committees, the judges and prosecutors, as well as the local bureaucracy (by 1991, no central bureaucratic bodies were hosted in Ukraine) started to act arbitrarily, inconsistently and incompetently. That had terrible consequences for the development of the procedures and institutions of a modern state of law in Ukraine.¹⁵

¹³ We will probably never know to what extent those results were 'enhanced' at the vote counting stage.

¹⁴ Кравчук, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹⁵ Transplanted into the new system, this Soviet legal nihilism later led to many complications; the most recent illustration of this is that in 2016, solutions for local governments

The new state had to define its borders. This was easy in the case of the original 'external' borders (with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania¹⁶) because those had long been demarcated and were uncontested. The situation was different in the case of the former 'internal' borders (with Belarus, Russia and Moldova), which had not even been delimited in sufficiently detailed maps and had played no role in the economic life of the respective provinces. While the Commonwealth of Independent States¹⁷ did decide that the original administrative divisions between the Soviet republics would become state borders, the decision was not followed by a swift delimitation (drawing of the borders on detailed topographic maps) or demarcation (marking in the field, which is necessary for the effective defence of the border).

Part of the reason why this work was postponed concerned the expectation, which survived for some considerable time, that the Slavic post-Soviet states at least would remain 'open' to one another, and would not introduce border and customs checks.

continue to be implemented by parliamentary and governmental acts, while the constitutional amendment needed to make that mode of operation possible still cannot be adopted, as it would make most of them unconstitutional.

¹⁶ In the case of Romania, some difficulties were encountered due to the natural change of course of the border section of the Danube, but these were nonetheless quickly resolved. More serious problems arose in connection with the division of territorial waters around the Snake Island on the Black Sea. The dispute was resolved only in 2009, thanks to international arbitration.

¹⁷ The organisation was established at the conference in Viskuli, Belarus; the intention of Ukraine (and the other republics) was that the CIS would serve as a kind of 'commission for the liquidation of the USSR', while Moscow saw it as an instrument to salvage all the institutions and procedures of the Soviet state which could still be salvaged.

II. FROM SOVIET REPUBLIC TO ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

Ukraine was formed by the Ukrainian SSR breaking away from the Soviet Union and subsequently gradually reforming itself. Its repeatedly amended Soviet-era constitution from 1978 was only replaced with a new constitution in 1996; the Soviet-era *Verkhovna Rada* elected in 1990 survived until the spring of 1994, and the government formed by Vitold Fokin in the autumn of 1990 remained in office until October 1992. Until the year 2000, the numbering of the successive terms of the *Verkhovna Rada* continued to be counted from the beginnings of the Ukrainian SSR. Many pieces of Soviet legislation, albeit amended to varying degrees, remained in force for decades, and some are still in force today. There was no symbolic or actual break of continuity, as Ukraine opted for the evolutionary reconstruction of its non-sovereign statehood instead of revolutionarily choosing to build new state institutions from scratch. That path was the only one possible, as independent Ukraine had been ushered into existence by the elites of Soviet Ukraine.¹⁸

1. The nature of Soviet state and law

To understand the processes which shaped Ukraine's (formal and actual) system of government, it is necessary to know what kind of system existed in the Soviet Union, including its theoretical bases. That system, which had been created in a revolutionary manner, was based not on the continuity of organic development of social institutions, but on an ideological programme which also extended to the philosophy of law.

Under the influence of the language of Soviet propaganda, in which the Communist system was referred to as 'socialist democracy', many external observers adopted the idea that the Soviet system was a dictatorship (of an individual or an apparatus) hiding behind the appearances of democratic institutions which did not differ significantly in terms of their general make-up from their counterparts in Europe. Few authors noticed that "the real state was the Communist party".¹⁹ Even fewer realised that the Soviet theorists and practitioners had rejected Montesquieu's fundamental concepts of a democratic state.

¹⁸ It was symbolic that the person democratically elected as Ukraine's first president had been the second secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine in charge of ideological issues and chair of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR, and the building formerly occupied by the Central Committee in Kyiv became the president's official seat.

¹⁹ A. Åslund, *How Ukraine Became a Market Economy and Democracy*, Washington 2009, p. 36.

According to the Marxist-Leninist theory of law, law is the expression of the will of the ruling class, and its contents reflect and should reflect the interests of that class. It is therefore a misnomer to speak about ‘the instrumental use of the law’ in Communist states, because law was merely one of the instruments of power and could not be anything else. All legal acts, including the constitution, played an auxiliary role for the state apparatus and were not binding: those with political power could use them, but could also ignore or freely modify them if need arose. This concept of law is reflected in what Soviet prosecutors reportedly often told dissidents: that “the constitution is for abroad”.²⁰

The original source of power and law in that system was the “will of the working people of towns and villages”, understood as *volonté générale* (the ‘universal will’, independent of the real views and aspirations of individual members of society), and expressed and interpreted by the ‘avant-garde’ of the working people, i.e. the professional apparatus of the Communist party (which was not a party in the democratic sense, but rather something between a professional corporation and social estate). Real power was therefore exercised by the Communist party’s committee system, and the role of public authorities was limited to implementing their decisions. This is what the ‘steering role of the party’ stood for (Art. 6 of the 1977 Soviet constitution read: “The leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organisations and public organisations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union”).

Political necessity/expedience was the main organising principle of the Soviet legal system. The consequence of this was that the principle of stability of law had to be rejected, and there was no need to educate the people about the law – on the contrary, efforts were sometimes made to thwart the development of legal awareness. All those characteristics, partly rooted in the legal system of pre-Revolutionary Russia, prevailed until the end of Communist rule.

The Communist system abolished the separation of powers with independent and mutually balancing branches of the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. The USSR constitution stated that “The people exercise state power through Soviets of People’s Deputies, which constitute the political foundation of the USSR. All other state bodies are under the control of, and accountable to, the Soviets of People’s Deputies.”²¹ The Supreme Soviet, the ‘highest body of state

²⁰ Here, quoted after V. Moroz, *Reportaż z rezerwatu imienia Berii* [Reports from the Beria reserve], [in] I. Koshelivets, *Ukraina 1956–1968* [Ukraine in the years 1956–1968], Paris 1969, p. 237.

²¹ Art. 2 of the 1977 constitution of the Soviet Union, *op. cit.*

authority' by force of the same constitution, combined the roles of the legislative and the top tier of the executive (Art. 108). The judiciary was also an integral part of the system of 'state power' bodies, leaving no room for any independence of the judiciary, although the constitution did contain a provision on the independence of judges (Art. 155).

In the system, there was also no room for the self-governance of the people, or even of the regions. The soviets of people's delegates (which characteristically bore the same name from village to central level) and their executive committees were the local organs of state authority, bound by the principle of democratic centralism, which effectively boiled down to hierarchic subordination. At the same time, the councils formally enjoyed very broad competences, granted to them without any concern for the system's cohesion.

The Communist states regularly organised elections of 'people's delegates' (deputies and councillors), but they did not play the same role as in democratic states. The very act of election was ostensible because no rivalry among candidates was allowed, not to mention competition among political programmes.²² The elections were effectively plebiscites intended to demonstrate to the public that it univocally supports the programme of the authorities (i.e. was reasserting its 'own' *volonté générale*). The real outcomes of elections were presumably an important source of information for the Soviet leadership on the actual sentiments prevailing among the 'working people'.

2. The path towards constitutional separation of powers

As already mentioned, the steering role of the Communist party was abolished in 1991, and with it the principle of democratic centralism which had enabled the hierarchic management of the party apparatus. However, the original system had a clear division of competences and responsibilities, and this was not replaced by a new one. In this way, the state's backbone, i.e. the system which had made it governable, was removed.²³ As one of the consequences, full powers were taken over by councils at different levels (leading to inevitable chaos created by overlaps

²² The competition and discussions leading to the formulation of programs and candidate lists that would be later presented to the public, took place within the party committees, and usually did not take place in the public eye.

²³ In Russia in that period, the KGB and the armed forces, which had their own hierarchies largely independent of the Communist Party structures, gained a bigger role. In Ukraine neither the military nor the security services played a significant role in creating the new state order.

in competences). Another consequence was the emancipation of the bureaucracy, whose arbitrary behaviour had previously been restrained by the possibility that someone could complain to the party committees.

In order to tackle the mounting anarchy of social life, the post-Soviet states vested strong powers in their presidents and created systems of local state organs subordinate to the president (the so-called *vertikal vlasti*, or *vladnaya vertikal* in Ukrainian, i.e. literally ‘hierarchy of power’; also referred to as ‘the power vertical’), all in an effort to make the state governable again. Their establishment (and the move to subordinate governments to the president) became the first step towards a division of the original ‘state authority’ into mutually balancing executive and legislative branches of power. However, the old system did not give in easily. It was a permanent demand of the post-Soviet Communist parties to abolish the presidency and subordinate the executive organs to the Supreme Councils again, i.e. to restore the ‘unity of state authority’, in other words, the Soviet system. The disputes between presidents and Supreme Councils were not manifestations of the usual rivalry between the executive and the legislative branches, but rather struggles to transform the Councils into parliaments (organs of legislative power) and thereby introduce the separation of powers. That was the essence of the confrontations between the presidents and the Supreme Council speakers: Yeltsin and Khasbulatov in 1993 in Russia, and in Ukraine between Kravchuk and Plushch in 1993 (which the president lost), and Kuchma and Moroz in 1995 (in which the president won).

In Ukraine, the separation of powers was already provided for in the Declaration of *Suverenitet*, which in 1991 started to function partly as a ‘small’ constitution, and partly as a guidance document for interpreting the constitution of the Ukrainian SSR / Ukraine. However, it was only Leonid Kuchma who managed, in 1995, to push through the separation of powers by granting the *Verkhovna Rada* the status of a legislature and subordinating the executive to the president.²⁴ This was a pivotal decision for Ukraine, which paved the way for the formation of a democratic system in the European and not the post-Soviet sense, and even though haggling over some detailed provisions in the constitution (especially concerning the early dissolution of the parliament and the impeach-

²⁴ The constitutional agreement between the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine and the President of Ukraine, concluded on 18 June 1995, started with the following passage: “The *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine, being the sole legislative body, on the one hand, and the President of Ukraine, being the head of state and the superior executive authority, on the other, that is, the Parties who are the subjects of the constitutional law and who were granted their prerogatives directly by the nation...”.

ment of the president) continued for another year, the principle of the separation of powers was never called into question again.

The 1996 constitution of Ukraine introduced a presidential-parliamentary system in which the head of state had a significant advantage over the parliament; it was the president who appointed the government and the heads of the local state administration bodies. Arrangements offering the executive branch an advantage over the legislative branch were introduced in nearly all post-Soviet states at that time; this may have well been the only way to force the original soviets of people's delegates to limit themselves to the role of parliaments and local self-government bodies. Unfortunately, the adoption of the constitution was not swiftly followed by the adoption of the necessary acts of implementation; for example, no rules on impeachment have been enacted until the present day, and election regulations have been revised ahead of nearly every vote, etc.

Still in 1990, the local soviets were renamed as territorial self-government bodies (but not as people's self-governments), and in 1992 their executive organs were dismantled as the local state administration bodies took over their competences (and apparatuses). As a result, the local *nomenklatura* and bureaucratic elites became self-governed. The 1996 constitution formally introduced territorial self-government by transforming the local soviets into territorial self-government bodies, and the 1997 law on self-government established genuine self-governments in the major cities (with their own executive apparatuses). Nevertheless, those local governments continued to pay little heed to the interests or desires of the local people.

3. The constitution and politics

Even though the rule of law had been formally introduced in Ukraine, in practice the principle of 'political expedience' continued to prevail. The handling of the successive amendments to the constitution provides some dramatic examples. The draft amendment prepared and provisionally adopted in spring 2004 was intended not so much to balance the powers of the different state bodies, as to weaken the state by undermining the president's position.²⁵ It was

²⁵ This was one of those frequent situations in which the solutions functioning operating in mature Western democracies proved dysfunctional or even decidedly harmful to the fledgling post-Soviet democracy. Another similar example concerned the decision (taken in 2016 under strong pressure from the EU) not to allow any influence of either the legislature or the executive to exert on the appointments of judges, which in the Ukrainian condi-

adopted in December 2004 without observing the necessary formal conditions (which provided grounds for the Constitutional Court to repeal the amendment in 2010), as part of a compromise solution to the political crisis, which also included the invalidation of the second round of presidential elections by the Supreme Court in December 2004 (that decision was also dubious from a formal point of view, to say the least).

Consequently President Viktor Yushchenko had much less power than his predecessor, and had to cope with a system of checks and balances which had been distorted by the amendment. He started his term as president by ostensibly ignoring the constitution: he appointed the oblast administration chiefs immediately after the government's inauguration, despite the constitutional requirement to appoint them at the government's request, i.e. after the government's first sitting. The formal standards of the rule of law, which Kuchma had taken care to observe, were left in tatters.

After Yushchenko's embarrassing defeat²⁶ in February 2010, his successor Yanukovych decided to revert to the 1996 constitution, which would not only grant him more powers, but also ensure better stability and more coherent functioning of the state bodies. However, as he could not get the necessary changes through parliament, he opted for a verdict by the Constitutional Court, which in September 2010 repealed the amendment on procedural grounds²⁷ and ruled that the 1996 constitution was thereby restored.

Restoring the 2004 constitution was one of the most important demands of the Maidan protests of 2014, which rightly regarded the 1996 version of the constitution as an instrument of President Yanukovych's authoritarian rule. It also proved to be a providential move, thanks to which the Ukrainian state was able to ensure continuity of governance after Yanukovych and Prime Minister Mykola Azarov fled the country. The 1996 constitution stated that in a situation when the president is unable to perform his duties, the prime minister takes over, but it did not lay down any provisions for the further succession. The 2004 constitution, on the other hand, stated that in such a situation the speaker of parliament should take over. And since Volodymyr Rybak, who was

tions could lead to one outcome only: conservation of the lawlessness of the judges, instead of the promotion of their independence.

²⁶ As an the incumbent president, he garnered a mere 5.45% of votes.

²⁷ The problem was that the text on which the Constitutional Court had given its opinion was had been changed in the parliament and adopted without consulting the Court again.

the speaker of parliament at that time, had resigned in a fully formal way, the *Verkhovna Rada* was able to elect a new, ‘revolutionary’ speaker and entrust him with the presidency of the faltering state.

Those measures were necessary, but unconstitutional. The law on “restoring the binding force of certain norms in the Constitution of Ukraine” was adopted on 21 February 2014 without consulting the Constitutional Court, or even the competent parliamentary committee. As this bill was not signed by the president, who fled the capital a few hours after its adoption (the constitution normally allows two weeks for the presidential signature), the *Verkhovna Rada* as early as the next day adopted another resolution “on the text of the constitution”, based on which the 21 February bill was signed by the new speaker of parliament, Oleksandr Turchynov, in his capacity of acting president (by force of the same bill). The 2004 version of the constitution came into force on 1 March 2014. The manner in which Yanukovich was ousted is particularly dubious as there was no basis for that in the constitution.²⁸ Ukraine was in a revolutionary situation, and this unprecedented predicament required precedent-setting solutions. Those solutions saved the state, but at the same time had a negative impact on the operation of the rule of law in Ukraine and the development of the people’s legal awareness.

One could wonder whether Ukrainian democracy was sufficiently mature around the year 2010 (at the onset of Yanukovich’s rule) to be able to afford to implement solutions typical of parliamentary systems of government which took generations to develop in other countries (its party system certainly was, and remains, too immature to sustain stable parliamentary governance). However, the 2004 constitution is certainly not suitable for today’s Ukraine – a country involved in a war and threatened by the covert rebellion of some professional associations. The constitution is a burden, if not a threat to the state; but it would be very difficult to amend it in keeping with the rules currently in force.²⁹

²⁸ The Parliamentary resolution stated that the president had ‘ousted himself’ and ceased to perform his duties, and on this basis those duties were thereby assumed by the speaker of parliament. Meanwhile, the constitution provides that the president’s term may be terminated early in the following circumstances: resignation, inability to perform duties due to poor health, impeachment and death.

²⁹ The rules are prohibitive and designed to make the legislative process as difficult as possible. Every draft constitutional amendment first needs to be put on the agenda of a *Verkhovna Rada* session by an ordinary majority (which in Ukraine means an absolute majority of the constitutional number of MPs, irrespective of how many are present, i.e. 226 votes). Then the Constitutional Court needs to rule that the draft will not pose a threat to the human rights enshrined in the constitution or the independence and territorial integrity

4. The shape of Ukraine's democracy

Every political system rests on a certain social group (class) which supports it mainly because it believes that the system serves its interest. Democratic systems are typically supported by the middle classes, i.e. those who own the means of production on a small to medium scale,³⁰ such as the small slave owners in the ancient democracies, the gentry in aristocratic democracies, and the urban bourgeoisie in present-day Western democracies (with a large share of free farmers in the USA). Historical experience shows that democracies thrive when the middle classes enjoy stability (including peace) and prosperity which enables education. When the middle classes are in decline, democracy turns into one or another form of oligarchy (the rule of large owners who for various reasons sustain the institutions of electoral democracy).

Ukraine, like the other post-Soviet states, did not have a middle class at all. With some marginal exceptions, its citizens did not own property, and the inequalities which existed concerned the relation to power and access to information. The broadly understood *nomenklatura* (professional members of the party apparatus, bureaucracy, technocracy, the administration of justice and security services, military officers) constituted the upper class, which was highly stratified but privileged in terms of access to material goods, information and decision-making. The only other class which existed was the 'working people of towns and villages', who constituted the lower, albeit formally ruling class.

At the onset, the new Ukrainian state developed mainly on the basis of the *nomenklatura* (especially the bureaucracy and technocracy). However, as the middle classes slowly grew and big business, whose top representatives typically hailed from the ranks of the *nomenklatura*, developed dynamically, it only took a few years for a new social group, the oligarchs, defined as large business owners who get involved in politics to secure their business interests, to enter

of Ukraine, for which there is no statutory deadline. The draft on which the Court has given its opinion may not be changed by the parliament, but nonetheless it needs to be adopted twice: in a first vote by an ordinary majority, and in a second vote, held during the next parliamentary session (i.e. within the next half-year) by a qualified majority of 300 votes. The definitions of ordinary and qualified majority are a legacy of the Soviet system.

³⁰ There are various definitions of the middle class; the most common one at present is based on the income criterion, as a result of which it encompasses some employees alongside the owners of the means of production and the self-employed. However, as the two groups have divergent interests and expectations *vis-à-vis* the state, the older definition will be applied here.

the stage. The oligarchs almost immediately established close co-operation with the bureaucracy, and already by around the year 2000 Ukraine's democracy could be described as an oligarchic-bureaucratic system (similar to aristocratic or bourgeoisie democracies). That group, characterised in more detail below, became the foundation of Ukraine's democratic order. In early 2017, there are no visible social processes which could undermine that foundation.

Ukraine's present system of government and political practice meet the minimum standards of an electoral democracy: the country has a real, not a façade multi-party system; all adult citizens (except for those stripped of civil rights by the courts) enjoy equal rights to vote and stand in elections; elections take place regularly and the right of secret ballot is observed; no massive irregularities occur at the stage of vote counting, and the vote results are binding on those in power; and finally, the major parties enjoy wide access to the electorate through the media and are able to conduct electoral campaigns.³¹

The weakest part of Ukraine's system concerns the equal access of political parties to the media; and the country's party system, while pluralist, can hardly be regarded as mature because most of the dominant parties represent the interests of different big business groupings, rather than the political positions and views of major social groups. Of the many 'programme' parties formed in the first years of independence, most failed to grow, while others were taken over by powerful sponsors, usually oligarchs. Ukraine has no major social-democratic, Christian-democratic, liberal or conservative party (although it does have a fairly strong nationalist party).

Ukraine also lacks strong and genuinely independent media or non-governmental organisations which are not dependent on foreign funding, and the trade union movement has failed to find a place for itself in the post-Communist system. Likewise, it has no territorial self-government in the European sense, as the self-government's space continues to be occupied by the post-Soviet '*nomenklatura* self-government' which thwarts civil initiative instead of supporting it. Finally, Ukrainian democracy is hugely burdened by the disastrous quality of legislation and its excessive volume, which fuels corruption. And corruption remains a constituent element of the system (and has been since the times of the Russian Empire), rather than an anomaly or violation of the generally accepted rules.

³¹ Based on Freedom House criteria, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2010/methodology>, last accessed on 19 September 2016.

Ukraine does not meet many of the standards of liberal democracies, especially the Western model in which the legislative branch has an advantage over the other branches of power, and the rights of minorities have priority over the principle of equality before the law. The Ukrainian solutions are in many respects closer to those models found in the Western hemisphere where the executive power has an advantage, restrained mainly by the right to challenge its decisions in courts. Ukraine seems to be evolving towards a mixed model in which the strong position of the executive, in competition with the legislative organs (central, regional and self-governmental) will remain a permanent element (the external threat, which will presumably not disappear in the long term, will be conducive to that as well).

However, it should be remembered that Ukrainian democracy is only a quarter of a century old, while the democracies of France or Germany have taken over two hundred years to develop their contemporary solutions; nor did their developments always proceed peacefully, to put it mildly. Even if one considers the acceleration of social transformations in recent decades, this is still a huge disproportion.

III. THE ECONOMY: AWAY FROM ONE SYSTEM AND TOWARDS ANOTHER

The Soviet economy was based on a negation of both the market as a regulating force and of the spontaneous (self-regulating) nature of economic phenomena. The economy was supposed to be shaped so as to serve overriding social (political) objectives as defined by the sovereign; the main ways of achieving this consisted in the planning of economic activity and allocating resources needed to implement the plans at all levels. The assumption was that the planner had full knowledge of the available resources and economic mechanisms. The second pillar of the Soviet model concerned not so much the abolition of private ownership of the means of production (and restrictions on the ownership of other goods) as the imposition of the concept of an indivisible state ownership which altogether eliminated the function of ownership from the economy: conglomerates of property did not have owners, but only managers.

The system built on those principles inevitably became bureaucratized, failed to encourage innovation, was wasteful, and struggled with impossibility to gather full and reliable information about the state of the economy and society. It worked best in the armaments sector, which naturally depends not on the people's needs, but rather the political objectives of the state. On the other hand, the volume of defence spending decreed by the Soviet leadership over the decades ruined the other branches of the national economy, contributing to the collapse of the Soviet system.

Like the other Soviet republics (apart from Russia), Ukraine was additionally burdened by the fact that its economy was not independent. The planning of investments took place at the Union level without any consideration for the interests of the individual republics. Most Ukrainian manufacturers were dependent on supplies of raw materials and components from outside the Ukrainian SSR, and their products were also sent to other republics. The tank factory in Kharkiv, one of the largest in the USSR, did not manufacture its own tank guns; Ukraine's many automotive plants were dependent on external supplies of clutches; and although it was the leading producer of sugar beets, Ukraine did not manufacture complete sets of sugar refining equipment, etc. The production of iron and steel, based on the local resources of iron ore and coal, was the only industrial complex which was almost entirely located in Ukraine. This constituted the foundation for the future role of the Donetsk Basin's elites in the economy and politics of Ukraine.

Ukraine did not have sufficient energy resources, and in particular it did not have any which were globally sought after and could be exported on a massive scale. Most of the products of its industry were attractive mainly to the post-Soviet markets and other countries at medium or low levels of development, and much of its defence sector's production ceased to be useful at all after the collapse of the Soviet Army with its global strategic objectives. The situation of agricultural production was similar; nobody wanted new competitors in the stable global market of that time, and Ukraine was left with the post-Soviet markets.

Like most of the public, around the year 1990 the Ukrainian *nomenklatura* believed that its country was rich, and that the problems it was experiencing were the result of inadequate redistribution of national income within the Soviet Union. That view was reinforced during the campaign ahead of the independence referendum when one argument was commonly used concerning the alleged exploitation of Ukraine by Russia and the other republics.³² Few had a realistic picture of the real condition of the Soviet economy, and especially the gap separating it from the world leaders, and virtually nobody (whether in Ukraine or elsewhere) was aware of the risks involved in an uncontrolled dismantling of the command-and-control system. The Ukrainian political and economic elites knew very little about the world outside the Soviet Union, and what they knew concerned the standards of living and lifestyles, rather than post-War doctrines, values and transformations. Therefore, they did not realise what kind of challenge was ahead of them and to what kind of economic system they would have to adjust.

It is a frequently voiced opinion that immediately after regaining independence, Ukraine could and should have undergone a programme of 'shock therapy' like Poland's Balcerowicz Plan (this view has supporters in Ukraine as well). However, that would not have been possible: in order to undertake such a deep and radical reform, a country needs to possess an organisationally and intellectually strong economic decision-making centre capable of preparing such a project and then responding to the problems that arise as it is implemented. No 'shock therapy' could have worked in a country that had no central bank and no monetary system of its own, no efficient legislature and no professional statistical service. When the Ukrainian state finally built the institutions and developed

³² Similar views and propaganda messages, attributing poverty in one's own country to exploitation by the other republics or the Soviet Union, were common in all the Communist countries in Europe.

the procedures enabling it to undertake radical reforms (i.e. around 1996), the situation had changed to such an extent, that the old solutions were no longer valid. Ukraine no longer had a command-and-control economy, but a spontaneously developed post-Communist economy whose nature nobody understood.

1. Spontaneous transformation

It is questionable whether there was any chance of stopping the degradation of the Soviet economy, overburdened by its armaments effort and overregulated to the point of absurdity (for example, within the first eight months of 1986, the government structures of the Ukrainian SSR issued more than 500,000 written regulations and directives addressed to state institutions, while in all likelihood, at least as many arrived from Moscow³³), especially in the conditions of a permanent military and political confrontation with the United States. Genuine economic revival could only be achieved by radically restraining the armaments effort and re-allocating the freed resources to the production of consumer goods for both the internal market and for export. However, this is precisely what the USSR leadership wanted to avoid: after all, the *perestroika* programme was undertaken to strengthen the state also in the military dimension.

The Soviet leadership therefore decided to tap its 'hidden reserves', i.e. to allow the people to legally undertake manufacturing and commercial activity.³⁴ The response was massive (in the late 1980s in Ukraine alone around 700,000 people worked in so-called co-operatives in Ukraine alone³⁵); the retail and semi-wholesale trade in goods, the manufacturing of consumer goods and small services developed rapidly, and so did speculation (which was inevitable with commerce developing in the conditions of drastic shortages and in the absence of adequate regulations) as well as the practice of private sellers 'capturing' the produce of state-owned manufacturing plants.

³³ Ю. Алексеев, С. Кульчицький, А. Слюсаренко, *Україна на зламі історичних епох. Державотворчий процес 1985–1999 р.* Київ 2000, p. 17.

³⁴ In 1986, people in the Soviet Union were allowed to undertake economic activity in their 'spare time'; in 1987 the formation of 'co-operatives' (i.e. joint economic activity without hiring workers) was permitted, and in 1988 – nearly all sorts of economic activity (including banking services) and hiring workers were allowed. For more information, see: Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 24–25.

³⁵ 'So-called co-operatives' because these were not genuine co-operatives but rather privately-owned businesses (run by the owner alone, or companies, usually with an unclear legal form status).

This spontaneous development occurred without access to credit, in the absence of a banking system adequate to the new situation, and in the conditions of a widespread lack of confidence in the durability of Gorbachev's new policy (which was not conducive to stimulating investment), and as well as in utter regulatory chaos. Most of the new businesses could only operate thanks to bribing the state functionaries at various levels and in different sections of the administration, while a considerable number were able to do business thanks to their corrupt links to state-owned enterprises. The fledgling small and medium bourgeoisie (soon joined by the big bourgeoisie) was therefore trained from the start to operate according to the principles of a corruption-led market economy, and not a 'classic' market economy. Meanwhile, the lack of access to credit attracted one of the few groups possessing funds at their disposal, i.e. organised crime.

A little-known element of the Soviet transformations in the late 1980s concerns the *de facto* legalisation of the practice of the illicit manufacturing of consumer goods, which seems to have dated back to the period immediately after World War II. The persons involved seldom organised illegal manufacturing plants, (although that happened, too) more often, they conducted illegal manufacturing activities at state-owned plants, for which purpose they forged documents on a massive scale and took advantage of the corrupt links between the criminal world, the plant managers, and the bureaucracy and the police. In the period preceding the *perestroika*, millions of people were involved in the system, and those who organised the illicit manufacturing business were among the few who people familiar with the principles of market economy on a micro-scale. However, legalising the practice also involved legalising its mechanisms.

When in 1986 the managements of companies were tasked with taking import and export decisions, this was followed by a wave of speculations that took advantage of the price differences between domestic and foreign prices. Two years later, the reform of those enterprises resulted in chaos: the old system was abolished, but no new system was introduced. Management boards were put in control of enterprises, while the state continued to own them (as a result of which the individual components of the 'indivisible socialist property' effectively belonged to nobody), while the existing links to the illicit manufacturing sector made it easier for the enterprises to become colonised by private companies selling their products (in this way, profits were privatised, while the costs remained state-owned). The original orientation towards output (the accomplishment of the plan) gradually gave way not to profit-seeking, but to rent-seeking.

Rent-seeking and profit-seeking

Profit-seeking means activities aimed at extracting gains from the production of goods or provision of services in competitive markets, whereas rent-seeking stands for activities aimed at extracting gains from the ownership or control of property and from various non-market mechanisms, especially links to the political world (i.e. the ability to influence the state as the regulator of the economy). The post-Communist model of rent-seeking was closely connected with the oligarchisation of the economy. Åslund has listed the following main rent-generating mechanisms in the Ukrainian economy: purchasing products of the steel and chemical industries at domestic prices and reselling them at global prices; selling the imported natural gas on the internal market at higher prices (in this case the rent comes from the state-subsidised exchange rates), constant interest rates of banking loans in the conditions of high inflation, and direct public subsidies to the agriculture and energy sectors.³⁶ The former three are already history,³⁷ but the fourth model is still partly in place (subsidies for the energy sector were abolished in 2016). Meanwhile, new models have emerged, including in particular the theft of budget funding allocated to various purposes.

The Soviet authorities no longer controlled anything, and new mechanisms had not yet been developed. Even though production of consumer goods was growing, market shortages were widening, accompanied by growing inflation: while in 1990 the USSR had an inflation of 10% year on year, in the first half of 1991 inflation growth was 25% week on week.³⁸ In the autumn of 1990 the Ukrainian SSR introduced rationing coupons for a large number of foods and industrial goods (which was later transformed into the *karbovanets* coupon, the first Ukrainian currency). Nobody knew how to solve the problem on the macro-scale, but many knew very well how to take advantage of it to their own benefit. Most Ukrainian businesses have their roots in those processes and that period.

This was the economy which independent Ukraine inherited. The sudden disintegration of economic links between the republics and the withdrawal of most defence orders (while the arms manufacturers, least affected by the chaos of the late 1980s, probably constituted the healthiest part of the Ukrainian economy

³⁶ Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 55–56.

³⁷ In 2016, a new kind of schemes for extracting rent from the trade in natural gas was revealed. See: www.epravda.com.ua/news/2016/12/14/614390, accessed on 15 December 2016.

³⁸ Ю. Алексеев, С. Кульчицкий, А. Слюсаренко, *op. cit.*, p.27.

at that time) made matters even worse as the Ukrainian economy was massively dependent on imports and exports of goods and services.³⁹ To some extent, the quick emergence of financial-industrial groups improved the situation because those structures enabled the co-ordination of economic processes in at least some parts of the economy.

The Soviet Union ceased to exist as a 'subject of international law and a geopolitical reality',⁴⁰ but it still existed as an economic and social organism, and its dismantling required reflection and effort. First of all, there existed a single monetary system (the rouble zone) in which one bank of issue was replaced overnight by fifteen such banks as all the republic-level banks, now in the capacity of central banks, started issuing the rouble⁴¹ without any co-ordination – it seems that their management boards for a long time had no understanding of the role of money in a market economy. Kyiv tried to speculate on its partial participation in the rouble zone by eliminating the rouble from its cash market and keeping it for non-cash circulation and the issuance of credit, subsidised to a large degree by the budget. This created chaos and led to hyperinflation (2730% year on year in 1992 and a staggering 10,255% in 1993).⁴² That situation continued till September 1993 when the central bank of Russia terminated the functioning of the rouble zone, realizing that it was doing more harm than good to Russia.

In the initial period of independence, Ukraine was focused on building the structures of the state, the armed forces, diplomacy, etc., and neglected the development of an independent economic system. This can be interpreted as helplessness in the face of economic challenges (Kravchuk had no knowledge of the economy, while Prime Minister Masol only understood how the Communist economy worked). The 1992 budget was adopted in June that year, and there was nobody to formulate a programme of reforms. Meanwhile, Ukraine's debt to Russia was mounting as the country continued to receive raw materials and components, now no longer needed, under co-operative arrangements

³⁹ In 1988 Ukraine accounted for 46% of the Soviet Union's iron ore production, 41% of cast iron, 35% of steel goods, more than half its sugar production, one third of vegetable oil production, 35% of television set production, etc. (Ю. Алексеев, С. Кульчицкий, А. Слюсаренко, *op. cit.*, p. 23). Ukraine was also an educational hub; its civilian and military universities were oriented towards educating cadres for the entire Union.

⁴⁰ The wording of the agreement on the formation of the CIS.

⁴¹ Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁴² Unless indicated otherwise, the statistics come from the website of the State Statistical Service of Ukraine (Derzhstat, www.ukrstat.gov.ua) and the printed statistical yearbooks of Ukraine.

that were still in force,⁴³ while the inflationary depreciation of loans created speculative fortunes (the dual-currency trade with Russia also generated huge profits). The transformation (and partial privatisation) of the large industrial enterprises was conducted in the interest of their management boards, who sought rents and not modernisation or restructuring; this situation was the at its worst in those sectors which manufactured easily sold products, i.e. in the extractive, chemical and steelmaking industries.

The scale of economic decline was catastrophic: official GDP decreased by 48% in the years 1990–1994, although according to Åslund, the share of the grey economy in real GDP increased by 48% by 1995, and hence, the real decline was much smaller.⁴⁴ According to estimates by Oleksandr Paskhaver, in 1991–1995 the grey economy accounted for 5–10% of the machine-building industry, 10% in the petrochemical industry, 15–20% of cargo transports, 30–40% in healthcare services, between 50% and 70% in commerce and service, and around 40% of the money circulation, and in 1994 the grey economy may have accounted for 30% of real GDP.⁴⁵ According to that author, the illicit economy saved Ukraine from complete economic collapse in the first years of independence. In the years that followed, the share of the grey economy continued to grow (around the year 1998 it was even estimated at 60% of real GDP), then started to decline (to 30% around the year 2006) and then increased again (to around 35% in the years 2011–2013 and 40% in 2015⁴⁶). The share of the grey economy thus remains very high, mainly due to an unreasonable tax system and the people's deep and ingrained distrust for the state.

The grey economy supplied many goods and services that were in real demand (while the 'official' economy in many cases continued to manufacture useless goods) and provided jobs and incomes. This kind of economic activity, which largely originated straight from Soviet illicit production (see above), was parasitical in nature and the revenues it generated were not invested, but often illegally transferred abroad (according to Paskhaver, the volume of capital illegally

⁴³ Åslund, *loco citato*.

⁴⁴ Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 48–49. Åslund also points to the disastrous quality of Ukrainian statistics. Cf. the same author's interesting reflection about the nature of GDP in Communist countries and in the early post-Communist period in: *Building Capitalism. The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc*, Cambridge 2002, p. 123 and following.

⁴⁵ А.Пасхавер, Теневая экономика спасла Украину от голода, [in:] *Галицкие контракты*, 1996, Issue 3. Other interesting statistics available there.

⁴⁶ Г. Кукуруза, Почему растет теневая экономика, <http://forbes.net.ua/opinions/1400265-pochemu-rastet-tenevaya-ekonomika>, accessed on 29 November 2016.

taken out of Ukraine reached US\$ 15 billion in the years 1991–1995 alone⁴⁷). It also stimulated corruption and was conducive to making entrepreneurs dependent on the criminal world, while also encouraging members of the criminal world to enter the ‘normal’ economy (both public and grey).⁴⁸

Those phenomena in the first phase of transformation had disastrous consequences, and could not be reversed. The economy, which still in 1990 still had a potential to modernise and develop, was degraded, and a relatively transparent set of rules was replaced by an extreme version of *laissez-faire* which permitted everything (albeit not to everyone) and allowed rampant corruption, which soon became the only efficiently functioning mechanism. At the same time, the obsolete but still functional systems of healthcare, welfare and education were destroyed, depriving large swathes of society of access to those services. Previously unknown, open unemployment developed, the middle-income strata of society became impoverished, while a new class of very rich people emerged. Those negative consequences have still not been reversed until the present day.

2. Kuchma and the oligarchs

The situation began to change after Leonid Kuchma took office as president in 1994. Unlike Kravchuk, he did have some idea about the economy, while the Dnipropetrovsk machine-building industry circles from which he hailed were much more progressive and open to market-economy solutions than the Donetsk industrialists, who played a dominant role in the final period of Kravchuk’s presidency. Kuchma understood the need to restore balance in Ukraine’s national economy and gradually adjust it to the global market economy models. As early as in his first address, he presented a plan for relatively radical reforms based on the Russian and Polish experiences.

Unfortunately, the attempt at stabilising the monetary system (still without introducing a full-fledged currency), which was a prerequisite for the other reforms’ success, had failed already by May 1995, one of the reasons being

⁴⁷ Пасхавер, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ The question of the GDP share of strictly criminal activities such as drug trafficking, the importation of stolen cars, control of prostitution and gambling is not addressed here. With all the legal and ethical reservations, those activities responded to the public’s demand and created large numbers of jobs (in the case of drugs and gambling, however, the criminal world actively stimulated the growth in demand).

a monetarist orientation which destabilised the market.⁴⁹ Political reasons were equally important: Kuchma did not have a majority in the *Verkhovna Rada*, which was dominated by parties with a Communist orientation and strongly influenced by the fledgling oligarchy. The reforms had to be implemented by presidential decrees, and not parliamentary bills.

Kuchma was a pragmatic, experienced manager and was not attached to any particular ideology or concept. He decided to postpone the reforms pending the adoption of the new constitution (in a move which helped him reach a compromise with the *Verkhovna Rada*), and first focused instead on tackling inflation, which was still very high. Shortly after the constitution was adopted, the situation was mature enough by the autumn of 1996 for the introduction of the hryvnia, which finally put one of the most important elements of economic life in order. Further reforms had to wait until Kuchma's re-election in November 1999.

Meanwhile, the chaotic rent-seeking system matured and became more orderly. A growing number of economic actors no longer felt comfortable in the chaos, especially since the rivalry over shares in the market for Russian natural gas (the revenues from which nurtured the second 'generation' of Ukrainian oligarchs) frequently involved assassinations of important businesspeople. After the killing, in November 1996, of the Donetsk entrepreneur and politician Yevhen Shcherban, Kuchma decided to impose a *modus vivendi* on the emerging Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk 'clans' (here meaning oligarchic-bureaucratic structures), under which the elites of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were granted informal autonomy. In this way, the president of Ukraine became the architect of Ukraine's informal system of government frequently referred to as the 'oligarchic consensus', which has proved durable and effective. The experience of the two attempts at undermining that system (in 2005 and 2014) has led to the conclusion that in the medium term, internal transformations in Ukraine will only be possible within the framework of the oligarchic-bureaucratic system.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In that period it became common to 'pay' wages in kind (sugar, pure alcohol, or whatever the given plant produced), and for the large and medium-sized enterprises to issue their own quasi-currencies.

⁵⁰ For more information about the Ukrainian oligarchy and its role, see S. Matuszak, The oligarchic democracy. The influence of business groups on Ukrainian politics, *OSW Studies*, Issue 42, Warsaw 2012, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2012-10-16/oligarchic-democracy-influence-business-groups-ukrainian-politics>; and W. Konończuk, Keystone of the system. Old and new oligarchs in Ukraine, *OSW Point of View*, Issue 59,

The problem of the oligarchs

The post-Soviet systems are usually referred to as oligarchic, and the members of their dominant groups as oligarchs, without asking for a close definition the meaning of this term, which has been borrowed from Russian political rhetoric⁵¹. Without getting into detailed analysis, the following definition of post-Soviet oligarchs (but not oligarchs in general) has been adopted for the purposes of this paper: oligarchs are big business owners who (a) acquired their assets thanks to the disintegration of the Soviet economic governance system (by appropriating state-owned assets or otherwise), often in ways that were barely legal, or indeed illegal; (b) are sufficiently powerful to objectively influence the political situation at the national or regional level, (c) seek to maintain or strengthen their position *vis-à-vis* the state and other oligarchs by informally influencing the activities of public authorities and the bureaucratic apparatus using methods which are questionable from the legal point of view or evidently illegal; (d) tend to create monopolistic and oligopolistic structures that suppress competition in the economy and the process of the economy opening to global markets, as well as political and media pluralism. Oligarchs and their clans operate on a national scale, but there are also regional or city-level oligarchs, whose economic basis tends to consist in commerce and services rather than manufacturing, who are more dependent on links to the apparatus of power, and who are more likely to have links to the criminal world.

Around that time, Ukrainian entrepreneurs gained access to a new tool: the ability to register companies abroad, especially in tax havens, and to siphon off massive funds to be invested back in the country on preferential terms as foreign investments. This gigantic machinery of tax evasion and money laundering, which had existed even before, was one of globalisation's first 'gifts' to Ukraine. In addition to the tax evasion which significantly impoverished the country, with the equivalent of several annual national budgets of Ukraine likely stashed away in banking accounts in tax havens, the new rules had one more negative consequence: it became impossible to determine without an international

Warsaw 2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2016-08-18/keystone-system-old-and-new-oligarchs-ukraine>

⁵¹ Cf. the definitions proposed by Konończuk (*op. cit.*, p. 5) or Åslund (How Ukraine..., *op. cit.*, p. 107).

enquiry which investment coming from, say, Cyprus⁵² was a cover for Ukrainian investors, and which for Russian businesses.

The emergence of post-Communist oligarchies is usually seen as a negative phenomenon and an obstacle to the development of 'normal' market relations, i.e. of the type that would meet the standards adopted in leading EU states. However, it should be noted that one of Ukraine's first tasks was to create property relations – not simply 'normal' or 'free-market' relations, but of any kind at all, as property did not exist as an economic notion under Communism, and the country did not have capital assets of an adequate scale. Meanwhile, opening up to an inflow of foreign capital in the first half of the 1990s would have posed a direct threat to the survival of the Ukrainian state because most of that capital would have come from Russia.

The Ukrainian economy was dominated by large industry and large-scale farming; small retail and industry were just starting to develop, and could not then have replaced the old sector as a source of tax revenue or jobs, and certainly not as investors. Potential Western investors at that time were not interested in the opportunities offered by Ukraine⁵³ and China had yet to become a global investor. On the other hand Russian actors, who were interested in recreating the old co-operative links, did show interest in Ukraine, and the rapid economic transformation in Russia and Moscow's quiet approval of involvement in Ukraine created big opportunities for them. That, however, posed risks for Kyiv, especially as relations with Russia remained difficult (the two states' fundamental treaty on mutual relations was signed as late as 1997). Moscow steadfastly sought to take over numerous strategically important assets in Ukraine, especially the transit gas pipelines running through Ukraine, or at least take control of them. Speaking of gas pipelines, Kyiv rightly perceived the ownership of them as an important guarantee of sovereignty, and successfully thwarted Gazprom's repeated attempts at takeovers, in some of which the Russian monopoly was backed by Western companies.

In that situation, maintaining a high share of state ownership of assets and allowing the opaque, corrupt privatisation schemes to operate was a lesser evil, especially since spontaneous, illegal privatisation processes were already

⁵² While being an EU member state, Cyprus is a major tax haven.

⁵³ It seems that before 2000, the interest would have been no higher even if the Ukrainian market had been quickly and fully opened to foreign investment, because the possibilities of expansion in Central-European post-Communist states were far from being exhausted.

underway; the state could put these in order, but could not reverse them. The emergence of the Ukrainian oligarchy and its successful takeover of some of the largest enterprises paradoxically prevented Russian oligarchs from establishing themselves in Ukraine, and thereby stopped Moscow from expanding its influence in Ukraine (which was particularly important after Putin later subordinated the Russian oligarchs to state policy)⁵⁴. It probably also prevented large-scale deindustrialisation in Ukraine, as many Russian investors were interested not in developing the businesses they were taking over, but in winding them down as unnecessary competitors (it seems to have been no accident that the Donbas elites were the most determined to block Russian investments; for them, the Russian mining and steelmaking sectors constituted an existential threat).⁵⁵

In later periods, the oligarchs (as a class, a great bourgeoisie or a plutocracy, often referred to as the '*oligarkhat*') became a stabilising factor for the Ukrainian democracy. They competed against one another, also through their respective representatives within the public authorities, and were therefore interested in the preservation of functioning democratic mechanisms, which prevented the formation of a single monopolistic political bloc in Ukraine. When Yanukovich and his circle attempted to take control of the entire national economy after 2010 and to eradicate the oligarchs (the Yanukovich 'family' was not another clan, but something new and different⁵⁶), some of them felt so threatened that they decided to back the revolutionary movement in January 2014 from behind the scenes, despite its anti-oligarchy slogans. Later, support of these figures (especially from Dmytro Firtash and, in a different way, Ihor Kolomoyskyi) contributed to stabilising the new government.⁵⁷

As already mentioned, after his re-election, Leonid Kuchma resumed the reforms that had been on hold since 1995. He fairly quickly managed to build a majority in the *Verkhovna Rada* in support of the reform programme, which led to the formation of a new government under Viktor Yushchenko's leadership

⁵⁴ Cf. the in-depth analysis by the *Korrespondent* weekly: „Чужих не нужно. Как олигархи сформировали Украину”, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3720239-chuzhykh-ne-nu...>, accessed on 25 July 2016.

⁵⁵ In later periods some Russian oligarchs did take over Ukrainian companies. However, the situation was different: the dominance of the local oligarchic capital was firmly established, and the 1990s threat of 'creeping re-integration' was gone.

⁵⁶ The system created around Yanukovich by his son and aides lasted too short a time to lend itself to detailed description.

⁵⁷ For more information on the transformations within the oligarchy and its role in post-revolution Ukraine, see: Konończuk, *op. cit.*

to deal with its implementation. This time, the reforms were carried out determinedly and effectively: rent-seeking was curbed dramatically (even though it was not fully eradicated in the two key sectors: the gas trade and coal mining), barter exchange was eliminated almost completely, and some of the 'first generation' oligarchs were pushed out of the game⁵⁸ (including Viktor Medvedchuk,⁵⁹ who lost his business position even though he remained a leading politician). Payment backlogs of many months (or years in some cases years) were eliminated (salaries had become properly monetarised some time sooner). The manufacturing oligarchs gained as a result of the changes, especially those from the metallurgy sector.

According to Anders Åslund, Ukraine transformed into a market economy within the first four months of 2000.⁶⁰ The reforms could not change the already established character of the system, which was oligarchic, bureaucratic and corrupt, but now all of its elements started to function under new, more progressive and efficient rules. After the Yushchenko government collapsed in the spring of 2001, the speed of reforms subsided, but none of the changes already implemented were reversed. Statistics show that whereas the 1990s saw a decline of nearly all Ukraine's economic and social indicators, after the year 2000 the country slowly started to make up for the its losses.

That decisive breakthrough was the work of President Kuchma. Under the constitution of the day, Yushchenko was merely the president's first minister. It was the determination and perseverance of the head of state, his pragmatism and ability to choose the right people to collaborate with, that were decisive for the reforms' success, even if Yushchenko, who knew how to take care of his PR, reaped the benefits and became the symbol of the Ukrainian reforms and democracy (a capital he utterly wasted when he later served as president).

Many serious charges have been levelled at President Kuchma. The most important ones from the political point of view concerned the incitement of the assassination of the well-known journalist Georgiy Gongadze and authorising the sale of the Kolchuga radars equipment to Iraq. However, the credibility of the

⁵⁸ For information on the first oligarchs, see Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 107-109. The following pages contain interesting reflections about the phenomenon of industrial oligarchies in general.

⁵⁹ Interestingly it was Medvedchuk who build up the pro-reform parliamentary majority as the *Verkhovna Rada* speaker in 2000, balancing on the edge of legality.

⁶⁰ Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

former allegation is highly questionable, whereas the sale of the Kolchugas has never been confirmed (not even by the United States after the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime; the case was likely a Moscow-inspired provocation intended to discredit the Ukrainian president in the eyes of the West). Another allegation, this time not unfounded, concerned Kuchma's consent for the head of the Presidential Administration to issue the so-called *temniki*, i.e. instructions for the media. Interestingly the most serious charge against Kuchma is very rarely mentioned: it concerns the evident rigging of the referendum on 16 April 2000 on constitutional amendments which strengthened the president's position *vis-à-vis* the parliament (although it should be recalled that Kuchma did not opt to implement those changes on the basis of the referendum result alone, nor did he try to push them through the *Verkhovna Rada*).

These allegations concern the strictly political aspect of Kuchma's presidency and do not affect the assessment of his role in the economic transformation. The decade of his rule, which he exercised with caution, pragmatism and an understanding of the functioning of large systems (which both Kravchuk and Yushchenko lacked) allowed Ukraine to exit the post-Soviet chaos and enter a long period of internal stability. Kuchma's second term, despite the mounting political tensions, can be regarded as the best time in the history of independent Ukraine to date.

3. The stabilisation of the oligarchic-bureaucratic system

Kuchma's reform programme nonetheless failed to deal with many important spheres of economic and social life. In the case of some measures, there was not enough time to implement them as the new presidential elections were approaching, while others faced too strong opposition from the oligarchic circles,⁶¹ and from especially the consolidating bureaucracy (the role of the oversized State Tax Inspectorate, which was rife with corruption almost from the beginning, was particularly destructive in this respect). The absurdly stringent sanitary and environmental standards were not reviewed⁶²; the tax system, which was unfit for the purposes of the market economy, was not reformed, even though

⁶¹ Yulia Tymoshenko managed to put the natural gas market in order as deputy prime minister for energy; her attempts at implementing similar measures in the coal and electricity markets were met with resistance, which ultimately led to her resignation and (some time later) to the collapse of the Yushchenko government.

⁶² The Soviet environmental standards served a propaganda purpose; they were impossible to meet, and in the new conditions became a source of massive corruption rents.

around the year 2001 a political consensus could have been reached in this regard which would have allowed changes to be implemented (a new tax code, which was decidedly unfavourable to small and medium-sized enterprise, was adopted only in 2011); market prices for municipal services and utilities were not introduced (that was done only after the Revolution of Dignity); the system of overly elaborate but very low social benefits was left unreformed, as was the pensions system; and no changes were made to the archaic and increasingly corrupt administration of justice and law enforcement.

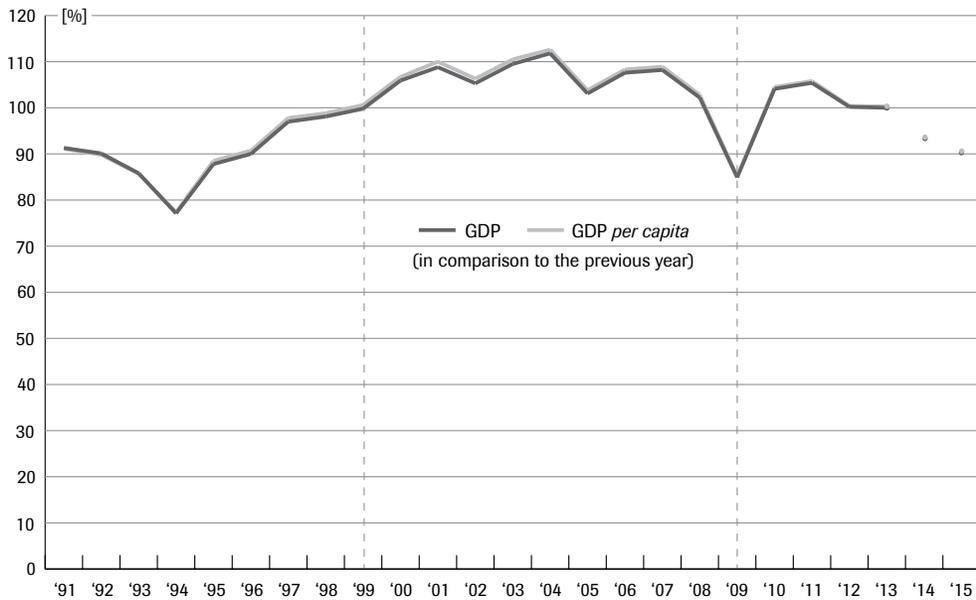
The necessary deregulation (meaning a reduction of the number of rules applicable to various spheres of social life, combined with an improvement in their coherence and quality) was actively opposed by the bureaucracy of all sectors and levels, for which overregulation and the low quality of regulations allowed – and continues to allow – them to profit from corruption. What is worse, the few measures that were implemented were beneficial mainly to large enterprises and public offices, and hardly ever to small and medium-sized businesses or citizens. That tendency has proven long-lasting: a major deregulation effort was undertaken only after the Revolution of Dignity.

The 2000 reforms opened a period of economic growth which has since proved to be sustainable (despite the major slump in 2009, related to the global crisis in the financial markets and especially in the steel market).⁶³ Massive remittances from Ukrainians working abroad have been a constant factor in the economic growth (since as early as the 1990s),⁶⁴ as it stimulated demand for individual homes and the construction services related to this. Nevertheless, big industry is still dominant and there is no indication that this will change: the middle class has been developing slowly, while stumbling on various obstacles, among which the expanding possibilities for young and dynamic people to emigrate are not the least significant. Still, according to some estimates, small and medium enterprises today account for 5–15% of real GDP, and the share of the middle class in the economy of Western oblasts and Kyiv is growing (the effects of which were visible during the Revolution of Dignity and the first phase of the war).

⁶³ In 2007, steel products accounted for more than half of Ukraine's exports.

⁶⁴ According to the National Bank of Ukraine, official remittances amounted to around US\$ 30 billion in the years 2010–2015 alone, while unofficial remittances (i.e. mainly cash) brought in at least another US\$5 billion (А. Карпец, Знакомьтесь, главный инвестор Украины! И это не Ахметов, <http://glavcom.ua/publications/334323-znakomtes-glavnyj-investor-ukrainy-i-eto-ne-ahmetov.html>, accessed on 12 April 2016). According to other sources, in 2006 alone Ukraine received US\$ 8.4 billion in official remittances.

Chart 1. Dynamics of the officially reported total GDP and GDP per capita in the years 1990–2015



The vertical dotted lines point to where the methodology of GDP calculations was changed, as a result of which the figures are not fully comparable. Figures for the years 2015-2017 exclude Crimea and the occupied part of the Donbas.

Because of the huge expansion of the grey economy, Ukraine's real GDP was larger than the official figures, even by several tens of percent, especially in the 1990's, and the dynamics of that part of the national income have not yet been studied in detail.

Around the year 2001, Ukraine's economy became a system again, that is, it started to be governed by a clear set of formal (economic and legal) and informal rules. The system is oligarchic and bureaucratic in nature, and sanctions corruption (while regulating and organising it), and is still far from the set of governing Western Europe's economic system. Attempts at changing it⁶⁵ have been met with strong resistance – not so much on the part of the oligarchs (other than the local ones controlling bazaar trade and associated with the criminal world⁶⁶), as bureaucracy more generally understood (including the political class, judges, police officers, etc.), i.e. the oversized state apparatus which is ridden with corruption. On the other hand, small enterprise has continued

⁶⁵ Two such attempts have been made so far: the efforts of Yanukovich's so-called 'family' to capture the state and the economy, and the inconsistent attempt to implement Western standards undertaken after the Revolution of Dignity, which is still underway.

⁶⁶ The '7th kilometre' near Odessa is one of the biggest bazaars. In 2012 it occupied an area of 170 ha, employed 60,000 people and generated profits of more than UAH 0.5 million a day (T. Kuzio, Ukraine. Democratisation, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism, Santa Barbara /Denver 2015, p. 369). Similar bazaars, albeit usually smaller, exist in all the major cities of Ukraine.

to develop, despite the disastrous tax system and the lawlessness of the bureaucracy, including IT companies typically dealing with outsourced services, which in late 2015 employed a total of around 100,000 people and accounted for 4–5% of GDP (admittedly, in a situation where the output of the heavy industry had declined considerably because of the war).⁶⁷

Despite having a disastrously bad government in the years 2005–2009, and one that was hardly better in the years 2010–2013 ('better' only because it was more consistent and professional, and worse, because it encouraged corruption on an unprecedented scale and tried to replace the oligarchic-bureaucratic order with the rules of mafia activities), the Ukrainian economy, which is still dysfunctional in many respects, was stable enough to face the new challenge of a war and the loss of part of the country's territory, along with the production capacity located in the lost areas.

4. Europe's granary?

Central and eastern Ukraine was one of the most important agricultural regions of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ Thanks to excellent soil conditions ('black earth' [*chernozem*] of the steppe, one of the best kinds of soil that exist) and its favourable climate, its large agricultural holdings and, since the late 19th century, also the intensive smallholder farms which generated large surpluses of cereals, sugar beetroot, as well as cattle and pigs. Ukraine in that period was indeed a 'granary' of not only the Empire, but also Europe.

The Soviet system destroyed both the large holdings and the smallholder farms. The system of *kolkhozes* (collective farms subjected to the central planning regime but formally non-state-owned) and *sovkhoses* (state-owned agricultural holdings) restored the large agricultural holdings, but could not make them as efficient as before. The uneconomical, extensive land management and the mass cultivation of oil crops (mostly sunflower) and maize degraded the productivity of soils, especially in the southern oblasts, as a result of badly managed irrigation.

⁶⁷ В. Некрасов, Є. Сисоєв, Масштаб подій в нашій ІТ-галузі унікальний навіть для Європи, www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2016/01/20/577478/view_print, accessed on 22 January 2016.

⁶⁸ Western Ukraine, which is not part of the *chernozem* cereal basin (apart from the Ternopil Oblast), is not discussed in this chapter.

The most important problem, however, lay elsewhere: the Ukrainian countryside ceased to exist as a community of farmers and small- to medium-sized agricultural producers. While the small allotment gardens that the *kolkhoz* employees were allowed to use for personal purposes did play an immense role in feeding the Ukrainian population,⁶⁹ those tiny plots (often cultivated using semi-horticultural methods) could not prevent the erosion of the skills needed to independently run an agricultural farm. The *kolkhozniks* turned into agricultural workers: tractor operators, herdsman, milk maids. Where the old village buildings had been burnt down during World War II, i.e. in most parts of central and eastern Ukraine, they were replaced with workers' housing estates, with small utility shacks, but without barns or other farm buildings. Finally, the nearly seven decades of treating the countryside as an unlimited labour reserve, without taking heed of the consequences that approach had for the development of agriculture, brought it to the brink of demographic collapse. In 1990 there were around 8,000 *kolkhozes* in Ukraine and 3.8 million *kolkhoz* workers as well as 1.2 million *sovkhos* workers.⁷⁰

After Ukraine regained independence it was a common hope that the country would once more become Europe's granary thanks to the return of medium-sized, private-owned land holdings engaged in intensive farming. However, only the *kolkhoz* managers and agronomy specialists had the skills needed to run large farms independently, and they were more interested in keeping control of the existing farms than they were in starting their own operations. Also important were the technological changes in global agriculture: while shortly after World War I an agricultural worker could easily become a farm business owner, in the late 20th century it was practically impossible due to the changes that had transformed farming practices. It seems that the Ukrainian elites, and especially the intellectual elites, were unaware of this, as they still believed in the myth of the affluent steppe village from 100 years back.

On the other hand, the *nomenklatura* in the agricultural sector was very strong, and was keenly aware that it had an interest in preserving the *status quo*, and

⁶⁹ These accounted for 29.6% of total agricultural production of the Ukrainian SSR in 1990, including 48.08% of livestock production; after the collapse of the USSR their share increased to 46% and 56.5%, respectively, by 2013.

⁷⁰ Ю. Алексеев, С. Кульчицкий, А. Слюсаренко, *op. cit.*, p. 133. According to the latest figures, Ukraine's agricultural sector employs only 500,000 people. М. Заблоцький, Законопроект про скасування земельного мораторію зареєстровано у Верховній Раді, <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/zablodsky/58514866f15b2/>, accessed on 19 January 2017.

especially the preferential credit provided by the state to the agricultural sector, which could not continue in the event of a real privatisation. Under its influence, in 1992 the *kolkhozes* were 'reformed': the new bill on collective farms stated that every *kolkhoznik* owned a proportional share of the land of his or her *kolkhoz* and had the right to obtain a plot of land of that size (usually 2–4 hectares) on leaving the *kolkhoz*. In that way, the *kolokhozniks* were expropriated of shares in most of the *kolkhoz* property, i.e. buildings, machines, livestock, etc. It was only in 2001 that property *pais*, i.e. shares in this kind of assets, were introduced.

The bill led to a chaotic transformation of the *kolkhozes* into different kinds of 'agro-companies', some of which improved their quality of management, while others experienced catastrophic decline. Much of agricultural production was moved to the grey economy. Many such companies started paying their workers in agricultural products, practically excluding them from the monetary economy. The only reaction from the countryside was to focus more on the cultivation of the allotment gardens, now referred to as 'personal agricultural holdings'.

The process of distributing the *pai* certificates⁷¹ ended around 2002. The documents were issued to around 6–7 million people.⁷² Only 6% of those shares were handed over in kind and transformed into individual farms, while the remainder was leased or brought as contribution in kind to companies. At that time Ukraine had 4 million small landholders (with the former allotment gardens of up to 2 hectares, referred to as 'personal farms', accounting for half of that number) and 40,000 farmholdings.⁷³

The *kolkhozniks* had good reasons to be disinclined to start individual farms on 2 to 4 hectares of land. Not only did they not have the necessary means and skills, but it in most parts of Ukraine it was impossible to make profit from tiny farms that were too small to compete with the large-scale farms producing cereals etc., but too large for vegetable gardening (which was the orientation of most of the personal farms).

⁷¹ *Pais* (parts, shares) defined a proportion of ownership in the entire property, but did not identify specific plots of land. Most of the *pai* certificates, the massive issuance of which started only started after 1999, were deposited with the *kolkhoz*/agro-company chiefs.

⁷² Л.Кучма, *Сломанное десятилетие*, Kyiv 2010, p. 402, 433.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 407; according to official statistics, in 2014 Ukraine had 39,500 farm holdings and 13,100 agricultural companies with various ownership arrangements, including 700 of which were state-owned; the statistics do not include the number of private small-holdings, even though their production is included in the general figures.

Shortly after the *pai* certificates ceased to be issued, a renewed process of land property concentration started: some of the ‘agro-companies’ were transformed into agricultural companies which started to grow to colossal dimensions after 2000⁷⁴; they used state-of-the-art technologies and were able to compete in global markets. However, they did not own the land they were cultivating, as they could not buy it because of the ban on trade in agricultural land; instead they leased hundreds of thousands of land and property shares from the former *kolkhozniks*. Some of those companies have foreign partners who provide them with modern technologies, but these links are difficult to trace.

The gigantic agricultural holdings, dealing primarily in the production of cereals and increasingly in oil crops and livestock farming, have come to dominate the market.⁷⁵ Their orientation towards short-term profit, and the fact that they finance their activities not from revenues but from loans, remains their weakness. One of the reasons for this is that the holdings do not own their land but rather lease it⁷⁶; they cannot contract long-term mortgage loans but only ‘current’ working capital loans; and they do not benefit from the certainty that comes with ownership. On the other hand, they do not seem interested in introducing full ownership rights to agricultural land (in any case they have been lobbying against it), presumably in equal measure because of the risk of confrontation with global agricultural giants, and because of the profits they have been deriving from the use of *pais* that have not been inherited, whose number is already close to one million,⁷⁷ and other forms of ‘economically grey-economic’ possession of land.

The so-called farm holdings (which have the status of enterprises, unlike the personal farms) have turned out to be a dead end: in 2014 they accounted for 70% of all registered agricultural businesses and a mere 8% of agricultural output, and

⁷⁴ According to 2016 figures, 15 such companies operated farms of more than 100,000 hectares, including 4 with farms of more than 300,000 hectares. The largest agro-holding was UkrLandFarming, which in w 2016 had 654,000 hectares of land (up from 532,000 hectares in 2012) in 22 different oblasts (<http://latifundist.com/rating/top-100-latifundistov-ukrainy>, accessed on 30 November 2016).

⁷⁵ An impulse for the creation of the agro-holdings, and generally for the revival of Ukraine’s agriculture, came from the sudden increase in global prices of agricultural commodities in the years 1995–1996 and 2007–2009.

⁷⁶ Moreover, in most cases these are short term lease agreements; it was only in 2015 that a provision was introduced into the land code under which an agricultural land lease agreement may not be concluded for a period shorter than seven years.

⁷⁷ The *pais* of people who died and had no heirs or whose heirs were not interested in the inheritance; www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2016/07/13/598945/, accessed on 14 July 2016.

much of their land has been leased to agricultural holdings.⁷⁸ The personal farms play a more important role, they still make an important contribution to feeding the country. However, their share has been declining and will continue to decline: nobody knows how many of those farms are lying fallow or serve as pasture for cows or goats because their users are elderly people unable to work; there are certainly hundreds of thousands of such cases, and their number will grow.

In 2001, Ukraine adopted a new land code which introduced the principle of the ownership of land. It remains merely formal only, though, because the right to buy and sell land, i.e. the essence of ownership, has been suspended under the transitory provisions.⁷⁹ The suspension was initially intended to last only until the necessary legal tools are created (especially the land cadastre register and the mortgage bank), but it has since been repeatedly renewed, most recently until the end of 2017. The main reason for that this concerns the fear that land could be bought out on a massive scale by foreign companies which have massive funds at their disposal. These fears are not unfounded, as companies such as Cargill are already present in Ukraine, and the IMF, which has been advocating the liberalisation of land trade, openly admits that it wants foreign operators to be allowed to buy agricultural land in Ukraine. Another reason is the concern that the buying out of the *pais* could entail the expulsion of the former *kolkhozniks* from their homes, and since these are usually old people unable to do work other than vegetable gardening in their tiny plots, the adverse social consequences would be difficult to estimate.

Another problem of Ukraine's agriculture concerns the very bad condition of infrastructure in rural areas, which the agricultural holdings owners maintain only to the extent they need it for their activities. Moreover, Ukraine is experiencing soil degradation due to the neglect of crop rotation (in 2015, numerous obligations of land owners concerning agricultural practices were abolished) and the constantly growing proportion of sunflower, soy beans (including, perhaps predominantly, GMO soy)⁸⁰ and rapeseed cultivation, which heavily degrades

⁷⁸ Ю. Самаева, Докучная сказка о спасении села, <https://zn.ua/macrolevel/dokuchnaya-skazka-o-spasenii-sela-.html>, accessed on 25 April 2016.

⁷⁹ Therefore, active property rights are still non-existent in Ukraine's agriculture; there are only inheritable land-use rights.

⁸⁰ Andriy Vadaturski, the founder and general director of the Nibulon agroholding, said in 2015 that "90% of soy produced in Ukraine is GMO. The problem also concerns rapeseed, and is beginning to surface in maize, too". А. Вадатурский: „Давайте поставим крест на Донбассе и займемся более важными вещами”, http://lb.ua/news/2015/02/04/294295_andrey_vadaturskiy_davayte.html, accessed on 4 February 2015.

the soil. Most of the in-field tree clumps, important for conservation purposes, have been cut down. It is quite clear that the agriculture in Ukraine is generally oriented towards maximising exports, and not sustainable development.

The position of the Ukrainian agricultural sector in international markets has been improving. The market for food products has been booming since 2005 in connection with the rapid growth in Asian countries and the fact that some traditional producers have shifted to oil crops for the production of biofuels. In the business year 2014/2015, Ukraine ranked third globally (after the United States and the European Union) in terms of cereal exports, and first in terms of sunflower oil exports. In 2012, its exports of agricultural products exports (excluding cereals) to the EU exceeded exports to the traditional Middle Eastern markets (especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia) for the first time. Agricultural production accounted for around 8% of GDP and more than a third of exports in recent years,⁸¹ and the potential for further growth seems immense. Ukraine may become 'Europe's granary' once again, with agriculture offering a great opportunity to Ukraine. The question is whether it will be controlled by domestic or by global players.

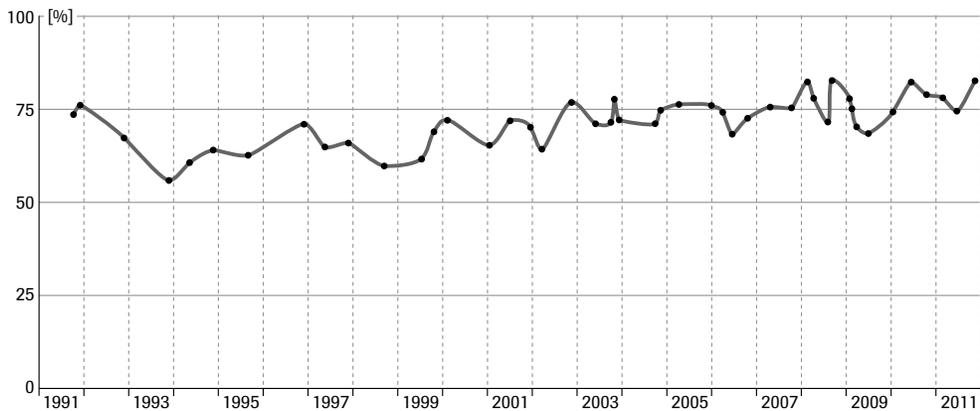
⁸¹ 31% in 2014, 38% in 2015, and 42% in 2016. Пузата Україна. Які регіони годують державу, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2017/02/10/620112/>, accessed on 11 February 2017.

IV. NATION BUILDING

On 2 December 1991, the Ukrainians saw themselves in a different light. They saw their almost absolute unanimity in supporting independence, as well as a shared will to build a state of their own and be citizens of Ukraine, and not Soviet people. It is immaterial to what extent the referendum result was ‘enhanced’ (if at all): it was generally accepted as proof of that unanimity and will. Crimea was the only place where support for independence was low, at 34% of the inhabitants (54% of voters, with a turnout of 66%), which foreshadowed future troubles.

Later opinion polls showed a rapid decline in support for independence, with many respondents declaring that they would have voted differently now, but the percentage of those backing independence has never fallen below the symbolic 50% threshold.⁸²

Chart 2. Dynamics of support for Ukraine’s independence in the years 1991–2011



The importance of those figures should not be overestimated, though: expressing an opinion to a pollster is not the same as taking part in a ballot – an act which actually influences reality. Still, it is significant that in November 2016, 82.6% of Ukrainians supported independence,⁸³ i.e. only 2% less than in the 1991 vote.

⁸² Chart on the basis of research by KMIS in ‘Незалежність України Підтримує 83% Українців – Опитування’, http://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2011/12/1/63567/view_print/, accessed on 1 December 2016. It should be noted that polls by the Razumkov Centre showed considerably lower support than the KMIS polls, including showings slightly below 50% in the years 2002–3 (http://old.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=320, accessed on 21 September 2017). The difference is presumably due to research methodology.

⁸³ ‘Незалежність України...’, *op. cit.*

1. A nation à la soviétique

In order to adequately understand the condition of the Ukrainian nation around the year 1990, one needs to return to Communist doctrine, the foundation of Soviet social practice. According to that doctrine, the abolition of class divisions was intended to dilute and eliminate differences between nations, which would unite in a common 'federation of labour'. That process was expected to lead to ethnic and linguistic homogenisation (by analogy to the processes which occurred in centralised European states, especially France, but also in the Russian Empire in the late 19th century). The aim of the Bolshevik party was to build a global state/Communist society and create a 'new man', i.e. the Communist person.

The fact that the Bolshevik revolution had to be limited to a truncated Russian Empire, deprived of its most economically and socially developed parts, was unexpected for the Bolsheviks, and so was the independence revealed in the course of the civil war of the non-Russian socialist and Communist movements. Their potential in Ukraine could not be taken lightly: around the year 1920 the future of the Soviet state hinged on control of Ukraine, the main producer of food, the coal mining and steelmaking centre, an important hub of the machine-building industry, and the territory where the harbour of Odessa was located, the second most important window to the outside world next to the port of Petrograd.⁸⁴

It was probably because of the power and ambitions of the Ukrainian revolutionary movement that the Bolsheviks gave up the plans to recreate the structure of the Russian Empire and decided to grant Russia, Ukraine and Belarus the formal status of federated states.⁸⁵ The pro-independence sentiments among the Ukrainian and Cossack landowners in the south of the Empire also played a role,⁸⁶ as the Bolsheviks needed to ensure their neutrality for the time being. Establishing the Soviet republics proved a providential move: on the one hand, it significantly increased the efficiency of the subsequent *korenizatsiya*,⁸⁷ and

⁸⁴ The official name of Saint Petersburg in the years 1914–1924.

⁸⁵ The Russian republic was also a federation, but its constituents were in fact only autonomies without any attributes of statehood.

⁸⁶ In pre-revolutionary Russia, the Cossacks were a social estate (free farmers under an obligation to provide permanent military service). Most of the Cossack forces were made up of Russians; Ukrainians were in the majority only among the Kuban Cossacks.

⁸⁷ *Korenizatsya* (or putting down roots) was the name of given to the Soviet cultural policy of the 1920s, the objective of which was to increase the impact of the Communist ideology by communicating it in the local language and massively promoting literacy. Another

on the other, years later, provided a basis for the external world to recognise the independence of the former Soviet republics.

The Soviet leadership needed Soviet people, citizens of the new state. The ‘new man’ they sought to create was supposed to be a new incarnation of the Russian man [русский человек], a faithful subject of the Empire professing its faith (which was now the Leninist faith, which had replaced the former ‘tsarodoxy’). The new men could be of any nationality, speak any language and abandon any religion, as long as they served the state. But with one significant difference: the new man was supposed to be a commoner aspiring to plebeian culture. The Soviet authorities consistently sought to destroy the culture of both the higher classes and the traditional rural landowners.

At the state level, the Russian language was dominant, which was hardly surprising as it was the language of the largest ethnic group and had served as the Empire’s *lingua franca* even before the revolution (in the Soviet terminology it was called the ‘language of internationalist communication’). In those cases where the local language became the ‘titular’ language of a Union republic, the generously financed programme of *korenizatsiya* stimulated its development, especially by allowing it to develop its own administrative, military, medical and other terminology. It was also conducive to the formation of new elites of the local nationality, and provided a stimulus for translations and the development of a new high culture. In this way, the local bureaucracy built up its position based on the people’s confidence and independence from the central authorities.

The development of those new elites and their rising ambitions (not only in Ukraine, but presumably mostly there) started to worry the central Union authorities in Moscow as early as the late 1920s, especially since most of the Soviet leadership believed the country needed to prepare for war, which they expected to break out in Europe within the next ten years – they believed that not only the economy would have to be switched to war mode, but also that society would need to become more consolidated. The Soviet planners were particularly concerned about the activities of the Ukrainian national movement in Poland, as Moscow could not afford a rebellion by Ukraine during a time of war. Part of the war preparations concerned the collectivisation of the agriculture, which deprived the rural areas of their elites, destroyed traditional forms of rural life,

element of the policy concerned the use of local languages in offices and schools (and local languages did not mean only republic-level official languages: local tongues were used even at the level of single villages). Ukrainisation was a specific instance of that policy.

and bound the peasants to the land again after less than one hundred years of freedom. Another measure was the Great Purge, which destroyed the Soviet elites educated before the revolution and put an end to *korenizatsiya*.

The 1930s marked the return of Russification, which had a different nature than the assimilation policies aimed at increasing the cultural and political potential of the dominant ethnic group pursued in the democratic states of that time (e.g. in France). In the Soviet Union, the purpose was not to force the minorities to become part of the 'titular' ethnic community (by taking over its language, culture and historical narratives), but rather to ensure the dominance of the Russian language as an instrument in forming a new culture, new narratives and a new nation & people. In the case of the Ukrainians and the Belarusians, an additional measure, possible only in those two cases, was undertaken: their very languages were Russified by promoting those elements shared by those two languages with Russian in dictionaries and textbooks, and eliminating or suppressing those elements which made the languages distinct. Another measure, applied also to non-Slavic languages, was to stop the development of specialist terminologies in those languages and impose Russian terms instead. The efforts proved to be very effective, and the process of lexical harmonisation between Ukrainian and Russian will probably be impossible to reverse.

The mass relocations of people also served the purposes of Russification/Sovietisation, even though they were carried out for economic reasons (such relocations have accompanied all the industrialisation processes known to history). The migrations, whether spontaneous, managed or forced (meaning deportations to camps) created ethnically mixed communities that spoke Russian in everyday situations. In the great construction sites, everyone, whether free or imprisoned, had to communicate in Russian. Likewise, the military had to be Russian-speaking.

After World War II, which brought with it a massive rise of patriotic propaganda in an imperial but not an ethnic spirit (the notion of the Great Fatherland War deliberately invited associations with the conflict with Napoleon, which was a clash not of nations but of states and civilisational principles), and after the brief episode of post-War Great-Russian chauvinism, under Khrushchev the (imperial, not civic) project of a Soviet nation was resumed. It was not about changing Ukrainians, Latvians or Chukchi into mental Russians – the Russians, too, were supposed to change and become Soviets. And they did so, easier and faster than the other nations.

Under Brezhnev, the objective was clearly stated: a ‘Soviet nation’, a new historical community of people was to be formed in the Soviet Union. The existence of the Soviet nation⁸⁸ was decreed as an accomplished fact in the preamble to the 1977 constitution.⁸⁹ The original policy of ‘bringing nations closer together’, which consisted in eliminating antagonisms and ensuring the dominance of the Russian language in public (including cultural) life, was forced to give way to a policy of ‘unification’⁹⁰ in which migration policies and the promotion of mixed marriages played an increasingly important role alongside the language policy.

The Soviet nation was coming into real existence, and the Soviet national identity turned out to be a durable concept: in 1992, up to 12.7% of respondents in Ukraine said their main identification was with citizenship of the Soviet Union; by 2013 that number had decreased to 6.6%, and by 2015 to 3.9% (in areas controlled by Kyiv).⁹¹ In a 2004 poll, a Soviet identity was declared by 5.3% of respondents who simultaneously said they were Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, 16.6% of those who identified as Russian-speaking Ukrainians and 22.4% of those who identified as Russians.⁹² Other polls produced similar results; for example, according to the Donetsk-based Research & Branding Group, in September 2012 49% of respondents considered themselves to be primarily citizens of Ukraine, but up to 9% considered themselves to be citizens of the Soviet Union,⁹³ while research by Yaroslav Hrytsak conducted in 1994 showed that up to 45.4% of the inhabitants of Donetsk and 4.9% of the inhabitants of Lviv considered themselves to be neither Russian nor Ukrainian but Soviet.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ The Russian word ‘narod’ in this context should be translated as ‘nation’ and not ‘people’.

⁸⁹ Constitution of the USSR, *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ Слияние (*sliyaniye*) in Russian literally means a confluence (of rivers) and or a merger (of organisations), but the verb слиться (*slitsya*) also means to fuse (of metals).

⁹¹ The following options were available in the poll: inhabitant of village/county/city; inhabitant of region; citizen of Ukraine (45.6% in 1992, 50.7% in 2013), member of ethnicity/nation, citizen of former USSR, citizen of Europe, citizen of the world, other. Source: <http://dif.org.ua/article/postmaydanna-blagodiynist-i-volonterstvo-2015-rezultati-sotsdoslidzhennya>, accessed on 25 October 2016.

⁹² С. Кульчицький, Червоний виклик. Історія комунізму в Україні від його народження до загибелі, Київ 2013, volume III, p. 397.

⁹³ Information about this research has since been removed from the Group’s website.

⁹⁴ Y. Hrytsak, ‘Ukrainian Nationalism, 1991–2001: Myths and Misconceptions’ [in:] *CEU History Department Yearbook 2001-02*, table on p. 240.

2. Between ethnicities and nation

The massive, supra-ethnic support for independence expressed in Ukraine's referendum did not prove the existence of a civic nation in Ukraine (that unity was still very Soviet in nature), but it triggered the formation of such a nation. The Ukrainian political elites did not even consider the possibility of building an ethnic nation in the way the Baltic states did: Ukrainian citizenship was granted to every person with registered residency in the Ukrainian SSR as of 24 August 1991 (even to those who had registered the day before). Requirements concerning domicile and knowledge of the Ukrainian language were introduced only for some political positions (the latter also for some positions in the administration). Ukrainian was declared the only state and official language⁹⁵, while Russian was granted a special status among the national minority languages (Art. 10.3 of the constitution of Ukraine).

That solution ensured ethnic peace and averted the risk of the state disintegrating the way Yugoslavia did; it also contributed to the formation of a political nation centred around the state, its symbols and institutions, and not around language and culture as superior values. Finally, it also enabled an evolutionary transition from the old, Soviet mindset to a new civil awareness. That came at a price, though: having adopted such solutions, it was much more difficult to transform the former Soviet subjects into citizens of Ukraine who “drop by drop squeeze the slave's blood out of themselves”.⁹⁶

In the early 1990s, the society (i.e. the political nation) of Ukraine consisted of three major groups, of which only two were registered in censuses.⁹⁷ These were the Ukrainians (more or less conscious members of the Ukrainian ethno-historical community), the Russians (more or less conscious members of the Russian ethno-historical community) – and the Soviet people. The latter group comprised mostly people without a clearly defined ethnic identity, who iden-

⁹⁵ In Ukraine and Russia, as in the former Soviet Union these two are separate legal terms. For more information see: T. A. Olszański, The language issue in Ukraine. An attempt at a new perspective, *OSW Studies*, Issue 40, Warsaw 2012, pp. 13–14, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2012-05-16/language-issue-ukraine-attempt-a-new-perspective>

⁹⁶ Anton Chekhov, in a letter to A.S. Suvorin, 7 January 1889. The words, which referred to the consequences of serfdom, are often quoted in contemporary debates in Ukraine and Russia.

⁹⁷ The authorities of the USSR treated the Soviet nation as an overarching category which should not be put on an equal footing with other identifications, and therefore it was not included in statistics. Therefore, people with a more or less crystallised Soviet identity tended to declare Russian nationality in the censuses.

tified with the Soviet state, who were in large measure members of mixed families, military families (Soviet military officers were likely to change their place of residency quite frequently), or immigrants who had arrived from other republics after 1944 and their descendants,⁹⁸ usually Russian-speaking. The members of Ukraine's ethnic minorities were also included, but this group was so small it did not significantly alter the general picture⁹⁹.

Ukraine was also home to four large linguistic groups: the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians (i.e. those who spoke Ukrainian in everyday and family life), mostly hailing from the lands incorporated into Ukraine after World War II and from the rural areas in central Ukraine; Russian-speaking Ukrainians, mostly members of the industrial proletariat and big city dwellers, *surzhyk*-speaking Ukrainians,¹⁰⁰ mostly the inhabitants of Kyiv and cities in central Ukraine, and finally, Russians and Russian-speaking members of other nationalities. It is not possible to determine the real proportions of those groups because the census data did not include *surzhyk* and respondents in sociological studies tended to conceal the fact that they spoke *surzhyk* and presented themselves as speakers of the 'politically correct' language of the moment.¹⁰¹ Everyone, perhaps with the exception of the village dwellers in western and parts of central Ukraine, were fluent in Russian, both in speaking and in writing (in many cases their writing skills in Russian were better than in Ukrainian). It was quite typical for people to abandon Ukrainian, also in family life, while moving up the social ladder, and for mixed families to adopt Russian as their language (even if neither of the spouses was Russian).¹⁰²

The members of all those linguistic groups (except for those who maintained intensive relations with their non-Ukrainian communities and homelands)

⁹⁸ For more information, see.: T. A. Olszański, Co ujawniła rewolucja godności [in:] *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2015, Issue 2, p. 221 and following.

⁹⁹ According to the 2001 census, the proportion of all ethnic groups (including immigrants) excluding Ukrainians and Russians was 4.9%; The most numerous of them, Belarusians, numbered 0.6%.

¹⁰⁰ *Surzhyk* is a specific language practice which mixes elements of Ukrainian and Russian. It does not meet the criteria of a language or dialect. See: Olszański, The language issue..., *op. cit.*, pp.12–13.

¹⁰¹ Census data and selected poll results can be found in: Olszański, The language issue..., *op. cit.*, pp. 16–20. The results quoted these had not changed significantly by the end of 2013, whereas the results of later polls conducted after the war had already broken out are unreliable.

¹⁰² According to 1995 polls, nearly 28% of the inhabitants of Ukraine lived in ethnically mixed families, including 19% in Ukrainian-Russian families; <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2009/07/14/4088226/>, accessed on 1 December 2016.

shared the Soviet Ukrainian patriotism: a bond with the land, the country where one lives, but also a bond with Soviet Ukraine, 'the second among equals' in the common state (while some anti-Communist ethnic Ukrainians did not identify with the latter idea, the common country was a unifying factor for all). That was a good start, especially after all-Soviet patriotism lost credibility in the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan and the subsequent voluntary abdication of the Union state.

The change of the proportions between Ukrainians and Russians, as recorded by the censuses of 1989 and 2001 (with the proportion of Ukrainians increasing from 73% to 78%, and the proportion of Russians decreasing from 22% to 17%) was due in only a small degree to demographic changes. A more important factor concerned changing identifications, a 'shift' of declared nationality seen in people whose identification had been fluid and/or Soviet. While general figures are not available (it is unlikely that anyone has tried to study the phenomenon) we know, for instance, that Leonid Kuchma declared Russian nationality in 1990, but by 1992 he said he was of Ukrainian nationality.¹⁰³ In another case, General Kostyantyn Morozov started to identify himself as Ukrainian after he became defence minister.¹⁰⁴ After 1991, children from mixed families started to be generally registered as Ukrainian, not Russian.

It is worth reflecting a little on the two examples above. Kuchma was an ethnic Ukrainian from a village in Chernihiv oblast who, since his time at university, had lived and worked in an entirely Russian-speaking environment, at some point reaching very high echelons of the Soviet hierarchy. The Russian nationality that was declared was probably a substitute for the Soviet nationality which was not officially recognised. When that state disappeared, he easily reverted to his 'natural' identity, which now also involved identification with a state. The case of Morozov was different: he was an ethnic Russian from the Luhansk oblast, a professional military officer, and his change of declared nationality (but obviously not of his ethnic identity) was an act of loyalty to the new state. He served Ukraine, and therefore he was Ukrainian. There were thousands of people like him, both military and civilians.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Kuzio, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰⁵ Another interesting case is that of Vilen Martirosyan, an Armenian from Azerbaijan, a professional military officer, commander of the Rivne regiment in the late 1980s, an activist of the People's Movement of Ukraine, and one of the founders and first chair of the Union of the Officers of Ukraine, a formation which played a key role in the Ukrainisation of the

The 'nationality' rubric disappeared from Ukrainian IDs as early as 1992,¹⁰⁶ which signified the diminished importance of declared nationality in public life. While all public biographic notes in the 1990s included information about the person's nationality (and often also that of his or her parents), since 2000 information about nationality has been omitted from an increasing proportion of such notes. Identification with an ethnic community has ceased to be a public affair, and hence no longer needs to be standardised. This has opened the way towards the development of the mixed identities which appear in sociological research,¹⁰⁷ especially among the young people who do not remember the times when nationality was a factor in one's chances of building a career. That change, however, also means that the 1989 and 2001 national identification figures are not fully comparable, and the figures from the next census will be entirely incomparable, because even if the question remains the same, it will be understood very differently.

In the first years of independence, representatives of the elites from Galicia, who believed that the essence of identity was to speak the national language, came to dominate social policy. Their 'linguacentrism', which ignored the multilingual nature of Ukrainian society, led to tensions and problems; but without it, Ukraine would not have seen the development of Ukrainian-language media or the publication of many specialist dictionaries, etc., and the language itself would not have been modernised and strengthened. However, contrary to the Ukrainian leadership's brash promises, an intensive Ukrainianisation policy was never implemented, effectively leaving language matters to the local communities and the people themselves (hence the western oblasts quickly became deeply Ukrainianised, while in some localities in Transcarpathia, informal Hungarian autonomy developed).

Still, the development of popular culture promoted the use of Russian (the Ukrainian nationalists were late to realise the need to promote popular culture in their own language), and in the absence of active state policy, Russian productions (and domestic productions in Russian) came to dominate the market for

Soviet formations stationed in Ukraine, who later unsuccessfully tried to make his way in politics, an ally of Kuchma in 2002 and of Yanukovich in 2004. By the way, his first name is an acronym: V. I. Len(in).

¹⁰⁶ Traditional nationalists protested (and continue to protest) against that solution.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. for instance A. Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, Fourth Edition, 2015, p. 219; according to research quoted in the book, 27% of respondents declared to be themselves both Ukrainian and Russian in 1997.

cultural goods, especially television and books.¹⁰⁸ The absence of a nationwide system for wholesale book and press distribution exacerbated the situation.

What followed was routine, chaotic and inconsistent, but also determined work by the state. The constant impact of the public symbolism, on the army, and even more importantly upon the school system, which ensured universal knowledge of the Ukrainian language and reversed the old narrative of national identity. The new narrative said that the purpose of the life and work of all generations of Ukrainians had been to take control of their destiny and aspire to an independent existence as a nation and a state, and replaced the old one in which Ukraine followed the supposed 'eternal tendency' to 'merge with the great Russian nation'. That phrase did not mean unification with Russia as a state (Ukraine had indeed experienced such a tendency over the course of its history), but rather a fusion with the Russian nation/people, which was a fabrication of Russian and Soviet propaganda, as was the claim that the Ukrainians were the 'younger brothers' of the Russians (if anything, they were the 'older brothers'). That new narrative built a new sense of self-value and gave the people a sense of being a nation. A nation of victims (the memory of the *Holodomor*, the greatest disaster in Ukraine's history was being restored), but also of invincible heroes (not only the Cossacks, but also Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) struggle).¹⁰⁹

That process also influenced the national minorities in Ukraine, including the Russians, by showing them that they, too, could be nations, and not merely 'natsyonalnosti', i.e. ethnic groups within the great Soviet nation, or, more accurately, orphans of the Soviet nation. In that process, some of the minorities were supported by their national communities of origin. As a negative consequence of that, some Ukrainian Russians not only failed to assimilate, but turned into Russian nationalists; this was probably an unavoidable outcome of the state launching a clear-cut identity narrative.

¹⁰⁸ See. Olszański, *The language issue...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-34. The trends described therein remained largely constant until 2013. After the Revolution of Dignity some measures were taken to limit the access of Russian media products' access to the Ukrainian market, but it is too early to say how effective these moves have been.

¹⁰⁹ For more information about the role of restoring the memory of the UPA in the development of the Ukrainian national identity, see: T. A. Olszański, *Miejsce UPA w Wielkiej Wojnie Ojczyźnianej. Dylematy polityki historycznej Ukrainy*, *Punkt Widzenia OSW*, Issue 35, Warsaw 2013, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/punkt-widzenia/2013-06-21/miejsce-upa-w-wielkiej-wojnie-ojczyznianej-dylematy-polityki>. The developments of the last three years have strengthened the tendency to see the UPA as part of the mainstream Ukrainian identity, and have undermined, if not totally eliminated, the alternative, 'co-imperial' identity narrative described there.

Unfortunately, Ukraine did not find a way to include the millions of immigrants from the other Soviet republics, almost all of them Russian-speaking, into a national community understood as something bigger than formal citizenship.¹¹⁰ It seems that Kyiv did not even notice the problem. Some of the children or grandchildren of such immigrants assimilated, many became state activists, and some even turned into radical Ukrainian nationalists, but most people in that category (the youngest of whom arrived in Ukraine in the mid-1980s) remained at best on the margins of the state and national community. They did enjoy full civil rights on an equal footing with all the other citizens of Ukraine, but their identity and sensitivities were not incorporated into the general national identity narrative, and were often treated with contempt by the 'native' elites.¹¹¹

Neither did Ukraine find a way to make Donbas and Crimea part of this uniform civic Ukrainianness. While President Kuchma did manage to suppress organised Crimean separatism in the 1990s, for twenty-five years Kyiv did practically nothing to make Crimea anything more than an 'island off the coast of Ukraine'. Crimea's autonomy (and Ukraine's tacit consent to have no real jurisdiction over Sevastopol) offered the central bureaucracy and political class a perfect alibi.¹¹² Also, Ukraine clearly did not want to fight for Crimea in 2014, as it did for Donbas. There, however, it did not manage to pre-empt the risks related to the presence of large numbers of post-Soviet proletariat and lumpen-proletariat (mostly of foreign origin) in the Donetsk oblast and the southern part of the Luhansk oblast. On top of that, the Ukrainian elites never missed an opportunity to insult those people with a narrative about their criminal origins and the criminal character of their community.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ See Olszański, *Co ujawniła...*, *loco citato*.

¹¹¹ For an illustrative case of such contempt, see the statement by the Ukrainian minister for culture Yevhen Nyshchuk, who said in November 2016: "In Zaporizhia, in the Donbas, there... these are dragged cities. There is no genetics there. This has been deliberately dragged in" (quoted after: С. Дацюк, Чотири Радикалізації України, <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/datsuk/5836bf68af18c/>, accessed on 24 November 2016). Genetic terminology is generally overused in Ukrainian political rhetoric: Nyshchuk implied that there are no 'real' Ukrainians in the great industrial metropolises, only deficient 'vagrants'.

¹¹² It should be noted, however, that because of Crimea's autonomous status, Kyiv did not have any formal ability to influence regulations concerning, for instance, land ownership relations or the rights of the Crimean Tatar community.

¹¹³ Cf. T. A. Olszański, Unity stronger than divisions. Ukraine's internal diversity, *OSW Point of view*, Issue 40, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2014-03-07/unity-stronger-divisions-ukraines-internal-diversity>, pp. 17–18.

Yet in 2014, the Russian-speaking young people from eastern and central-eastern Ukraine were the first to oppose the pro-Russian rebellion. This was not a sudden turn – it was the effect, and the ultimate test, of the Ukrainian nation’s chaotic and largely instinctive effort to build itself.

V. SHEVCHENKO VERSUS LENIN: A NEW POLICY OF SYMBOLS

Ukraine's Act of independence made a reference to the "thousand-year tradition of state development in Ukraine" and to nations' right to self-determination, but left no doubt as to the fact that it was the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic that was declaring independence, and that the new Ukraine would be its continuation, legally and symbolically. Independence was declared, not restored. This framing of the Act reflected the consciousness and way of thinking of the Ukrainian political elite in the summer of 1991.

On the eve of the first anniversary of independence, Mykola Plaviuk, the last, exiled president of the Ukrainian People's Republic (or Ukrainian National Republic, UNR),¹¹⁴ handed the Republic's insignia (seal and banner) to Kravchuk alongside an act stating that the authorities of the Republic recognised Ukraine as its legal successor. Had Vyacheslav Chornovil¹¹⁵ been at the helm of the state at that time, Ukraine would presumably have embraced that continuity, enshrined it in its constitution, and today the continuity would be an obvious element of its state and national identity. However, for Kravchuk and his circle that was politically and psychologically unacceptable, or maybe even unthinkable: 'their' Ukraine was a continuation of the Soviet one, not only in the real dimension (as it unquestionably was) but also in the symbolic dimension. Kravchuk accepted the UNR's insignia, probably without reflecting much about the significance of Plaviuk's gesture¹¹⁶, which dropped into a vacuum and was subsequently forgotten.

Another attempt at formally recognising the legacy of the Ukrainian People's Republic was made in April 2015, but this failed too. A draft bill on militants who had participated in the fight for Ukraine's independence stated in its preamble that contemporary Ukraine was a legal successor to the UNR, which had been

¹¹⁴ The Ukrainian People's Republic or the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR), proclaimed in Kyiv in the autumn of 1917, survived in a state of constant war with Red and White Russia, and then for some time with Poland, until the autumn of 1920 (in its final phase of it was Poland's ally). After it was defeated, its governing bodies continued operating in exile. The best-known leaders of the UNR included Mykhailo Hrushevsky and Symon Petlura.

¹¹⁵ Vyacheslav Chornovil (1937–1999) was a dissident and politician, co-founder of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and the People's Movement of Ukraine, Kravchuk's rival in the 1991 presidential elections.

¹¹⁶ Kravchuk does not mention this situation in his memoir (*Л. Кравчук, Маємо те, що маємо, op. cit.*).

a victim to Russian aggression, and that this made the subsequent fight for the restitution of the Ukrainian state legal. At the last moment, the draft was withdrawn and the preamble of the bill as ultimately adopted did not contain any references to the UNR, as a result of which the mentions of the legality of fighting for Ukraine's independence were left without a context. The reasons for the sudden change remain unclear.

1. New symbols

Every state and every community aspiring to form a state pursues a policy of symbols as an element of the formation of its collective identity. The standard elements include state or national emblems, military and other uniforms (such as, for instance, the uniforms of the January Uprising of 1863 veterans in interwar Poland, or the historical uniforms of the guards of honour in many countries), the highest orders and decorations, as well as monuments and the names of streets and public buildings (and in some countries also towns and villages).

The Ukrainian SSR did have a national emblem and a flag, both variants of their Soviet equivalents, a simplified coat of arms representing a five-pronged star, and an anthem, as well as a huge number of Soviet memorial names and monuments (especially monuments to Lenin, which in the Soviet symbolism served as a quasi-religious way of taking control of space and crowding out the Christian component). The new state reached for the symbols of the Ukrainian national movement: the *tryzub*, a symbol of medieval origin, a flag which also referred back to the medieval heraldic symbols of the Ruthenian principalities, a national anthem and other songs of anthem-like significance, and finally, the tradition of early 20th-century military uniforms.

Ukraine inherited the Soviet approach to the symbolic organisation of public space, the main motif of which was to place the symbols of the day everywhere, be it monuments, names of streets, institutions and places, heraldic decorations of buildings and interiors, memorial plaques to 'everyday heroes', leaders' portraits, etc. And while negating the Soviet symbolism was relatively easy, the Soviet-era tendency to symbolically 'take over' the space turned out to be permanent, and laid the foundation of the new state's symbolism policy (both for the central government and for the local authorities which enjoyed broad freedom in this respect, especially in the first years of independence).

The origin of Ukraine's state symbols

The coat of arms of Ukraine, the *tryzub*, was an emblem of the monarchs of Rus' (*knyazes*), which initially served more as an element of insignia than as a proper coat of arms. It survived in the symbolism of the Orthodox Church as the monogram of Saints Olga and Vladimir, the rulers who Christianised Rus'. It was adopted as the coat of arms in 1917 when it was also given the colours taken from the flag.

The flag of Ukraine was created in 1848 as the flag of the Supreme Ruthenian Council (a body of the then projected Ukrainian national autonomy in Galicia) in the colours of the medieval coat of arms of the Lviv Principality, which represented a golden lion on a blue field. During the 1917–1920 war for independence it was used in two variants, yellow-blue and blue-yellow. The latter variant, more popular in eastern Galicia, was officially adopted in the inter-war period.

Ukraine's national anthem, *Shche ne vmerla Ukrainy* (Ukraine has not yet perished), also adopted in 1917, is a slightly modified poem by Pavlo Chubynsky, first published in 1863, set to music composed by Mykhailo Verbytsky. In independent Ukraine, the anthem was reduced to the first stanza and the refrain and its lyrics were slightly modified.

The rejection of Soviet symbolism, which was 'non-sovereign' even at the visual level (the coats of arms and flags of the Union republics were variations of the USSR symbols), was an obvious choice, but the selection of new symbols was much less so. Even though a blue-yellow flag, offered by the protesters demanding a declaration of independence in August 1991, was brought into the plenary room of the *Verkhovna Rada* immediately after the adoption of the Act of Independence, that form of the flag was only officially adopted as the state flag on 28 January 1992, and not without resistance (the parliament had also considered a 'raspberry red banner with an archangel', a red-blue-yellow flag and several other variants).¹¹⁷ A little later, on 19 February, the *Rada* approved the *tryzub* as the small coat of arms (work on the great coat of arms is still underway, and the need to finally adopt it is raised every now and then in the *Verkhovna Rada*). The lyrics of the new national anthem gave rise to so much controversy

¹¹⁷ As late as 2011, the Communists proposed that the Orthodox cross (sic) should be adopted as the national coat of arms and the blue-yellow flag replaced by a raspberry-red one.

that only the music was adopted in January 1992, while it took eleven more years to agree on and adopt a text.¹¹⁸

Initially, there was substantial resistance to the new symbols: on several occasions in 1992, the police in Kyiv tried to discourage the practice of placing the flags on cars, and during the riots which erupted at the funeral of the Kyiv Patriarch Volodymyr in 1995 the police tore and trod on the flags carried by the procession. The controversies continued until the adoption of the new constitution in June 1996. The Communist deputies in the new *Verkhovna Rada* were so opposed to approving the already functioning state symbols that Article 20 of the constitution, which contained the disputed provisions, could only be adopted in a 'package' with regulations concerning the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (supported by the Communists against the opposition of the national democrats).¹¹⁹

During his short term, which was fully devoted to saving the collapsing economy and building up Ukraine's international position, President Kravchuk did not pursue any particular symbolic policy. It was only his successor, Leonid Kuchma, who adopted the presidential state symbols, i.e. the standard, the chain of office (in the form used in many states in the world), the *bulava* (ceremonial baton) and the seal (the latter two were a direct reference to Cossack insignia, although the seal had been a decoration of general chancellor (*pysar*), not hetman) on 29 November 1999, before his inauguration for the second term. Kuchma also introduced a pseudo-historic uniform for the presidential guard of honour,¹²⁰ although it was quickly abandoned. The uniforms of the increasingly neglected army remained practically unchanged until 2016, when new ones were introduced, reportedly modelled on the uniforms of the UNR Acting Army¹²¹ but certainly influenced by the Western European uniform tradition. Some time beforehand, possibly under the influence of Yushchenko's American-born wife, Ukraine adopted the American habit of putting a hand on the heart

¹¹⁸ By then, the performances of the anthem in official situations were instrumental only, and it was sung with the lyrics (usually only the first stanza and the refrain) only in unofficial, civic performances.

¹¹⁹ During the debate on the final text of the constitution of Ukraine on 27/28 June 1996, every article was put to a separate vote, but some of them were combined in packages so that both the supporters of independence and the Communists had to back them.

¹²⁰ That slightly operatic uniform of the company of the 1st Novorossiysk Kyiv Separate Guards Regiment was modelled on the 19th-century uniforms of the Black Sea Cossacks, the Zaporizhians resettled in the 18th century to Kuban region.

¹²¹ The Acting Army never had standardised uniforms.

during performances of the national anthem and at other ceremonial moments (instead of the 'at attention' position which had previously been required in such situations). The uniforms of the various non-state Cossack formations were usually influenced by the Soviet tradition, but the uniform for UPA veterans, developed by the diaspora, was also accepted.

It should be noted that while the Ukrainian state is secular,¹²² its presidents swear on the Gospel, or at least in the presence of the Gospel. As early as the inauguration of Leonid Kravchuk, who swore on the Soviet constitution of Ukraine and the Act of Independence by putting his hand on the two documents, the Peresopnytsia Gospels lay open on a separate table to his left.¹²³ Kuchma put his hand on the pages of the open Gospel, while his successors put theirs on the constitution and the Gospel, which was not open. It is unclear who first proposed that idea in 1991, but it was repeated by Kuchma in 1994, and became an informal but constant element of Ukraine's state protocol.

It could also be added that the new system of state orders recalls the old Rus' traditions (the orders of *Knyaz* Yaroslav the Wise, Princess Olga and Danylo Halytsky) and the Cossack heritage (the orders of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Ivan Mazepa), but does not draw upon any newer traditions, even though the highest state decoration is still a renamed and slightly remodelled Gold Star Medal of the Hero of the Soviet Union, now called the Order of the Hero of Ukraine. It exists in two versions: with a gold star (a near-exact copy of the Soviet one), and the Order of the State, in which the star is replaced by the *tryzub*.¹²⁴

¹²² None of the state oath and swearing-in formulas permit adding the words 'So help me God' or similar.

¹²³ The Peresopnytsia Gospels is a translation of the four Gospels into Ruthenian/Ukrainian of the day, dating back to the mid-16th century and preserved in an illuminated manuscript commissioned by Princess Anastasia Zaslavska; it is currently stored in the National Library of Ukraine. This priceless historical artifact (not a contemporary printed copy) has been part of the presidential inauguration ceremony in Ukraine since December 1991.

¹²⁴ The hierarchy of Ukrainian state decorations is as follows (the dates on which the decorations were introduced in brackets): Title of the Hero of Ukraine (1998), the Order of Freedom (2008), the Order of Yaroslav the Wise (1995), the Order of Merit (1996), the Order of Bohdan Khmelnytsky (1995), the Order of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes (2014), the Order for Courage (1996), the Order of Princess Olga (1997), the Order of Danylo Halytsky (2003) and the Order for Heroic Miners' Work (2008). The 'presidential' decoration, the Cross of Ivan Mazepa, also ranks as an order (2009).

2. Names and monuments

The initial phase of rapid decommunisation of public spaces, carried out by the local self-governments or spontaneously by the people, which involved removing monuments, changing street and town names, replacing patrons of schools and industrial plants, etc., and was limited in principle to the western oblasts,¹²⁵ was followed by a period of relative stability under Kuchma. Monuments to the national poet Taras Shevchenko were erected in large numbers in places where none had existed before, but the remaining monuments of Lenin and other Bolshevik activists were left untouched. Similarly, many monuments were erected to those killed in Afghanistan and Chernobyl (usually in the home towns of those commemorated), and to victims of the *Holodomor* (such monuments were erected in particularly large numbers under Yushchenko).¹²⁶ In Eastern Galicia, monuments to the Ukrainian *Sich* Riflemen and the Ukrainian Galician Army (the formations which fought for the independence of Ukraine in the years 1914–1919) had been erected early in the 1990s, but in central Ukraine hardly any monuments associated with the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1920) were erected.¹²⁷

Yushchenko, who attached great significance to the policy of national memory, did not seek a rapid symbolic decommunisation. It is true that during his term work started on the construction of a monument complex in Bykovnya, and a magnificent monument-museum was built for the victims of the *Holodomor* in Kyiv, but at the same time monuments to Hryhoriy Petrovsky and Stanislav Kosior, who were both responsible for Bolshevik crimes, continued to 'adorn' the streets of the Ukrainian capital. It was also under Yushchenko that monuments started to be erected to Stepan Bandera and other UPA commanders, as well as the organisation itself, but only in western Ukraine.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ President Kravchuk issued a decree on the demolition of Soviet monuments in May 1992, but it was never implemented.

¹²⁶ However, the first mound to the memory of the victims of the *Holodomor* was made near Lubny in the summer of 1990.

¹²⁷ To the author's knowledge, Symon Petlura has only one monument in Ukraine, in Rivne. In 2006 plans were made to erect a monument to him in Kyiv, but the city authorities ignored Yushchenko's decree to that effect; new plans were made in the autumn of 2016, and the monument is to be erected by 2019. More monuments have been erected to Hrushchewsky, who is better known as a great historian than as a political leader.

¹²⁸ 41 Bandera monuments have been erected to date, including 9 of which before 2000 and only 3 after the Revolution of Dignity. Apart from three in the Rivne oblast, all the others are located in Eastern Galicia (<http://dyvys.info/2016/10/15/bandera-na-pyedestali-skilky-naspravdi/>, accessed on 17 October 2016; the monument unveiled on 13 October 2016 in Dubno

That symbolic policy was a direct continuation of the Soviet tradition of appropriating space: back then, Lenin's portraits and monuments were supposed to crowd out the symbolism of crosses and churches, directing the public's attention to the 'appropriate' cult objects and role models (in the USSR, large numbers of monuments were erected to the so-called heroes of socialist labour, often while the person in question was still alive), and now the monuments to Shevchenko and (locally) Bandera were supposed, perhaps to not take the place of the Communist symbols, but to negate them and propose new, alternative models. This approach could have been effective, especially in smaller towns and among the less educated sections of society.

In the early days, however, the new trend very clearly differed from the Soviet narrative, in that the latter only recognised heroes and had no space for the victims (most of the sites of mass killings of Soviet prisoners in the years 1941-1942 have remained without any commemoration until the present day). The new focus on the memory of the *Holodomor*, Chernobyl and the Afghan war signified a turn towards a tendency to remember the victims, glorify them and put them at the heart of the nation's memory. The monuments to Bandera and the UPA members, on the other hand, were intended to restore the heroic narrative, but this time not instead of the narrative about victims, but in parallel to it.

This heroic narrative was strengthened first by the Revolution of Dignity and then by the war, with the emergence of new, unquestionable heroes, people who had shed blood for their homeland. First, the term Heavenly Hundred emerged, in itself monumental and evoking religious overtones. Later, the lower part of Institutskaya street in Kyiv¹²⁹ was transformed into a 'scattered' monument, very progressive in its chaotic and not entirely thought-through narrative.¹³⁰ Finally, monuments and ornamental gravestones for the fallen were erected in many places throughout Ukraine. Several months later, the Heavenly

was not included). According to Wikipedia, there are 12 monuments to Roman Shukhevych (including one outside Eastern Galicia, in the place where his body was reportedly burnt), and 3 monuments to Dmytro Klyachivsky, also known as Klym Savur, who was directly responsible for the Volhynia massacres, including 2 in Volhynia. Memorial plaques are present in an even larger number, again, mostly in western Ukraine.

¹²⁹ The site of the massacre of 20 February 2014. That part of the street was renamed as the Heavenly Hundred Heroes Street in 2015.

¹³⁰ Only a part of that commemorative complex was formally designed; many of its elements are the work of the families and friends of those killed, not co-ordinated by any single person.

Hundred Heroes were joined by the fallen ATO soldiers,¹³¹ in some places referred to as the Heavenly Guard, who are also commemorated with monuments and plaques. It is also worth noting that a new form of monument-making developed in Ukraine with the large number of commemorative murals, which are much cheaper and less time-consuming to make, and are often the work of local communities, and not the authorities. This can be regarded as a form of democratisation of the policy of memory.

It took the war for a radical decommunisation of the public space of Ukraine (within the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government) to make it through the parliament and then materialise in real life. Monuments to Lenin and other Communist heroes (other than the heroes of World War II) disappeared from squares and streets,¹³² and the names of 987 localities were changed, including two oblast capitals (Dnipropetrovsk was renamed as Dnipro¹³³ and Kirovohrad as Kropyvnytskyi¹³⁴), as were the names of 25 counties, 51,500 streets and an unknown number of institutions. The previous names were usually replaced by historic names (in more than 300 cases) or neutral names, and the few new names of a commemorative nature were usually related to the events of recent years or to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (in this case, the commemorations of the UPA were not limited to western Ukraine).¹³⁵

¹³¹ A neologism originating from the word ATO (anti-terror operation), the official euphemism denoting the war.

¹³² Among the 1300 or so monuments removed, many were destroyed during a spontaneous action known as *Leninopad* (Lenin-fall) in January and February 2014. The last urban monument to the 'leader of the world proletariat' was removed on 23 October 2016. It is possible that a certain number of monuments (or more likely busts) remain in villages. Around 1,000 monuments to other Communist activists were also removed. Around 300 Lenin monuments and numerous monuments to other Communists remain in the areas controlled by the separatists. Some monuments located in industrial plants also remain; for instance still in November 2016 the Roshen confectionery factory in Kyiv, owned by the president of Ukraine, still hosted a monument to Marx, the former patron of the plant.

¹³³ Dnieper in English.

¹³⁴ The former formally recognises the colloquial, shortened name of the city and signifies the name of the Dnieper in Ukrainian. The latter is a commemorative name given in the honour of Marko Kropyvnytskyi, the distinguished Ukrainian dramatist and actor associated with the city (1840-1910). Kirovohrad did not have a 'neutral' historical name; it had previously been called Yelisavetgrad and Zinovyevsk.

¹³⁵ Figures from a 2016 report by the Ukrainian National Memory Institute, UINP, <http://memory.gov.ua/page/zvit-ukrainskogo-institutu-natsionalnoi-pam-yati-z-realizatsii-derzhavnoi-politiki-u-sferi-vidn>, accessed on 16 February 2017.

VI. DE-STATISING THE SOVIET MAN

Soviet society was completely statised. Nearly everyone was supported by the state: whether as an employee of a state-owned enterprise, public office or another institution, a dependent of such an employee, a pensioner or a prisoner. Because of the state's monopoly on information (controlling the flow of information was a priority for the Communists; the scale of information control in the USSR had no historical precedent), the society also had similar worldviews and very homogenous ideas about the appropriate shape of social life. In part, that was also due to the fact that nearly everyone shared the same status – that of wage workers with similar if not identical interests.

For those reasons, the most important change that occurred after 1991 concerned the 're-privatisation' or 'de-statisation' of the Soviet man. For some, this involved gaining material independence from the state (through economic activity, but also, through the privatisation of the plants where those people worked); for others, looser state control over public life (with the formation of local government administrations or the admission of the freelance professions), and for still others, being ejected from society as a result of losing their care or means of subsistence. As early as 2002, most of those employed in Ukraine worked in private companies; currently the proportion of people working in state-owned enterprises has probably fallen to one-fourth or one-fifth of the total (no detailed figures are publicly available). Two groups remained completely dependent on the state, however: the pensioners, and the members of the broadly-understood state bureaucratic apparatus, both of whom are by nature inert and averse to change.

1. Coping without the state

People's awareness changed at a slower pace than their social status, especially as the privatisation of the large industrial undertakings initially changed little for their workers. The first changes which concerned everyone came with the scarcity of goods, hyperinflation, and (a little later) the coupon privatisation which turned out to be a great scam through which the managers of state-owned enterprises appropriated their assets¹³⁶; and finally, the mass withholding of pay by employers. As a consequence, the very idea of a market economy became compromised, especially since the people had approached it with distrust from the very start, understanding little of the economic novelties because they had not been provided with adequate information. People turned their backs on *prykhvatyatsya* and

¹³⁶ Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

*dermokratiya*¹³⁷ and politics in general. Instead, they undertook massive, dispersed economic activity, in most cases hoping just to make ends meet rather than get rich.

Initially, that activity consisted mainly in cultivating allotment gardens, which the Soviet authorities generously allocated to city dwellers in their final years (although the gardens were often located 100 km or further from the city), small cross-border retail (often amounting to contraband) and domestic retail, and later, also work abroad. Gardening and small agriculture were mostly subsistence-oriented, but the commerce did stimulate the development of business relations and educated people about the market economy. However, it was also marred by corruption and crime from the start, as organised criminal groups preyed on small trade, services, and on people working abroad. Over time, the proceeds from that activity started to stimulate internal demand, including for construction and renovation services and the related materials. On the other hand, small retail started to organise into networks in the form of semi-wholesale bazaars. Private capital was accumulated in substantial, or even very substantial, albeit fragmented amounts.¹³⁸ Under different conditions, that could have led to an investment boom. What was missing in Ukraine, however, was confidence in the state, which could provide neither regulatory stability, nor protection against crime. People still felt more like subjects than citizens, and subjects do not invest because nothing is really theirs.

The processes outlined here occurred against the backdrop of emerging inequalities of shocking proportions. The Soviet society had been egalitarian, and extreme wealth and poverty were hidden from the public view. After 1988, opportunities to get rich emerged, and contact with the Western world (including via popular culture) exposed people to patterns of ostentatious consumption, while on the other hand the social safety net disintegrated. The number of wage workers with medium incomes, and especially white-collar workers, decreased dramatically. Extreme poverty, which had been unthinkable in the Soviet times, at least in Ukraine, began to appear.

Today most of the city dwellers in Ukraine continue to be wage workers. The middle class has been developing slowly, but it is growing in numbers, especially in the western oblasts and in Kyiv, largely thanks to the revenues from work abroad. It is also starting to be aware of its interests. When those interests came under threat

¹³⁷ The terms could be translated as 'grabisation' and 'crapocracy'.

¹³⁸ According to some estimates, around the year 2010 Ukrainian citizens held around US\$ 100 billion in cash. А. Ермолаев, Четвертое измерение, http://gazeta.zn.ua/POLITICS/chetvertoe_izmerenie.html, accessed on 23 September 2016.

from the new tax code in 2010, more than 50,000 people protested in the Maidan.¹³⁹ Later it was those people, as well as the creative class and new technology specialists, often working for foreign companies, who supported the Revolution of Dignity and the Ukrainian armed forces with their money and organisational skills.

The rising inequalities were accompanied, especially in the initial period, by a collapse of the state's healthcare, education and culture systems, which affected rural areas and small towns particularly heavily. The number of hospitals decreased from 3,900 to 2,200 in the years 1990–2013 and the number of hospital beds per 10,000 inhabitants – fell from 135 to 88. The number of public libraries decreased from 25,600 to 19,100, and their collections shrank from 419 million to 311 million books. Participation in culture decreased dramatically: the number of theatre goers went down dropped from 17.6 million to 6.9 million, and the number of museum visitors – fell from 31 million to 22 million (even though the number of theatres and museums increased, by a factor of three in the case of the latter). The number of new book titles published increased from 76,000 in 1990 to 263,000 in 2013, but their total impressions numbers dropped from 170 million to 70 million, which meant that the accessibility of books (other than textbooks) declined dramatically, while the importation of books printed in the Russian Federation could not make up for the decline, and simultaneously increased the advantage of Russian-language books over Ukrainian-language books. Large swathes of provincial Ukraine became deprived of access to healthcare and culture.

In another situation and in another country, such a deep degradation of a majority of the people could have triggered protests on a revolutionary scale. If no 'hunger riots' broke out in Ukraine (of which the Communists like to warn, but which they never tried to organise), it was only because of the proverbial patience¹⁴⁰ of the Ukrainians, and the sense that there was no alternative. The powerful, stable state to which they had become accustomed had disintegrated for reasons they could not comprehend, and Russia was suffering similar, disastrous consequences of that collapse. People did not understand what had happened, and trusted neither the government nor one another.

There were no forces capable of organising and co-ordinating economic protests (in contrast to political protests). The miners of the Donbas, who had known how

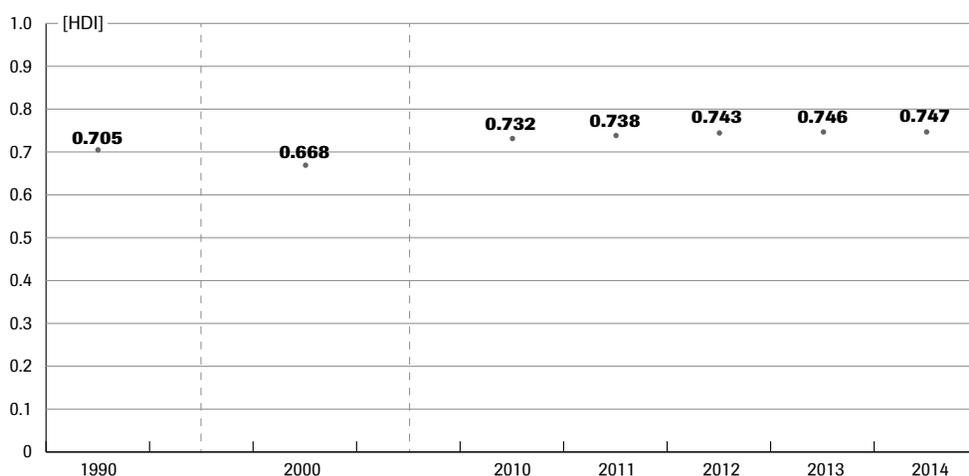
¹³⁹ Kuzio, *op. cit.*, pp. 87–89. According to the author, the amendment risked pushing as many as one million entrepreneurs into the grey economy.

¹⁴⁰ Almost all participants in Ukrainian political discourse draw upon this (appraising it either positively or negatively).

to organise mass strikes in defence of their economic interests back in the Soviet times, in independent Ukraine were only able to strike in the interest of the mine owners, at the owners' initiative and for their money. The old, Communist trade unions could not and did not want to adapt to the conditions of the market economy conditions, and the new unions failed to build a significant position for themselves.¹⁴¹

That patience still prevails, mainly because people have little faith that any change is possible which would benefit the wide masses, and not just the elites. The Ukrainians are prepared to stage determined, mass protests for political reasons, but not for economic reasons (when any such protests happen, they are organised by entrepreneurs, and not workers, public sector employees or *kolkhozniks*). If people hope to carve better lives for themselves, they look to work abroad (either for themselves or for younger family members) or to conduct various kinds of business activity for themselves, and do not think about forcing the state to ensure a legal order that would promote entrepreneurship or provide adequate welfare. Only the young generation is starting to raise such demands, but it is at the same time these are the very people who are increasingly inclined to emigrate.

Chart 3. Dynamics of the Human Development Index (HDI) of Ukraine in 1990–2014



Ukraine ranks in the 'high social development' category (the second of four), having dropped from 72nd position in 2005 to position 83rd in 2012. Soviet Ukraine ranked 46th in 1990, which seems to be due to an overestimation of social development in the Soviet Union. Sources: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2015_statistical_annex.pdf and <http://countryeconomy.com/hdi/ukraine> accessed on 10 February 2017.

¹⁴¹ In 2013, 1130 trade union centrals and 4143 trade unions were registered in Ukraine. The trade union movement cannot but be ineffective as long as it remains so deeply fragmented.

2. The generation of independence

The most important social change that has occurred in Ukraine over the last quarter of a century has been occasioned by the very passage of time. A new generation has entered adulthood, for whom a state of their own is the existing reality, and who have never experienced different statehood or a different doctrine of patriotism. Today this generation accounts for around 11 million people, a third of Ukraine's adult population.¹⁴² Not all those young people are progressive and pro-Western; the group also includes poorly educated inhabitants of the 'old' industrial centres and the shrinking category of rural youth, as well as people with pro-Russian views and people indifferent to public affairs. But Ukraine is the basic point of reference for all of them.

School has played a key role in that transition, providing all young inhabitants of Ukraine with a basic knowledge of the Ukrainian language, history, geography and literature – including the students of minority schools in which the 'republic language' was not taught in the Soviet times. That education has consolidated an attitude in which what is Russian is not entirely foreign (e.g. Russian literature does not fall under the heading of 'world literature'), but neither is it native or 'our own'. It has not only familiarised people with Shevchenko's poetry, but also nurtured the view that he is the Prophet, 'our Everything,' the alpha and omega of national culture. It sought to present Gogol not as a Russian author, but as a writer from 'Little Russia', with his roots deep in the history and culture of Ukraine.¹⁴³ Even where such narratives in education were met with aversion or even resistance, whether for ideological reasons, or due to an aversion to schooling as such, they changed the young people's way of thinking about their homeland and themselves.

Another important transformative factor concerned the society's increasing openness to the world, which was due to the collapse of the Soviet-era constraints and the new freedom to travel, as well as access to external sources of information and culture, and as well as the revolutionary changes in social communications that have occurred over the last twenty years with the development of the

¹⁴² For more detailed figures, see: T. A. Olszański, *Aftermath of the Maidan. Ukrainian society two years after the revolution*, *OSW Commentary*, 4 March 2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2016-03-04/aftermath-maidan-ukrainian-society-two-years-after-revolution>; for a deeper analysis of the problem, see: Olszański, *Co ujawniła...*, *op. cit.*, p. 216 and following.

¹⁴³ In extreme cases, attempts have been made at 'recapturing' Gogol from Russian literature, but the dominant view is that he had a double identity and a double affiliation.

internet and, subsequently, the social media, the rise of Wikipedia, and the online availability of a massive number of works of art and science. The effects of that opening were reinforced by the fact that schools in Ukraine increasingly commonly taught English and other Western languages (including Polish), and large numbers of the Ukrainians worked abroad, which offered not only material gains but also new knowledge about the world.

The transition described above has been progressing over the years, independently of anybody's will. Every year, several hundred thousand 'natural-born citizens' enter adult life and several hundred thousand people formed in the Soviet system pass away. In a dozen or so years, the members of that new generation will aspire to the highest positions in the state. They will be less patient and more radical: as throughout Europe, young people are radicalising, when faced with a lack of prospects and mounting threats. In Ukraine, such sentiments have been stoked in recent years by the war and the sense that the Revolution of Dignity has been defeated – as all that it achieved was a political reshuffle within the system, and not a change of the system itself (and neither has the large-scale replacement and rejuvenation of the political cadres shaken the system – perhaps for the time being).

A large portion of the young generation think of themselves as a civil society, i.e. a community of citizens who share a responsibility for public affairs. The volunteering movement, which supported Ukraine's defence in the first year of the war, proves that Ukraine has a great potential for civil self-organisation. However, new forms of civil self-governance for peacetime have been developing with great difficulty, due partly to the excessive bureaucracy and centralisation of the state, and partly – to the discrediting and disintegration of the Soviet forms of civil organisation, some of which could have been preserved in a reformed (decommunised) formula.¹⁴⁴

Apart from the conventional civil society structures in the Western sense, i.e. non-governmental organisations typically registered formally as foundations or associations, financed from grants and strongly institutionalised (or in some cases bureaucratised),¹⁴⁵ a grassroots, networked social movement has developed in Ukraine in recent years, with a multitude of co-operation formulas,

¹⁴⁴ For example, the various committees operating within blocks of flats, housing estates or streets, as well as parents' committees ensuring constant co-operation between parents and teachers.

¹⁴⁵ Accounting for the spending of grant money requires adequate organisational and book-keeping resources.

usually informal, financed from contributions or crowdfunded through Facebook (with many of those forms of co-operation forms operating via Facebook), and in some cases, supported by donations from local entrepreneurs. Those forms and forums of co-operation have been the strength of the Revolution of Dignity, for which – unlike in the case of the 2014 Orange Revolution – no one had prepared in advance.¹⁴⁶

The movement combines the new possibilities to act offered by social media (including crowdfunding), with the traditional Ukrainian anarcho-democratism, with its reluctance to working together within large organisations, and the growing aversion of contemporary societies to politics in general. This movement should not be expected to create a powerful political party or a similar organisation; rather, it will influence public affairs on a local scale, more likely through its own activities, than through pressure on the public authorities. However, the experience of the year 2014 demonstrates that in critical situations, it will be able to form quickly and sustain mass social movements. That potential is one of the opportunities for the growth of democracy in Ukraine.

3. Post-atheist Orthodoxy

The Soviet state was not simply atheist: it was actively anti-religious and tolerated the private profession of religious beliefs as a temporary concession. Its objective was to fully eradicate ‘religious superstitions’ and replace them with a ‘science-based worldview’. The most important tool in fighting religion was not repression, but measures designed to deprive religious organisations of legal personhood. Soviet law only recognised the existence of ‘communities of believers’ (religious communities), which could hire ‘cult personnel’, lease cult objects from the state, etc. Monastic orders, episcopal curiae and the like were also treated as ‘religious communities’. In this way, organised religious life became entirely subordinate to the state, i.e. in practice to the administrative bodies and the security services. The categorical ban on teaching religion to minors (even at home) further posed a major threat to the continuity of religious life.

That policy delivered a particularly hard blow to the Orthodox Church, which had previously been subordinated to secular authorities in the Russian Empire (the first stage of its loss of independence came with the enforcement by the

¹⁴⁶ Cf. С. Дацюк, *op. cit.* The author is very critical (perhaps overly critical?) of NGOs funded from grants, but it should be remembered that after 2004, Ukraine saw the arrival of many Russian donors alongside the Western ones.

secular authorities of Patriarch Nikon's reform in the second half of the 17th century, and the second with the abolition of the patriarchate by Peter I and the transformation of the Russian Orthodox church into an organisation modelled on the German Protestant *Staatskirche*). Stalin's appeal to people's religious beliefs during World War II and the re-creation of the patriarchate (under the patronage of the KGB, if not at their hands directly) changed little, especially since Khrushchev subsequently reinstated the previous anti-religious policies¹⁴⁷ which continued, albeit without massive repressions, until the period of *perestroika*. In that situation, Ukraine was in a privileged position anyway: because Moscow's priority objective was to eradicate the Greek Catholic faith, the Orthodox Church in Ukraine was to develop here while facing relatively fewer constraints. As a result, around the year 1988, approximately 50% of all the operational churches in the Soviet Union were located in Ukraine (3500 out of 7500), and 80% of newly ordained priests came from the Ukrainian SSR. This was one of the reasons why later on, the Moscow patriarchs later steadfastly opposed the separation of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy and the formation of an autocephalous church – because without Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church would no longer be the biggest one in all the Orthodox world.

The main effect of the efforts to suppress religious teaching and reduce religious life to its ritual aspect was to make Soviet Orthodoxy, which even before was focused on rituals more than it was on religious and moral reflection, even more superstitious. The level of intellectual and spiritual formation of the parish-level clergy was very low; in many churches no sermons were delivered for decades, many priests were informants of the KGB, and the task of providing people with spiritual guidance was largely taken over by the '*matushki*', i.e. the priests' spouses.

That was in line with the doublethink and the tendency toward ambiguous action characteristic of the Soviet societies in general. In the village houses, religious icons were replaced by portraits – if not of Soviet leaders, then of Shevchenko. The place of the *startsi* (the old ones) and *kobzari* (*kobza* players) as persons of authority was taken over during the Brezhnev era by veterans of the Great Patriotic War, often adorned by grotesque numbers of orders and medals.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ During the great atheisation in the years 1959–1961, two-thirds of all operating churches were closed down, but not one in Eastern Galicia.

¹⁴⁸ *Startsi* was the term used in Russia and Ukraine to denote men who lived as hermits without authorisation from the Church hierarchy, and who enjoyed much more authority than the Orthodox clergy. They were often believed to be miracle-workers, and were often mentally ill. The most famous one was Grigori Rasputin, while Yurodivy, a character from Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, is the literary archetype of a *starets*. The term was sometimes also used

At the same time, popular science and technology newspapers promoted various para-scientific concepts for decades, and irrationalist views borrowed from the cultures of China, India and Tibet thrived on the margins of Soviet popular culture. All that paved the way towards the explosion of the so-called *ekstrasens*¹⁴⁹ in the final year of the Soviet Union, of which Kashpirovsky¹⁵⁰ and the YUSMALOS Great White Brotherhood¹⁵¹ became the most prominent symbols. It is beyond any doubt that *ekstrasens* thrived under covert patronage of the KGB, although their motives for this are not entirely clear.¹⁵²

The revival of Orthodoxy in independent Ukraine was spontaneous and dynamic. On the one hand, very quickly large numbers of new parishes were established and churches opened very quickly, but on the other, the catechumens received no preparation (at least until 2000); baptism was offered to anyone interested, without any instruction. The spiritual regeneration of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy almost immediately became paralysed by its schism, and by unseemly fights over church buildings between the 'Kyiv' and the 'Moscow' Orthodoxies, and as well as between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics, which inevitably politicised the dispute. The advocates of a Kyiv Patriarchate independent of Moscow started to gravitate towards nationalism,¹⁵³ while those who preferred to remain under Moscow's patronage yielded to the Russian 'tsarodoxy', e.g. by transplanting to Ukraine the cult of Nikolai II, who has been declared a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church.

to denote monks revered for their spiritual guidance. *Kobzari* were the Ukrainian wandering bards, who also enjoyed high authority among village people as being well-travelled. Both groups were eradicated during the Stalin era.

¹⁴⁹ This non-translatable term originates from the English word *extra-sensory*, and refers to various concepts and practices related to healing, para-medicine, spell-casting, fortune-telling and other occult practices, as well as to associated persons: healers, fortune-tellers and the like.

¹⁵⁰ Anatoliy Kashpirovsky, born in 1939 in Ukraine to a military family, was a Soviet athlete, psychiatrist and psychotherapist who became famous for his televised sessions of what resembled psychotherapy or collective hypnosis, some regarded him as a healer, and others – as an imposter.

¹⁵¹ Also known as the White Brotherhood, a syncretic sect relying on psychological manipulation. It started in Kyiv in 1990, which and at some point had hundreds of thousands of members, mostly young Ukrainians and Russians. In November 1993 its members tried to take over Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv, in the aftermath of which the leaders were arrested and convicted, and the sect disintegrated.

¹⁵² The founder of the White Brotherhood, Yuriy Krivonogov, was a former KGB staff member, a cybernetics specialist who probably worked in the unit in charge of psychological manipulation techniques.

¹⁵³ In the 1990s, militias of the UNA-UNSO nationalist organisation took part in many battles for church buildings.

The most important religious organisations in Ukraine are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which recognises the supremacy of the patriarchs of Moscow and All-Russia, has the largest network of dioceses and parishes in Ukraine, and is the only one recognised by the international Orthodox community, followed by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (which probably has the largest number of adherents) and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (predominant in the three oblasts of Eastern Galicia). The remaining religious organisations are minority faiths: the most important ones include the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (present mainly in Eastern Galicia), the Roman Catholic Church and two Baptist organisations.

The schism and the pastoral negligence have led to the emergence of a group of believers who identify as *prostō pravoslavni* ('simply Orthodox') and do not consider themselves to be members of any of the Churches. Various studies show that this groups accounts for around 16–20% of the population, i.e. a much greater proportion of the total number of Orthodox believers.¹⁵⁴ Only 20% of people who identify as Orthodox believers engage in religious practice regularly, while 37% have never received Holy Communion and never read the Gospel, and 16% never pray.¹⁵⁵ Such is the scale of the failure of Ukraine's Orthodox clergy.

The Greek Catholic church, which has benefited from organisational and spiritual support of from the Greek Catholic diaspora, was in a better situation. However, despite great effort, it remained a local community – outside Eastern Galicia and Transcarpathia, the only Greek Catholics are people who have migrated from those two regions. The other religious communities are of marginal importance, even if some of them have been developing very dynamically (the various Baptist, Adventist and Pentecostal denominations or Jehovah's Witnesses).

Since the beginning of independence, Ukraine's religious life has been marked on the one hand by a rivalry between the different branches of the Orthodox Church, and on the other – by the aspiration of some of the laity (including politicians) to establish a Ukrainian particular church (*pomisna tserkva* in Ukrainian) that would bring together the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics.

¹⁵⁴ According to a 2000–2002 poll, slightly over 50%. A. Bychenko, N. Dudar, *Religiosity of Ukrainian Society: the Level, Character, and Specifics*, [in:] *National Security & Defence*, 2002, Issue 10.

¹⁵⁵ A 2016 study by Research & Branding Group; <http://rb.com.ua/eng/analitics/socyum/?date=2016>, accessed on 31 October 2016.

As a result of those conflicts, as well as generational change, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which was initially the largest religious organisation, has started to lose believers to the Kyiv Patriarchate, which also has many more young and educated people among its adherents. The process has probably been accelerated by the war.

According to most scholars of religion in Kyiv, adherents of the Kyiv Patriarchate are the predominant group among Ukraine's Orthodox believers, but the basis for those claims is rather questionable. One can suppose that the 'Kyiv option' is mostly a political declaration (in line with the view commonly held in Ukraine that an independent state should have an independent church) and that it is prevalent among people who consider religion to be a manifestation of national life. Adherents of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, commonly referred to as the 'Moscow Church', are probably the largest group among the regularly practicing believers,¹⁵⁶ because only that Church is recognised by the global Orthodox community and, consequently, it is the only one that administers sacraments in a valid manner. Because of that factor, the Moscow Church attracts not only supporters of the pro-Russian option and traditionalists, but also many people who experience their religion more profoundly.¹⁵⁷

The numbers of adherents of the different churches are always difficult to estimate. The figures reported by the religious organisations themselves are always overblown, and the results of sociological research may be distorted by people's reluctance to reveal their confession if they think it is 'not approved of' (e.g. it is likely that some people who say they are simply Orthodox do so to conceal their links to the Moscow Patriarchate in one part of Ukraine, and links to the Kyiv Patriarchate in another). Research conducted by the Razumkov Centre in November 2016 (i.e. not throughout the entire territory of Ukraine) showed that 64.7% of respondents considered themselves to be believers, of which 39.5% identified as adherents of the Kyiv Patriarchate, 23.1% as adherents of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and 25.4% as simply Orthodox.¹⁵⁸ Greek Catholics accounted

¹⁵⁶ In reality, it is a largely autonomous structure, which recognises the canonical primacy of the Moscow patriarchs but is not subordinated to them. On the other hand, the Church's hierarchy includes many advocates of restoring the former subordination to Moscow.

¹⁵⁷ It is worth noting that Viktor Yushchenko, an advocate of breaking the canonical ties with Moscow, received his sacraments in churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Petro Poroshenko is also a member of that Church.

¹⁵⁸ In a study conducted by the same polling institution in the spring of 2016 (http://old.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=1121, accessed on 7 November 2016.) 65.4% of respondents identified as Orthodox; affiliations with the different branches of Orthodoxy were not stud-

for 8.2% of the total, Protestants of different denominations for 1.2%, Roman Catholics for 0.8%,¹⁵⁹ 'simply Christians',¹⁶⁰ and atheists and non-believers – for 11.4%¹⁶¹. The decrease in the number of non-believers is notable: in a 1998 study they accounted for as much as 41% of the total (with members of the various Orthodox Churches accounting for 45% and Greek Catholics for 6.3%).¹⁶²

At the onset of independence, Ukraine had 10,000 registered religious communities and 800 non-registered ones of which the authorities were aware, including 6000 Orthodox communities, 2000 Greek Catholic communities, 1500 Baptist communities and 300 Roman Catholic communities.¹⁶³ Three years later, the number of religious communities had risen to nearly 15,000, including 8000 Orthodox communities, 3000 Greek Catholic communities, 1400 Baptist communities (in this case, some of the small communities must have merged), and 600 Roman Catholic communities.¹⁶⁴ By 2011, the number of religious communities had reached 34,000, including 18,000 Orthodox communities (including 12,000 parishes of the 'Moscow Church'), 4000 Greek Catholic communities, 9500 Evangelical communities in total, and 1100 Roman Catholic communities. While comparing those numbers, though, one should bear in mind that the communities of the major churches are large, usually with more than 1000 members, while the Evangelical communities are usually small, sometimes numbering only several dozen people.

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Independent Ukraine has not revised the fundamentals of the Soviet religious policy. It did not restore legal personality to religious organisations, and the state and local authorities still only recognise individual communities, even though the quasi public nature of churches is recognised in the western oblasts. Worse still, Ukraine's secular authorities have almost from the start considered themselves to be authorised to interfere in the matters

ied or not reported. It should be noted that with the narrower geographical scope, the study showed a lower percentage of adherents of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which are present in the largest numbers in Crimea and in Donbas.

¹⁵⁹ This means that there were around 420,000 Roman Catholics in Ukraine.

¹⁶⁰ Presumably these were mostly people who did not want to admit to an unthinking lack of faith.

¹⁶¹ www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/12/6/7129011, accessed on 18 December 2016.

¹⁶² Study by Socis-GALLUP in *Den*, 26 February 1998.

¹⁶³ О. Кривенко, 3 точки зору цифр, [in:] *Postup*, 1991, Issue 5.

¹⁶⁴ Kościoły i związki wyznaniowe na Ukrainie, [in:] *Radość Wiary*, 1994, Issue 4.

of the churches. President Kravchuk supported the schism within the Orthodox Church (the establishment of the Kyiv Patriarchate led by Metropolitan Filaret), and President Yushchenko tried to force the ecumenical patriarch to award autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodoxy, against the objections of the Patriarch of Moscow and in violation of the internal rules of the Orthodox Church.¹⁶⁵ Yanukovich, on the other hand, obtained the Moscow patriarch's consent to grant the prestigious status of a *lavra* to the provincial monastery in Svyatohorsk in the Luhansk oblast.

The above examples show that the political class in Ukraine and large parts of the religious community understand the separation of church and state as the right of the secular authorities to interfere with the affairs of the church. This is further confirmed by the fact that the teaching of (the Greek Catholic or Orthodox) religion at schools is tolerated in some oblasts (mainly in western Ukraine) even while the separation of church and state is still enshrined in the constitution.¹⁶⁶

On the other hand, it is difficult to argue that Ukraine is a fully secular state if the preamble of its constitution reads: “aware of our responsibility before God, our own conscience, past, present and future generations”, and its presidents have been taking their oath of office in the presence of the Gospel since 1991 (even if they do not swear on the Gospel). Chaplains have been informally operating in some hospitals and penal institutions¹⁶⁷, and a multi-faith military chaplain service was quickly formed in 2014. Finally, an Orthodox Church of Saint Volodymyr, subject to the Church of the Moscow Patriarchy, has been located in one of the premises of the *Verkhovna Rada* since 2008.

¹⁶⁵ However these activities did have a historical precedent: in 1919 an Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was established by a decree of the socialist authorities of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

¹⁶⁶ Art. 35, third sentence of the constitution of Ukraine reads: “The Church and religious organisations in Ukraine are separated from the State, and the school — from the Church. No religion shall be recognised by the State as mandatory”. The first sentence exactly echoes a provision in the 1977 Soviet constitution.

¹⁶⁷ A bill regulating the provision of religious service in hospitals did not make it through the *Verkhovna Rada* in November 2016.

VII. DEMOGRAPHIC COLLAPSE

The demographic collapse experienced by Ukraine has been the country's single greatest failure. On 1 January 1991, Ukraine had a population of 51.9 million (including 35.1 million in cities and 16.8 million in rural areas), and previous projections predicted further growth: the country's population was expected to increase to 53.4 million by 2015 (40.2 million and 13.2 million in the urban and rural areas respectively, which meant that further urbanisation was expected).¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, according to the official figures as of 1 January 2014 (i.e. the last comparable dataset available),¹⁶⁹ Ukraine had a population of 45.4 million (32.3 million and 14.1 million in urban and rural areas, respectively). The figures do not include migration, the volume of which is estimated at several million people. The country's population had already stopped growing in 1993 when a decrease of 130,000 people, i.e. (0.25%), was reported.

Thus, in a period of peaceful development, Ukraine lost 6.7 million people, mostly due to the diminishing rate of natural population increase: while 657,000 children were born in the country in 1990, in 2000 the number was only 385,000, and 504,000 in 2013 (corresponding to rates of natural increase of 0.5‰ in 1990, -7.6‰ in 2000 and -3.4‰ in 2013). In the same years, 1,019,000, 409,000 and 148,000 pregnancy terminations¹⁷⁰ were registered respectively,¹⁷¹ and the number of terminations dropped below the number of births only in 2001. In 2014, 70,000 terminations were registered; the decrease is partly due to a smaller reporting base as than in the previous years. The largest numbers of terminations (above 300 per 1000 live births in 2012) were registered in Sevastopol and in the Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The deep decrease in the number of abortions is also linked to the greater availability of contraception and information about family planning, as well as cultural change, especially the rejection of the Soviet-era view of abortion as a generally accepted birth-control method.

¹⁶⁸ Сборник статистических материалов 1990, Moscow 1991, p. 65.

¹⁶⁹ Figures for the following years exclude Crimea, and the figures for the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are very rough approximations.

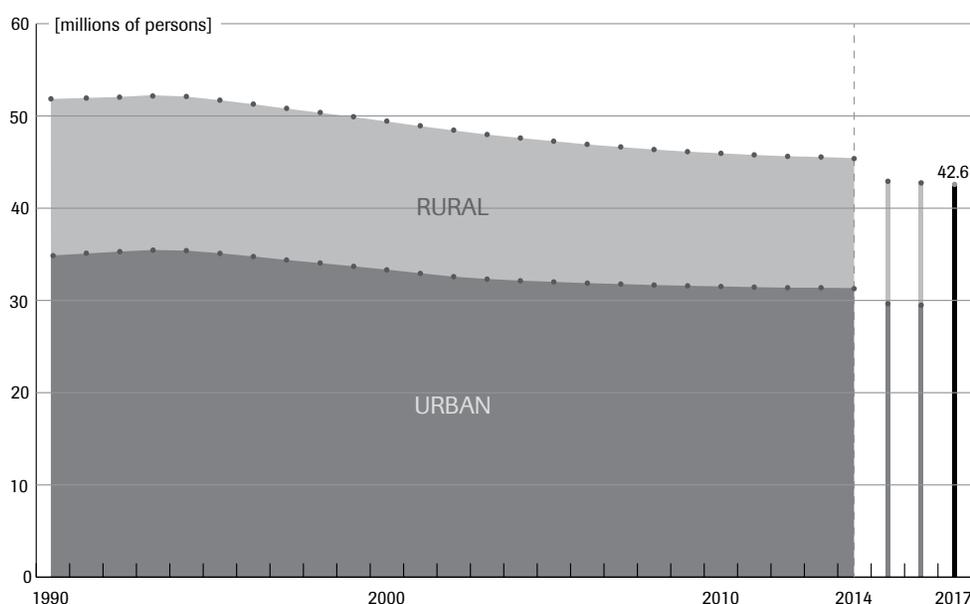
¹⁷⁰ Abortion has been legal in Ukraine since 1955: it is available on demand until the 12th week, and as late as the 22nd with a medical commission's prescription.

¹⁷¹ Figures from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, http://www.moz.gov.ua/ua/portal/pre_20120313_2.html, accessed on 27 October 2016, and О. Рудий, Абортівана країна, https://zaxid.net/abortovana_krayina_n1405175, accessed 30 September 2016.

According to the newest, incomplete figures, Ukraine had a population of 42.6 million as of 1 December 2016 (the figure excludes Crimea, and is based on a very imprecise estimation for the separatist-controlled areas). Within the first eleven months of 2016, 365,000 children were born and 330,000 people died.

Despite the increase in the number of births observed in recent years, the general downward trend is unlikely to be reversed in the long term: very few children were born in the second half of the 1990s and that deficit of future parents cannot be compensated for.

Chart 4. The population of Ukraine (total, urban, rural) in the years 1990–2017 (figures as of 1 January of the in successive years)



The figures for 2015–2017 exclude Crimea and the occupied part of Donbas; the figures for early 2017 have no breakdown into urban and rural areas.

Chart 5. Dynamics of live births, deaths and rate of natural increase in Ukraine in the years 1990–2013 (%)

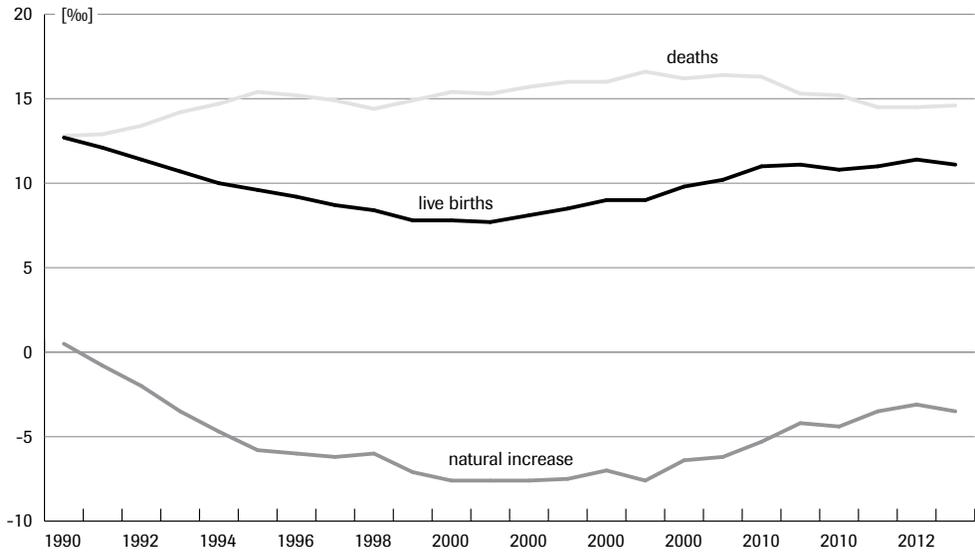
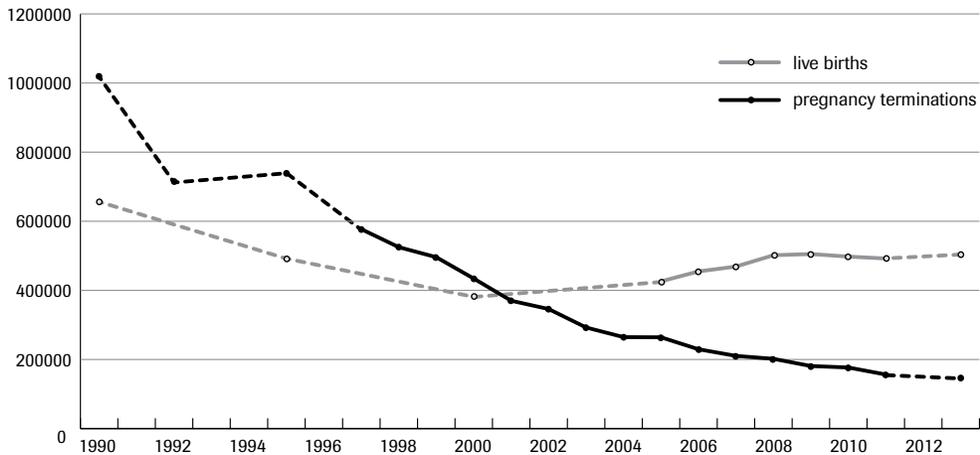


Chart 6. Dynamics of live births and pregnancy terminations in the years 1990–2013 (absolute figures)



The most recent demographic forecasts, which did not assume that the country’s territory would shrink, predicted further population decline in Ukraine: according to the Institute of Demography of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine, the country’s population was expected to shrink to 44.3 million by 2020 and to 39.2 million by 2050, while the United Nations predicted a decline to 43.2 million by 2020 and to 33.6 million by 2050.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Quoted from the Wikipedia entry ‘Демографічні прогнози для України’, accessed on 31 October 2016.

There are only two regions which have not experienced population decline: Kyiv, which invariably attracts new inhabitants as the capital city, and the largely rural Transcarpathia region which reports a higher-than-average birth rate. The Rivne, Volyn and Ivanofrankivsk oblasts, which are similar to Transcarpathia in many respects, have reported slight population declines (below 5%), while the deepest steepest drops (above 20%) were reported by the industrial Kirovohrad and Luhansk oblasts and the increasingly depopulating Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts.¹⁷³

According to the 1989 census, 66.7% of the inhabitants of Ukraine lived in cities; by early 2014 that percentage had risen to 69%, but the populations of a large number of cities have been shrinking since around 2000 (the trend was first registered in the 2001 census). Back in 2012 it was estimated that Ukraine had only two cities with populations above one million, i.e. namely Kyiv and Kharkiv (Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk had dropped below one million, and Odessa was fluctuating around that threshold). Of the forty largest cities in Ukraine, Kyiv was the only one to report more inhabitants in 2012 than in 1989, but numerous smaller cities such as Vinnytsia or Lutsk had started to grow again after 2000. It is characteristic that the cities which grow are mostly those which are the urban centres of agricultural regions, or cities near the western border that live off cross-border trade. The industrial cities in eastern Ukraine were reporting shrinking populations long before the war broke out.

The diminishing population growth and the emigration of young people from villages, which has continued for generations, has resulted in the depopulation of rural areas, especially in central Ukraine. Many villages have been deserted completely; others have populations of less than 200, several dozen or even under ten people, usually old age pensioners,¹⁷⁴ and there are hundreds of villages where no children or young people live.¹⁷⁵ In the years 1991–2012, 601 localities (villages and rural settlements) were deleted from the records, in most cases because they had no inhabitants left.¹⁷⁶ Apart from Transcarpathia and

¹⁷³ The reasons for which why these two oblasts, which are also rural and undeveloped, do not perform as well and Volyn and Transcarpathia, are likely related to the deeper impact of Communism on social structures.

¹⁷⁴ Around the year 2009, 65% of villages had populations of less than 500 people. Л. Кучма, *Сломанное десятилетие*, Kyiv 2011, p. 480.

¹⁷⁵ М. Василевський, *Жодної дитини за чотири роки*, [in:] *Den*, 1 November 2006.

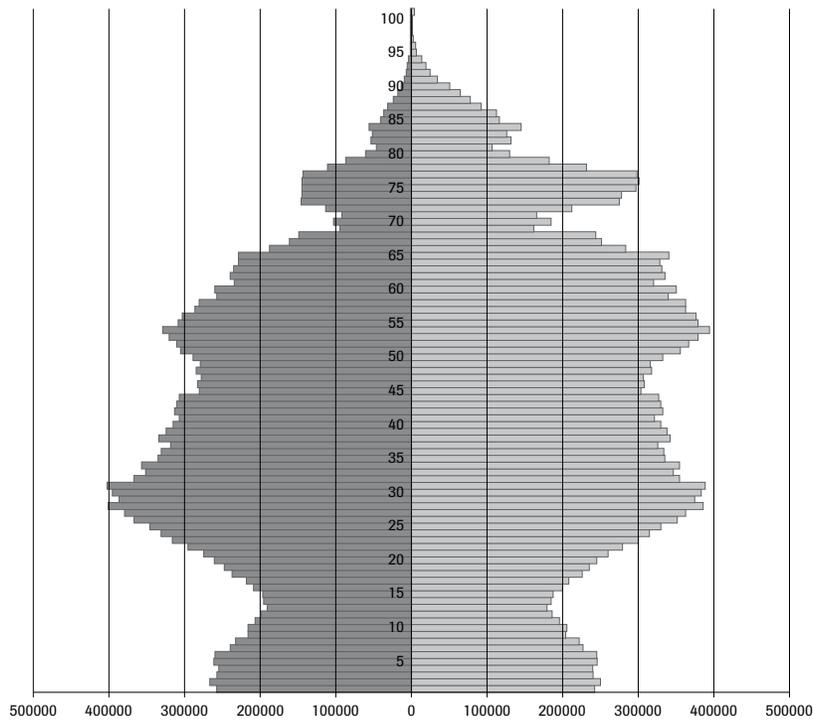
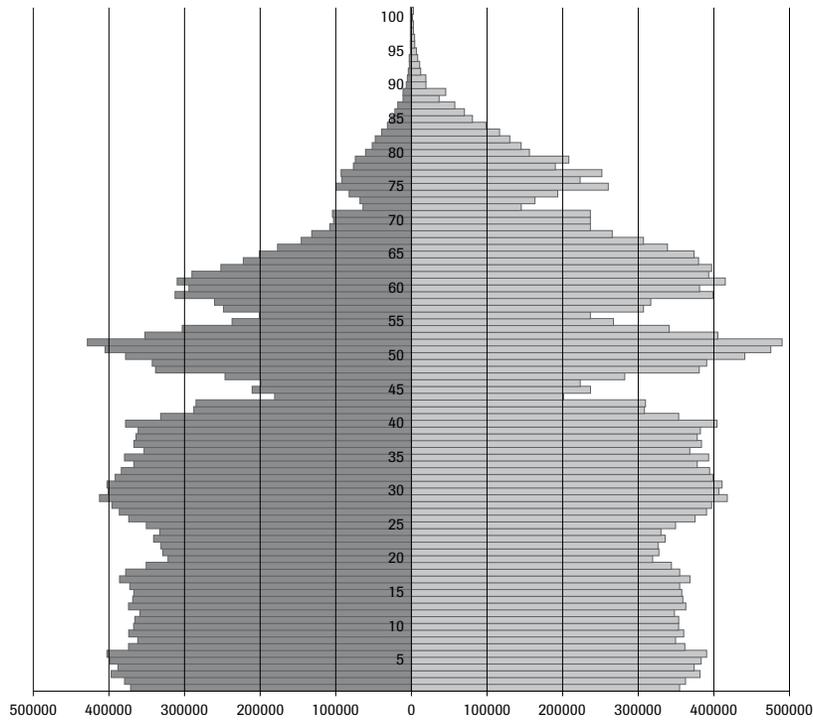
¹⁷⁶ www.pravda.com.ua/news/2013/04/9/6987778/view_print accessed on 10 April 2016. According to other sources, 350 villages disappeared from the map of Ukraine after 2000: Ю. Самаева, *Докучная сказка...*, *op. cit.*

some counties in Volyn, this process is set to continue. The ongoing consolidation of small municipalities (consisting of one to three villages) into collective municipalities of several dozen villages will be conducive to a concentration of people in the central villages, and reinforce the tendency for the smallest villages to become abandoned and formally liquidated.

The changes have distorted the proportions between generations. While the proportion of working-age people (older than 16) increased by 4.7% in the years 1991–2012, the proportion of people above retirement age (over 60)¹⁷⁷ increased by 2.9%, and the proportion of young people fell by 7.5% (to 15.4% of the population). The average age in Ukraine rose from 36.5 years in 1989 to 40.6 years in 2014 (it is lowest in Volyn and Transcarpathia). In 2014, Ukraine had 251 persons per 1000 at working age under 16, and 344 persons per 1000 over retirement age (compared to 390 and 305, respectively, in 1991).

¹⁷⁷ Until recently, the retirement age in Ukraine was 55 years for women and 60 years for men. In 2011, this was raised to 60 years for women (the change was to be implemented gradually over 10 years), while for men it remained unchanged (apart from state functionaries and academic workers, for whom it was extended to 62 years). Despite pressure from the IMF, Ukraine insists that it will not extend the retirement age for men in the coming decade, arguing that the average life expectancy for men in Ukraine is 65 years (which is a manipulation: 65–67 years is the life expectancy at birth; while the life expectancy at 60 was 18.45 years in 2013 (15.5 years for men and 20.63 for women). In 2013, Ukraine had 13.6 million old age and disabled pensioners, 1.4 million of whom were receiving disability pensions.

Charts 7&8. Graphical representation of the number of men and women by year of birth in the years 1989 and 2014



The average life expectancy at birth rose from 70.4 years in 1990 to 71.4 years in 2013, which is one of the poorest results in Europe (although it must be remembered that Ukraine's life expectancy had declined considerably in the 1990s, reaching the lowest point of 66.8 years in 1995). The increase is due to the considerable fall in infant (from 12.8‰ in 1990 to 8.0‰ in 2013) and child mortality, as well as a radical decrease in the number of accidents at work (from 6.2 per 1000 workers in 1990 to 0.9 in 2013).¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the excessive mortality rate of middle-aged men remains a huge problem, with one in ten of Ukraine's male inhabitants of Ukraine dying before the age of 35, and one in four – before the age of 60.¹⁷⁹ The country's general mortality rate was 14.5‰ in 2015, i.e. the second highest in the world (after Lesotho with 14.9, and ahead of Bulgaria with 14.5, Burkina Faso with 14.3 and Latvia with 14.3).¹⁸⁰ One of the main causes of the excessive mortality rate is alcoholism¹⁸¹; other causes include the poor condition of the healthcare system.

The number of people who have left Ukraine for a longer time or permanently, in contrast to those who regularly cross and re-cross the border (and constitute the only group of migrants for which reliable figures are available) has been variously estimated as high as 5–7 million.¹⁸² Research by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine puts the number of emigrant workers at 1.2 million in the years 2010–2012, corresponding to 3.4% of Ukraine's inhabitants between the ages of 15 and 70; for the years 2005–2008 it was estimated at 1.5 million.¹⁸³ Similar figures (1.5 million people emigrating to work in the years 2005–2008 and 1.2 million in the years 2010–2013) are given in the newest studies on the sub-

¹⁷⁸ This proves that safety at work has improved considerably, even when bearing the less accurate reporting in mind.

¹⁷⁹ Kuzio, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

¹⁸⁰ <http://glavcom.ua/publications/ukrajina-druga-u-sviti-za-pokaznikami-smertnosti-statistika-cru-359397.html>, accessed on 3 July 2016. The article quotes CIA figures. According to the same figures, Ukraine ranks 182nd globally in terms of the number of births.

¹⁸¹ Legal alcohol sales per capita fell from 4.1 litres of pure alcohol in 1990 to 2.8 litres in 2013. The largest sale volumes are currently reported in Kyiv (6.9 litres). The figures do not include illicit alcohol production; the very low level of alcohol sales in the second half of the 1990s (1.6 litres in 1995 and 1.4 litres in 2000) should be linked to the development of illicit alcohol production. According to T. Kuzio (*op. cit.*, p. 298), vodka consumption per capita in Ukraine corresponded to 8 litres of pure alcohol in 2013, putting the country in the top three for global alcohol consumption after Russia and Belarus.

¹⁸² Åslund, *How Ukraine...*, *op. cit.*, p. 235, figures for 2008; the highest estimates would correspond to around 20% of all people aged 18–60 on average, which undermines the credibility of those figures.

¹⁸³ Украинцы откликнулись на зов родины, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2199654>, accessed on 6 June 2016.

ject.¹⁸⁴ However, none of the studies differentiate between those who go abroad for two, three or five years but intend to come back to Ukraine, and those who intend to permanently settle down in the new country. We do not know how large the second category is. The number of people emigrating from Ukraine has been increasing again since 2014, but it is a matter of estimations how many of them intend to come back and how many are leaving for good. In most cases, the decision not to return will depend on further developments in the war in eastern Ukraine.

*

All predominantly Christian post-Communist states have experienced steep population decline,¹⁸⁵ which is unquestionably related to similar demographic processes in certain developed countries.¹⁸⁶ The concept of a 'second demographic transition', which was first put forward in demographic research in the mid-1980s, refers to a permanent tendency of developed countries to have birth rates below the replacement level, in other words, to experience natural population decline. Whether or not that concept is accurate, the Ukrainian demographic processes should be considered in the wider context of regional and even global trends. The declining rates of population increase cannot be attributed solely to the (unquestionable) mistakes of Kyiv's social policy, or the consequences of the post-Communist transformation, including the pauperisation of society.

The Ukrainian government conducted the last census in 2001. The new one has been postponed since 2011 and there are no indications that it will be conducted in the coming years. Apart from the obvious economic arguments and the fact that for the last three years, it has been impossible to cover the country's entire territory, two other factors have been discouraging the government from ordering a census. One concerns the worries that the census could show a growing proportion of Russian-speakers (which seems no longer valid today as declaring oneself as a Ukrainian-speaker has been 'politically correct' again since 2014), and the other – the fear that the census would reveal the real population numbers of Ukraine, i.e. expose the scale of emigration in the last two decades.

¹⁸⁴ D. Drbohlav, M. Jaroszewicz (ed.), *Ukrainian Migration in Times of Crisis: Forced and Labour Mobility*, Prague 2016, p. 16.

¹⁸⁵ According to Eurostat, the rate of natural increase in 2012 was -3.5‰ in Ukraine, -5.2‰ in Bulgaria, -3.2‰ in Romania, 0.5‰ in Slovakia, etc.

¹⁸⁶ According to Eurostat, the rate of natural increase in 2013 was 1.4‰ in Italy, 2.2‰ in Portugal, 0.6‰ in Denmark, 0,0‰ in Austria, etc.

VIII. KYIV VERSUS MOSCOW

At the onset, independent Ukraine did not have a clear conception of its place in the international community. The declaration of *sovereignty* stated that Ukraine would be a non-aligned state¹⁸⁷ without nuclear weapons, which was a direct declaration of its desire to break with the Soviet military alliance structure, but also of a desire not to develop close ties with the Western structures. This was due to more than just political caution (the Soviet Union still existed at the time the declaration was adopted): the declaration also reflected the genuine aversion to NATO harboured by most of the Ukrainian political elite, as well as the aversion to making decisive choices which later turned out to be a permanent feature of Ukrainian politics.

Ukraine had to find its place in a new geopolitical reality. The greatest novelty and challenge concerned the fact that while Russia was now a neighbouring country, the close ties between the two countries had not disappeared. Those ties consisted not only of the most evident economic and infrastructural links, but also the social relationships built up over the several decades during which Ukraine had existed within the Soviet migration space, as well as cultural relations. Equally important, or perhaps more so, were the ties between the secret services, the legacy of being part of a single system of armed forces and security services, as well as the 'twin' relations between the two countries' criminal worlds; and finally, the fact that thousands of bureaucrats and technocrats had become accustomed to viewing Moscow as the actual decision-making centre.¹⁸⁸ Many of those ties had to be preserved, but all of them needed to be 'delimited'. Meanwhile Kyiv seemed to care little about demarcating its post-Soviet borders, even in the most basic sense of separating its territory from the territories of other states (in which it was fully and actively backed by Moscow).

Ukraine was a founding member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (the establishment of which was a formula for, and probably also the pre-requisite of, the dissolution of the Soviet Union), but it did not become a full member, having rejected the organisation's statutes. In practice, on some occasions

¹⁸⁷ This was an euphemism used in order to avoid the word 'neutrality', which was associated with the treaty-guaranteed status of Austria or Switzerland.

¹⁸⁸ Ukraine's tendency to take Moscow's interests into account as a priority was probably the main reason why it Ukraine was so slow to establish its energy independence; the other reason concerned the bureaucratic inertia which led people to continue with business as usual instead of looking for new solutions. In this case, as in many others, the two approaches complemented each other.

Kyiv behaved as though Ukraine was a member, and on others as though it was a non-member, depending on its current political interest. It avoided joining structures and agreements it perceived as unfavourable (including the agreement on co-operation in the area of defence, i.e. the so-called Tashkent Treaty). Later, when the Commonwealth lost much of its importance, Kyiv again carefully manoeuvred its way whenever Russia insisted it take part in re-integration undertakings; for instance in 2000 Ukraine joined the Eurasia Economic Community, but only as an observer.

After the initial period of fascination with the Baltic-Black Sea axis concept, which was particularly active during Kravchuk's presidency (and was also influenced by the fact that similar concepts, including the *Intermarium* or 'NATO-bis', were being nurtured at that time in Poland), President Kuchma realised that such projects had no future, and that Ukraine needed to seek the support of Western powers. He also realised that he could play Russia and the West (especially the United States) off against one another to Ukraine's benefit. Kyiv could gain a great deal in the West by implying that Ukraine might be forced to make concessions to Russia, while it could extract much from Moscow by threatening to build closer relations with the United States. No wonder that Kyiv announced its strategic partnership with the United States as early as 1996, and another with the Russian Federation (as well as Poland) the year after.¹⁸⁹ Later, more than a dozen other states were granted the title of Ukraine's 'strategic partners', as a result of which the very idea of strategic partnership lost any significance (in 2001, the then foreign minister of Ukraine, Anatolii Zlenko, tried to salvage the situation by saying that Ukraine had two strategic partners: Russia and the United States). It is notable that the list of Ukraine's 'strategic' partners has never included Germany or France.

During Kuchma's presidency Ukraine first expressed its willingness to join the European Union and NATO, but it was aware that those aspirations were unlikely to materialise in the foreseeable future. It got a cold reception in both organisations: the leaders of the Alliance understood that an attempt at incorporating Crimea, with its Russian navy bases, into NATO's structures could

¹⁸⁹ Polish-Ukrainian relations are outside the scope of this paper, but it is worth noting the role of Polish diplomacy in Ukraine's efforts to strengthen its international position, first in the years 1992-1993, when Kyiv did not have a true diplomatic corps of its own, and then in 1996-1997, when negotiations on NATO enlargement were underway. (The idea of a Ukraine-NATO Charter was first publicly proposed by Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski during his address at the Royal Institute of International Relations in London on 24 October 1996).

be a *casus belli*,¹⁹⁰ while the EU had other priorities, including the threats posed by the successive wars in the Western Balkans and mounting internal problems. Or, as two British political scientists put it: “Ukraine’s problem was that the EU did not care enough about Ukraine’s pro-European choice — and Russia cared too much.”¹⁹¹

Under Yanukovych, Kyiv came under constant and mounting pressure from Moscow to join the various re-integration initiatives, and responded by trying to negotiate compromise formulas, such as limited co-operation with the Eurasian Customs Union (the so-called 3+1 formula), or Ukraine’s simultaneous membership in two free trade areas, the CIS and the EU, etc. At the same time, Kyiv continued its negotiations with Brussels, and finally in 2013 it managed to close the negotiations of the Association Agreement with the EU, whose signature Russia blocked at the last minute with a brutal act of blackmail. Earlier in 2013, Ukraine officially rescinded its aspirations to join NATO by adopting a bill on its ‘non-aligned status’, thus also creating a safeguard against potential accession to a hypothetical Eurasian military pact.

What followed was the revolution, the war and Ukraine’s decisive rapprochement with the West, including the signature of the Association Agreement and the repeal (in December 2014) of the bill on the country’s non-aligned status. These measures signified the end of the original ‘multi-vector’ policy of trying to benefit from the divergences of interests between Russia and the West. Kyiv now needs to meet the expectations of its Western economic partners (especially the IMF); so far this has resulted in a noticeable but still insufficient uptick in its determination to fight corruption and implement the solutions provided for in the Association Agreement.

Nevertheless, Russia has succeeded in blocking Ukraine’s prospects of joining the European Union and NATO. The EU could theoretically consider the accession of a state which does not control parts of its territory,¹⁹² but not of a state which is involved in an ongoing military conflict. And Russia will make sure that the conflict continues at least until (if ever) Moscow significantly revises its

¹⁹⁰ The Georgian war in 2008 marked the end of Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic opportunities. However, it should be noted that Ukraine was denied the prospect of membership (i.e. it was not given the MAP) several months before the war started.

¹⁹¹ R. Dragneva-Lewers, K. Wolczuk, *Ukraine Between the EU and Russia. The Integration Challenge*, London 2015, p. 128.

¹⁹² The accession of the permanently divided Cyprus in 2004 set a precedent.

international strategy. Likewise, NATO will not consider admitting a country at war. Kyiv seems to be aware of that, which is probably one of the reasons why it opposed the attempts at imposing a resolution of the conflict on Russia's conditions, as laid down in the Minsk Agreement.

Irrespective of how Kyiv defines its future relations with Moscow and how those relations develop in future, they are of crucial importance for Ukraine, and the stability of the Ukrainian state depends on its ability to develop a stable and mutually acceptable *modus vivendi*, which today seems more distant than at any point during the last quarter of a century.

IX. ONE UKRAINE AND MANY UKRAINES

The territory of Ukraine is very diverse, mainly because no state or autonomous territory encompassing all the lands inhabited by Ukrainians today had existed before the 20th century.¹⁹³ Large parts of today's ethnically Ukrainian territory saw their first agricultural and urban settlements only in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the early 20th century, three major 'macro-regions' of Ukraine could be distinguished: the 'old' Ukraine, which had been part of the Russian Empire since the 17th-18th century; the 'new' Ukraine (or *Novorossiya* in Russian terminology), annexed by the Empire in the late 18th and early 19th century; and Red Ruthenia, which had been controlled by the Austrian empire (Eastern Galicia or *Halychyna*), as well as the marginal 'micro-regions' of Transcarpathia and Bukovina which had been part of Czechoslovakia and Romania. Crimea was not part of ethnically Ukrainian territory (nor did it become ethnically Ukrainian after its incorporation into the Ukrainian SSR). None of those regions had any overarching regional political structures acting as intermediaries between the administrative units (guberniates in Russia, counties in Austria; the autonomous Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria combined ethnically Polish and Ukrainian territories) and the centre of the state.

The situation started to change during the Russian Revolution. In 1917, Ukrainian socialists founded the Ukrainian People's Republic, in response to which some Bolsheviks in Donetsk tried in 1918 to organise a 'Donets-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic' which would have become part of the all-Russian federation of republics.¹⁹⁴ However, the Bolshevik leadership rejected the idea, probably because it intended to 'balance' the predominantly peasant 'old' Ukraine with the proletarian centres in the east (the fact that nearly all the rural areas in the projected republic were ethnically Ukrainian is a separate matter). As a result, the Ukrainian SSR was created, which comprised three distinct regions: the west, the east and the south. After western Volhynia and eastern Galicia were incorporated during World War II, the original west became the centre of the country, and Ukraine became even more regionally diversified.

¹⁹³ The topic has been raised in nearly all studies on contemporary Ukraine. For more information about the issue see: Olszański, *Unity stronger than divisions...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁴ The concept of the Soviet Union did not exist at that time; the aim was to be separate from the Bolshevik Ukraine within the Bolshevik, federative all-Russia.

The 'regional issue' did not exist in the Soviet Union. The state was so diverse (in terms of climate zones, ethnicities and economic conditions) and at the same time so centralised that diversity was considered to be obvious and permanent. Both factors were part of the Soviet narrative of identity. Even the 'foreignness' of Ukraine's western oblasts, as emphasised in Soviet propaganda, did not have any major significance: Lviv (which, by the way, had a large proportion of Russian inhabitants)¹⁹⁵ was perceived as a 'magical European' city rather than a hostile one.

The situation of the independent Ukrainian state was different: not because the differences between its regions were particularly great (most states in the world are regionally diversified to a similar or greater degree), but because, on the one hand, for many supporters of independence the Ukrainian language amounted to a national *sacrum*, and on the other, those who opposed independence exploited the country's deep inter-regional differences to question Ukraine's right to independent statehood.

Already in the late Soviet period, a view had developed in Ukraine and beyond that the country was essentially divided into two distinctive parts: the Ukrainian-speaking, patriotic (nationalistic), Greek Catholic and pro-Western west (approximately corresponding to the third 'macro-region' mentioned before), and the Russian-speaking, Orthodox (or more accurately post-Orthodox) and pro-Soviet east (corresponding, approximately, the remaining two 'macro-regions'). Some also believed that central Ukraine (Dnieper Ukraine) was a distinct region. These regions were supposedly so fundamentally different that fusing them into one nation could only be achieved if the inhabitants of one of them (it was implied that it should be the west) gave up their own identity, or at least their state- and nation-building ambitions. The country thus entered independence with this myth of 'two Ukraines'.

However, that view ignored the consequences of several decades of the Ukrainian territory's administrative unity, freedom of internal migration (and the consequences of 'managed' migrations), 'marriage migrations', and the unifying nature of school education and state propaganda. It also ignored the fact that Ukrainian identity was built neither on the 'Lviv' narrative, nor on the

¹⁹⁵ In 1951, Russians accounted for 38.8% of the population of Lviv, by 1989 that percentage had decreased to 16.1% (census data). For more information see: К. Кондратюк, Зміни етносоціального складу населення Львова (1944–2000) in Visnyk of the Lviv University, Ser. Istor. 2007, p. 611.

‘Donetsk’ narrative (merging those would indeed be difficult to imagine), but on the ‘Kyiv’ narrative of Taras Shevchenko and Zaporizhia. This narrative was acceptable to all who had their roots in Ukraine (although it did not necessarily have to be as acceptable to a large portion of the internal Soviet immigrants).

Contrary to the view preached in Russia, a common ‘Novorussian’ identity/consciousness bringing together the inhabitants of south-eastern Ukraine from Kharkiv to Odessa never really formed. Its several parts were too different to be able to be combined by anything except subordination to the same state organism, or membership in the same political nation. The Donetsk Basin, which would later turn out to be a lynchpin of the *Novorossiia* project put forward by Moscow, did not have a distinct cultural identity at all: its inhabitants, who for the most part were recent immigrants from other regions of the USSR, only shared a territorial affiliation and a sense of pride in their professions, inherited from Soviet propaganda, and still genuinely felt today.

In the independent state the old, ‘soft’ version of Ukrainianness / Little Rus-sianness, which had allowed people to be Ukrainian, Russian and Soviet all at the same time, ceased to suffice. Later still, it became virtually impossible. Ukrainianness started to be political; it was now a citizenship. On top of that, Russian propaganda exploited the regional differences to call the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state into question: questions were raised about Ukraine’s title to not only Crimea, but also the Donbas and other regions with a predominantly Russian-speaking population, or even all of the lands conquered by the Russian Empire which had previously belonged to the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, from Donetsk to the Danube estuary.

Despite its strong centralist tendencies, the independent Ukrainian state had to remain internally pluralist: Kyiv cannot ever dominate the entire country the way Minsk dominated Belarus or Budapest dominated Hungary. Almost immediately a kind of ‘concert of metropolises’ formed. This involved Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk, the four cities with populations above one million, which were Ukraine’s major political and economic centres (elites from the latter two cities played a crucial role in the development of Ukraine, while the role of Kharkiv was less prominent). The ‘concert’ also included two semi-metropolises, i.e. Odessa and Lviv (the latter mainly as a provider of intellectual elites who thought in state and national categories). This natural internal pluralism became an important ‘anchor’ for Ukrainian democracy, especially once the transforming Soviet elites recognised the parliament and local representative bodies as good instruments through which to compete and negotiate their respective interests.

The country's bureaucratic centralism, which embraced this 'concert of metropolises', brought about an unexpected benefit for the country's unity: it attracted very large numbers of members of the local economic and intellectual elites to the capital city. This drained the regions of human resources, which was bad for the country's development, but strengthened the unity of Ukraine. The centrifugal tendencies of Ukraine's eastern regions were also eased by the fact that the elites of those regions co-decided on the country's affairs at almost all moments after independence.

In the 1990s, the people-to-people ties between the regions started to falter. Travelling became more expensive, the system of organised holidays and health spa treatments collapsed, and people became generally impoverished, as a result of which the number of intercity passenger trips decreased by nearly two-thirds.¹⁹⁶ According to research in 2012, a third of Ukrainians (and as many as 50% in western Ukraine) have never travelled beyond their home oblast.¹⁹⁷ Football fans (*ultras*) are the only social group to have travelled the entire country (or at least visited most of the large cities); and it seems no accident that they have generally been opposed to the separatist tendencies.

The territorial differences based on material factors rather than ideas still persist in Ukraine: the eastern oblasts continue to be dominated by large industry, while the centre and the west are dominated by agriculture, trade and smaller scale industry (the de-industrialisation of the last century has contributed to the restoration of this dualism).

Differences concerning ideas such as language, confession or the closeness and form of one's bond with the state/nation have been evolving. In particular, they have ceased to be strictly territorial (even though the decline in inter-regional travel may have been conducive to the development of more pronounced territorial differences). Internal migrations are still taking place, and social media has largely offset the consequences of the erosion of direct contacts, at least for the young and middle generations. School education reinforces the view that the

¹⁹⁶ According to the official statistics, in 1989 the Ukrainian railways moved 704.1 million passengers, inland waterways – 20.2 million, and road transport (including city buses) – 8,382.9 million. By 2013 these numbers had decreased to 425.2 million, 600,000 and 3,343.6 million, respectively. However, one should bear in mind the effects of the development of individual motorisation (as a result of which the passengers of city transport other than the subway also decreased).

¹⁹⁷ <http://news.bigmir.net/ukraine/568083-Opros-Kajdii-tretii-jitel-Ykraini-ni-razy-ne-bil-v-drygom-regione-strani>, accessed on 20 January 2017.

state's unity is natural. The events of the years 2014–5 have considerably undermined the importance of language as a defining factor in one's identity. A new factor came with the wave of refugees from the Donbas, the number of which has been estimated at 1.5 million people. Those people have been resettling in various regions of Ukraine, but in most cases, they have not abandoned their 'eastern' identity. In this way, regional differences have largely transformed into political differences, similar to those found in other young democracies. Generational, social and ideological differences have also been widening. Some of these might pose a challenge to the internal order in Ukraine, but not to its unity.

X. NEITHER WAR NOR PEACE

The Revolution of Dignity was much less expected than the Orange Revolution had been ten years before. The latter had been prepared in advance: even though its scale still took the organisers by surprise, the permanent rally in Independence Square had been planned and activists had trained in 'colour revolution' techniques for some time. The protests which erupted in November 2013, on the other hand, had not been prepared by anyone, primarily because nobody had predicted that Yanukovich would take the last-minute decision not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. At the same time, tensions in Ukraine were much higher than in the autumn of 2004, with growing anger fuelled by the mounting arrogance and lawlessness of the local and central administration, often of a criminal nature. The Vradiivka riots in July 2013¹⁹⁸ were a warning signal for the government – a signal which, however, was ignored. Meanwhile, the interests of all the oligarchs, as well as the budding middle classes, came under threat as the 'Family', i.e. the business and political circles surrounding the president's son Oleksandr Yanukovich, tried to take control over much of the national economy, no longer through corruption but this time using openly criminal methods.

The independence generation described above, which was the driving force behind the revolution, had by now become much larger, more mature and more aware of its interests. These were young progressive people, personally interested in Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU, distrustful of authority, and especially of politicians. Initially this group mainly comprised students from Kyiv and Lviv, later joined by representatives of nearly all social classes and groups. While the 'orange' Maidan of 2004 had predominantly been the work of activists and the Kyiv intelligentsia, the winter Maidan of 2014 also attracted workers and farmers, left-wing liberals and right-wing radicals, and veterans of the Afghanistan war. With the material support of both the middle class and some of the oligarchs, it was able to maintain a 'fortress town' in the centre of Kyiv for nearly two months, the functioning of which was an excellent lesson in civil attitudes, self-discipline and self-organisation, and unleashed a great potential of generosity and creativity. The Maidan also offered people an opportunity to undergo basic defence training and get their first experiences of fire and bloodshed: by the time Yanukovich's rule collapsed, Ukraine had at least

¹⁹⁸ For more information about the Vradiivka atrocity and the public reaction, see K. Kwiatkowska-Moskalewicz, *Zabić smoka. Ukraińskie rewolucje*, Wołowiec 2016, pp. 109–118; the previous chapter also provides some important context (pp. 88–108).

several thousand young people who had shed the ‘civilian’ aversion to the use of force, even if they did not yet know how to really fight.

1. The war for the Donbas

Immediately after the collapse of Yanukovych’s rule, Russia annexed Crimea and proceeded to try to unleash a ‘Russian spring’, i.e. to stoke a rebellion against Kyiv in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, from Kharkiv to Odessa. What it wanted to achieve was a ‘federalisation’ of Ukraine, i.e. its transformation into a state made up of two constituents, which would permanently thwart Kyiv’s aspirations to rapprochement with the West and bind it with Russia. That plan failed as it ran into opposition from not only most of the young generation, the middle class, a majority of the oligarchs, but also the bureaucracy and the state apparatus (the interests of the latter, including the existing corruption patterns, had by then become too closely linked to the Ukrainian state for the administration apparatus to be willing to risk major change). Meanwhile, the ‘silent pro-Russian majority’ on whose support Russia counted turned out not to be a majority any more: the generation of ‘orphans of the Soviet Union’ had grown older, smaller and less active.

The ‘Russian spring’ only succeeded in parts of the Donbas. It was there that the separatist rebellion started, conducted by paramilitary formations from Russia and members of the Ukrainian special police forces which had been disbanded in the wake of the Revolution, and backed primarily by immigrant communities with loose links to Ukraine, and also apparently by sections of the criminal world. The rebellion also had the silent support of old-age pensioners, nostalgic about the times of Brezhnev-era prosperity (and their own youth). In view of the disintegration or marginalisation of the major pro-Russian forces in Donbas, i.e. the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Communist Party of Ukraine,¹⁹⁹ Russia re-activated fringe separatist communities like the Donetsk People’s Republic (an organisation by that name had existed at least since 2010). When their first actions met with success, Russia provided backing in the form of both media coverage and military assistance (instructors, militants, special troops, and later also regular army units).

Ukraine was defenceless in the face of Russian aggression. In early 2014, its armed forces theoretically had around 121,000 troops, but only 5000 at best

¹⁹⁹ This was the result of consistent efforts by the Party of Regions.

(and possibly as few as 3000) were combat-ready,²⁰⁰ and even those were operating within small groups rather than fully staffed units. That was the result of the deliberate dismantling of the armed forces under Yanukovich,²⁰¹ as well as the fact that all Ukrainian governments since 1992 had neglected the army. As a result, Ukraine surrendered Crimea without a fight (and much of its armed forces along with it), was unable to quickly respond to the Russian-inspired capture of government buildings in the cities of the Donbas, and later on, was highly inept at conducting its first military operations.

In that situation, the burden of defending the country was taken on by the Maidan Self-Defence, supported by volunteers, especially from the eastern oblasts, and backed financially and organisation-wise by the Dnipropetrovsk oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskiy. The volunteer battalions formed in this way (*dobrobaty*) were poorly armed, disastrously equipped and usually poorly trained (even though there were many army and police veterans within their ranks), but they were militant and persistent. And since at that time they were fighting equally poorly trained and badly commanded (albeit slightly better armed) semi-regular units, the difference in the level of determination was decisive. Thus, the Ukrainian volunteers managed to stop the advancement of the rebellion until the newly established National Guard and the Land Troops reconstructed at an impressive pace could join the fight.²⁰²

When the Ukrainians gained a sufficient advantage in summer 2014 to be able to suppress the rebellion by force, Russia decided to intervene directly, and deployed regular units with heavy weaponry. The Ukrainians were defeated (but not crushed), and the *dobrobaty* suffered massive losses in the battle of Ilovaysk in August 2014. Further fighting led to an impasse: Kyiv was unable to expel the Russians beyond the border and dismantle the self-proclaimed republics,

²⁰⁰ Як „зливали” Крим: у РНБО розсекретили стенограму засідання за 2014 рік, 22 February 2016, <https://www.obozrevatel.com/ukr/crime/42817-yak-zlivali-krim-v-rnbo-rozsekretili-stenogramu-zasidannya-za-2014-rik.htm>, accessed on 25 February 2016, and Встреча начальника Генерального штаба вооруженных сил Украины В. Муженко с блоггерами, 28 February 2016, <http://bmpd.livejournal.com/1762315.html>, accessed on 28 February 2016.

²⁰¹ The dismantling of the army may be blamed to a large extent on the presence of Russian agents within the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff, which the president tolerated. Dmytro Salamatin, one of the defence ministers from that period, had only been a citizen of Ukraine since 2004.

²⁰² The National Guard was formed in 2014 by reorganising the Internal Troops, which were in a much better condition than the armed forces, but had no artillery of their own, and some of whose units had been actively involved in resisting the Revolution of Dignity.

while Russia was unable to force the Ukrainians to capitulate.²⁰³ In that situation, a ceasefire deal was concluded, which was apparently taken seriously only by the Western negotiators who wanted a cessation of hostilities, but not a resolution to the conflict.

Since February 2015, Ukraine has been in a state of ‘neither peace nor war’: the country pretends to be involved not in a war, but rather an ‘anti-terror operation’, even though at the same time it has spoken of an occupation of the Donbas.²⁰⁴ Ukraine also still maintains diplomatic and consular relations with the Russian Federation, as well as elaborate trade relations and visa-free travel arrangements.²⁰⁵ The 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Co-operation and Partnership likewise remains in force. Russia, on the other hand, has been pretending that it is not at war, but merely providing humanitarian assistance to the separatist republics.²⁰⁶ Meanwhile, every day several Ukrainian soldiers are injured or killed in armed incidents, mostly involving artillery fire (there is no reliable information available on the losses suffered by the Russians and the separatists). The low-intensity trench warfare goes on and may continue for years, especially since neither side considers itself to have been forced to make any major political concessions.

Fighting a war against external aggression, which also involves some elements of civil war, has been a challenge for the Ukrainian state, comparable only to the Chernobyl disaster. Among other reasons, this is because the response requires not only military, organisational and economic measures, but also a kind of reflection which would lead to the revision of many views which had hitherto seemed obvious. Ukraine has looked in the mirror again, and has seen an image of itself that is new in many respects.

2. The wartime state

Despite its limited scope, the war has inflicted massive damage on the country, and it should be remembered that Ukraine was in a difficult economic

²⁰³ For more information on the progress of military operations, see the Timeline.

²⁰⁴ The fact that Ukraine is at war with Russia was officially recognised for the first time in a resolution adopted by the *Verkhovna Rada* on 8 September 2016 condemning the resolutions in the Polish Sejm and Senate on the Volhynia massacres.

²⁰⁵ A proposal to abolish visa-free travel was put on the *Verkhovna Rada*’s agenda as late as autumn 2016, but it did not make it through the *Rada*.

²⁰⁶ It is commonly known that the so-called ‘humanitarian convoys’ deliver arms and munitions, among other things.

situation even before then. According to available figures, so far on the Ukrainian side more than 2500 troops and 6,000 civilians have been killed and more than 22,000 troops and 11,000 civilians have been wounded. The losses of the separatist and Russian formations and civilian casualties in the ORDLO²⁰⁷ are unknown, but presumably comparable.²⁰⁸ The losses suffered by the Ukrainian armed forces have thus exceeded those suffered by the Ukrainian SSR during the ten years of the war in Afghanistan. The number of displaced persons is estimated at 2–2.5 million,²⁰⁹ including around 1.6 million internally within Ukraine and 900,000 in Russia. Much of the industrial activity in the Donbas has stopped, in some cases permanently.²¹⁰ However, as some of the plants still operating in the Donbas are owned by companies registered in Kyiv, they are probably paying taxes both to the Ukrainian budget and to the self-proclaimed republics.

As a consequence of the war, Ukraine's GDP dropped by 6.3% in 2014 and 10.4% in 2015 (only to rise again by around 1.8% in 2016). Moscow had expected Ukraine to experience complete economic meltdown, but Arseniy Yatsenyuk's government managed to avert the worst as it obtained external support, improved the budget situation and curbed inflation, and even managed to stop buying gas from Russia, thus depriving Moscow of an important instrument of pressure. Efforts to fix the banking system were also undertaken (e.g. some banks were

²⁰⁷ This acronym was first used in the bill of 17 March 2015 to describe the areas controlled by the separatists and Russians. It is used quite frequently to avoid using the word 'republics'. It stands for *Okremi Raiony Donetskoyi [ta] Luhanskoyi Oblastei*, or the separate counties of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

²⁰⁸ Figures published by Ukraine on the third anniversary of the annexation of Crimea pointed to referred to 9,800 killed and 23,000 wounded in Donbas; presumably that figure includes civilian and military casualties on both sides of the front. See <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2017/02/21/7135971/>, accessed on 21 February 2017.

²⁰⁹ Official Ukrainian statistics mention 953,400 displaced by the end of 2015, including 20,900 from Crimea. П. Лоза, Свої чи чужі?, *Nasze Słowo*, 4 April 2016, Issue 14, <http://www.nasze-slowo.pl/%d1%81%d0%b2%d0%be%d1%97-%d1%87%d0%b8-%d1%87%d1%83%d0%b6%d1%96/>. On the other hand, the head of the state administration in the Donetsk oblast said in the summer of 2016 that of the 740,000 displaced persons registered in the Kyiv-controlled part of the Donetsk oblast, only 250,000 are present there while the others have registered as displaced persons in order to obtain benefits while in fact living in the separatist-controlled areas; www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/06/14/7111729/, accessed on 14 June 2016.

²¹⁰ No reliable information on the subject is available. It seems that some of the plants which stopped operations in the first months of the war have since resumed activities. In the spring of 2016 it was estimated, on the basis of an analysis of city lighting, that economic activity had dropped to 30–50% of the pre-conflict level in the large cities of the Donbas and to around 10% in the small towns. See: <http://voxukraine.org/2016/07/18/and-the-lights-went-out-measuring-the-economic-situation-in-eastern-ukraine-en/> accessed on 18 July 2016. The methodology of the study is also available there.

wound down), and the economy was switched to war mode, with large contracts awarded to the defence companies in an effort to rebuild and modernise the armed forces on a scale that would have been unthinkable if the country had not been at war.²¹¹ Finally, a number of deregulation measures were implemented, this time actually beneficial to the middle class and ordinary citizens.

The 'Revolution of Dignity' nonetheless failed to create a new elite capable of taking power, as a result of which the 'oligarchic-bureaucratic opposition' took over in Ukraine. The oligarchs' position did falter seriously at the beginning of the war, but no attempt was made to restrain their role in political life.²¹² The new Ukrainian leadership again has links to the oligarchic business, and does not consider a thorough change of the system of government to be possible (also because of the risk such a change would involve if undertaken during wartime). On the other hand, the return to the 'oligarchic consensus' formed before 2012 has also brought some benefits for Ukraine, albeit in the form of a lesser evil; after all, the Yanukovich team had aimed at transforming that pluralist system into a centralised, authoritarian-criminal dictatorship that would have blocked any hope of future change.

The five-party coalition formed after the 2014 elections, which included two 'oligarchic' groupings (the Petro Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front), two populist parties (*Batkivshchyna* and the Radical Party) and Self-Reliance, a formation of unclear identity, functioned poorly almost from the start because the populists and Self-Reliance blocked some of the government's proposals. That forced the president and prime minister to seek the support of what remained of the Party of Regions, i.e. those groupings which had re-embraced the oligarchic consensus once Yanukovich was gone and with which Poroshenko felt he had more in common politically than with Yulia Tymoshenko or the young radical democrats. The government's fight against corruption was met with fierce resistance by the bureaucracy and the justice administration (whose functionaries make up one of the most corrupt professional groups in Ukraine), and had stalled practically completely by mid-2016. However, Ukraine managed to establish a specialised body to fight corruption (the National Anti-Corruption Body) and, in October 2016, to launch a system for the electronic declarations of assets by politicians and officials, and to force those concerned to actually file their

²¹¹ Official defence spending increased rose from 0.97% of GDP in 2013 and 1.77% in 2014 (a correction of the budget adopted still under Yanukovich) to 2.7% in 2015 and 3.6% in 2016.

²¹² For more information, see Konończuk, *op. cit.*

declarations. The range of arbitrary administrative decisions, one of the foundations of corruption, was also significantly limited.

The war was one of the reasons why Ukraine made faster progress in reforming itself – not only because it inspired greater determination to do so, but also because it put an end to the worst aspects of Kyiv’s ‘multi-vector’ policy. Previously, Ukraine had tended to negotiate its political and economic benefits, including financial assistance, by suggesting to one of its partners (either the West or Russia) that refusal would force it to seek rapprochement with the other one. That worked for more than 20 years, also as a way to avoid modernising the economy. However after the war broke out, Kyiv could not continue that this policy and was forced, albeit reluctantly, to meet the conditions imposed on it by the International Monetary Fund.

The three years of the war have shown that the Ukrainian state is stronger and built on more robust foundations than had commonly been believed. Despite all its shortcomings and deficiencies, the Ukrainian state has demonstrated that it is a stable system capable of responding to new challenges, defending itself and evolving.

3. Faltering internal security

At the time of the Revolution of Dignity, and later during the initial phase of the war, civilians in Ukraine got hold of large numbers of weapons (mostly firearms, man-portable anti-tank weapons and mines, including anti-personnel and anti-tank mines).²¹³ In 2014, many volunteer armed formations were created which only theoretically recognised the supremacy of the Ukrainian authorities, while in reality they were controlled by no-one except their commanders. Para-military organisations, which had been banned but tolerated in Ukraine, grew considerably in strength. The criminal world also armed itself better, while at the same time the police stopped operating in many areas. As a result, the state lost its monopoly on the use of force, and the law & order authorities lost control of what was happening in the criminal underworld.

The largest threat to public order, posed by the *dobrobaty*, was tackled quickly and effectively. Contrary to the fears voiced in late 2014, the units accepted being subordinated to the state’s command structures without resistance (though

²¹³ This is indirectly confirmed by the Ukrainian media, which report almost every week on discoveries of hidden arms and munitions depot, usually attributed to the separatist saboteurs.

not without friction), and were then incorporated into the structures of either the National Guard or the land troops, usually keeping their original names and their status as 'separate' units. In this way, they ceased to be volunteer formations. At the same time, they were joined by professional commanders and submitted to daily military routines. For some units it sufficed to purge them of people with criminal inclinations; but there was one unit, the 'Tornado' patrol service company of the Interior Ministry, which had to be formally disbanded.

The Volunteer Corps of the Right Sector (probably numbering around 1000 people and running several training centres in central Ukraine) was the one unit which was not incorporated into the regular army and yet whose activities continued to be tolerated. The strongest among the 'new' units, i.e. the Azov Regiment of the Interior Ministry's National Guard, has also retained considerable autonomy and maintains its own network of training centres, including a sergeant school.²¹⁴ The 'Azovtsy' also form a political movement of their own, but in military terms, they are more of a laboratory for new forms and procedures than a security threat. What does pose a risk, though, is the fact that in many localities, cells of the 'Azov' Civilian Corps have been taking over the functions of the police,²¹⁵ which will lead to wrangles with the newly formed regular police.

The *de facto* division of the country into two zones which were never fully isolated from one another has been conducive to the development of crime, especially corruption at the checkpoints controlling traffic and cargo movements across the ceasefire line. On the one hand, the line's permeability has made life easier for the people who have found themselves in the separatist-controlled territories; but on the other, it has been corrupting the Ukrainian state's new cadres, who should be stimulating the regeneration of law enforcement in Ukraine. The problem is not limited to small trade; Ukraine's energy sector needs large amounts of anthracite, which is mined in the separatist-controlled territory, a fact which has led to the creation of illegal supply schemes. Energy supply has thus been ensured, but at the price of undermining the process of the state's 'cleansing'.

²¹⁴ A new-type of non-commissioned officer school; [https://foxx.salon24.pl/729942,kijowq-29.09%e2%80%93zakonczenie-pierwszego-kursu-szkoly-sierzantow-im-konowalca,](https://foxx.salon24.pl/729942,kijowq-29.09%e2%80%93zakonczenie-pierwszego-kursu-szkoly-sierzantow-im-konowalca,(material-unavailable)) (material unavailable), accessed on 17 October 2016.

²¹⁵ С. Шебеліст, «Азов»-стайл, [http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?azovstayl&objectId=1406755,](http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?azovstayl&objectId=1406755) accessed on 17 October 2016.

As it does always and everywhere, the war has also brought about a rise in common crime. Large numbers of criminals joined the ranks of the volunteer units (usually for short periods); mentally unstable people came into the possession of weapons; and many veterans failed to build civilian lives. The disorganisation of the *militsiya* (including the criminal departments), and the subsequent efforts to build the police from scratch emboldened the criminal world. The post-revolutionary shakiness of the state structures created favourable conditions for the local 'barons' and extremist organisations trying to create a business basis for their activities (one case illustrating this phenomenon was the well-publicised standoff in Mukachevo on 11 July 2015 between the Right Sector militants and the people of the local 'contraband king').

In June 2015, the number of firearms possessed illegally by private persons in Ukraine was estimated at 6 million (only 4.5 million according to other estimates), compared to 800,000 registered firearms. That corresponds to 11–14 firearms (both legal and illegal) per 100 inhabitants, compared to 6.6 in 2012 (which was a similar level to the United Kingdom).²¹⁶ The numbers of military weapons held in illegal arsenals has also increased. It is therefore hardly surprising that in 2014, the number of criminal acts involving firearms increased rose by as much as 40% according to some estimates (detailed figures are not available), and doubled in 2015. At the same time, the number of criminal acts involving knives and similar objects decreased, as firearms had apparently replaced knives in the arsenals of common criminals.²¹⁷

The upward trend in the number of heavy crimes also continued in 2016 (the number of such acts in Kyiv increased by a third within nine months).²¹⁸ Interestingly, the largest rise in robberies recorded by law enforcement agencies took place in two districts of Volhynia (82% and 72% respectively); the causes for this should be seen not in a sudden rise of crime, but in the increased effectiveness of law enforcement. Various reports also suggest that law enforcement and courts treat serious crimes committed by war veterans with great indulgence. This situation does not contribute to the restoration of the state structures' authority.

²¹⁶ О. Лой, До зброї готові!, 10 December 2015, <http://glavcom.ua/articles/35932.html>, accessed on 11 December 2015.

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁸ Ю. Луценко, Про причини погіршення ситуації із станом злочинності та пропозиції щодо законодавчого забезпечення проведення реформи у правоохоронних органах (summary of the prosecutor general's testimony before the parliamentary committee), <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/lucenko/57e354f186267>, accessed on 22 September 2016.

The situation in Volhynia has unexpectedly presented a new challenge for the Ukrainian authorities. In the northern districts of the Volyn, Rivne and Zhytomir oblasts, which are heavily forested, sparsely populated and very poor, amber deposits have been exploited illegally, but under controlled, organised systems patronage, potentially reaching as far as Kyiv. At present the sharp rise in amber prices, the deepening pauperisation and the instability of state order has led to the mass illegal extraction of amber, which poses a threat to the forest and water management in the region on the one hand, and control over the export of amber by structures on the borderline of the criminal world and the nationalist organisations²¹⁹. Consequently, Kiev lost control of some of these regions in 2015, and from available reports has still not recovered control over them. However, the situation does not pose a threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity, and it is probably for this reason that Kyiv has not been paying much attention to it.

4. A wartime society

The Revolution has revealed the massive potential for self-organisation of Ukrainian society, as well as its one of its important weaknesses, inamely the fact that the Ukrainian people are apparently disinclined to form overarching structures capable of integrating the efforts of individual groups, communities and individuals on a regional scale, and even less so on a national scale. Even the Maidan did not have a single administrative or command structure, and later on, individual volunteer groups or even individual people supported the state's defence effort independently of one another.²²⁰ Still, those activities were highly synergetic, and made a massive contribution to averting the threat which Ukraine faced in the spring of 2014.

At first, individual groups, organisations and persons took to providing the volunteer armed formations with food and essential equipment (not arms, but including helmets, bulletproof vests and thermal imagers). Later, support was extended to the National Guard and the armed forces, which also lacked

²¹⁹ The killing of the Right Sector militant Oleksandr Muzychko, who died as the police tried to arrest him on 24 March 2014, was probably linked to the fight for control of that market. Volyn is also home to structures controlled by one of the Lviv crime leaders, Volodymyr Didukh, also known as 'Vova-Morda', who is believed to be a secret patron of the *Svoboda* party.

²²⁰ A similar feature was visible in the formation of the *dobrobaty*, which did not try to create an overarching structure.

everything, starting from shoes.²²¹ Quite rapidly, local communities developed a form of patronage – not over units, but over individual soldiers coming from a given town or village. Volunteer news agencies were established which dealt solely with news about developments in the war. The importance of that support in 2014 cannot be overestimated.

The volunteering movement subsequently started to provide assistance to the Donbas and Crimea refugees, whom the state had neglected, and (in a less massive but more professional manner) to provide psychological care and rehabilitation to the veterans returning to civilian life (the first service of this kind had already been established in the Maidan; today the Maidan Psychological Service comprises around 500 specialists in 20 cities). The emergence of local associations of ATO veterans is a new phenomenon, but such associations have already been operating in all the districts of Kyiv. These and other forms of activity have been building up new social ties (also based on the potential of social media) and rebuilding the old ones (for instance, when funerals of soldiers fallen in the east were attended by people from entire counties).

The war has become the ‘laboratory’ of a new nation. At the front, it did not matter what language the defenders of the homeland spoke (most spoke Russian, and many considered themselves to be both Russians and Ukrainian patriots at the same time). Ukraine’s ‘ethnic’ nationalists were forced to acknowledge this reality (and *Svoboda*’s blind adherence to its linguacentrism has greatly contributed to the party’s declining popularity). It was also behind the frontlines that a new reflection on the meaning of nationhood emerged. This included a realisation of the distinction between the Russian-language culture of Ukraine and Russian culture in Ukraine (i.e. culture imported from the Russian Federation). At the same time, attitudes towards history lost importance as a measure of patriotism or identity: the main measure was now which side you wanted to win the war, and which to lose it.²²²

The popularity of the Azov Battalion (later a regiment), with its charismatic leadership and the its voluntary-political backing in the form of the Azov Civilian

²²¹ For more information on the volunteering, see T. A. Olszański, *Aftermath of the Maidan. Ukrainian society two years after the revolution*, *OSW Commentary*, 4 March 2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2016-03-04/aftermath-maidan-ukrainian-society-two-years-after-revolution>.

²²² This is how Pavlo Kazarin, a Kyiv-based journalist, put it during a panel at the Batory Foundation in Warsaw on 11 October 2016.

Corps, brought about a rapid rise of a new formula of Ukrainian nationalism²²³, which exhibits racist views, but not ethnic hatred, draws upon Ukraine's pre-Christian traditions, and at best accepts the Bandera tradition in inverted commas.²²⁴ This community has even produced the idea that the Russian language spoken in eastern Ukraine is in fact a local variety of Ukrainian.²²⁵ Irrespective of who devised that formula, it may prove to be fruitful. And if it takes root, it will change the way of thinking about the language issue in Ukraine.²²⁶

The new generation of Ukrainians increasingly brings together both Ukrainian- and Russian-speakers, as well as speakers of *surzhyk*. It also offers a space to Ukrainian Russians and other minorities²²⁷ – all except the Ukrainian Soviets. The latter are lost to Ukraine after the three years of the war.

The military operations, involving the massive shelling of residential districts and large numbers of civilian casualties, have driven many people, mostly those identifying with Ukraine, away from the Donbas. Those who remain are mainly old-age pensioners, the least educated and the least mobile workers, i.e. those groups within which the Soviet identity has been the strongest, as well as the people who had been involved in the creation of the separatist republics. The war incited great fear, but also great hatred; it created new narratives and new heroes, of whom we know very little. That cannot be reversed.

During the three years of the war, Kyiv has not developed any political offer for the people of the Donbas; it has not even brought itself to seriously reflect on the

²²³ For more information, see T. Olszański, Ukraine's wartime nationalism, *OSW Commentary*, Issue 179, 19 August 2015, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-08-19/ukraines-wartime-nationalism>

²²⁴ Andriy Biletsky, the leader of the Azov movement, publicly stated in September 2016 that Bandera's ideas were no longer valid in the 21st century, http://news.liga.net/interview/politics/12867152-andrey_biletskiy_i_vlast_i_oppozitsiya_dlya_nas_odinakovye_vragi.htm, accessed on 24 October 2016.

²²⁵ В. Шкляр, Дума про братів азовських, in *Чорне сонце*, Kharkiv 2016. It says on p. 49 that the inhabitants of Mariupol "speak a south-eastern dialect of the Ukrainian language. Yes, the vocabulary is mostly Russian, but the phonetics and syntax are Ukrainian with some Greek influences". On p. 69 it says that the range of this 'dialect' extends to the Kharkiv region.

²²⁶ Such an operation may be successful, as demonstrated by the separation of Serbo-Croatian into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin over the last quarter of a century, which happened because of the political will of the users rather than actual linguistic processes (especially in the latter two cases).

²²⁷ It is symbolic that the first two people to die on the Maidan were an Armenian (a son of refugees) and a Belarusian (an immigrant without citizenship).

conditions for the region's future re-integration. Even if any such reintegration manages to eliminate the separatist elites from public life, and even if most of the war refugees return to their homes (which is unlikely), the Soviet part of society will not become part of Ukraine's civic community – not only because of the impact of the separatist indoctrination of recent years, but also because those people had never really been 'politically Ukrainian'.

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There are many indications that Kyiv has accepted the loss of Crimea, even if it continues to use the rhetoric of 'de-occupation' for formal and international purposes. However, the loss of parts of the Donbas is unacceptable, either to the Ukrainian leadership, or to the majority of the public, partly because too much blood has already been shed for the region. Still, in view of Kyiv's official activities, it is unclear whether the Ukrainian leadership is really seeking to restore its sovereign rule in the area; it seems as though maintaining a 'frozen' conflict which claims a couple of casualties a day could be acceptable to Ukraine's leaders.

Kyiv has run out of options. Officially it has to accept the terms of the peace deals, which would permanently disintegrate the state by granting one of the regions a right to veto the entire state's strategic decisions²²⁸, and thus block its integration with European structures. That is because Ukraine is under pressure from the Western powers, whose main concern is to get Ukraine off the 'hot' international agenda, and who are therefore inclined to accept Russia's proposals. On the other hand, however, Kyiv cannot afford a renewed armed confrontation with Moscow. Neither can it implement the Minsk agreements, not only because they are dangerous to Ukraine, but also because they would unleash public protests which might threaten the government.

The *status quo* is not entirely unfavourable to Kyiv. The war has undermined the influence of pro-Russian groups and communities on public life, and deprived an important part of that electorate, which was hostile to Ukraine's current policies and leadership, of the possibility to vote. As long as Kyiv does not control the Donbas, it need not worry about the reconstruction of that region's economy and social life. The war has also diverted the politically active public's attention

²²⁸ The essence of the Russian proposals is to grant special rights to eastern Ukraine (at this stage, to the Donbas alone) but not right-bank Ukraine or eastern Galicia. In this way, it would be possible to block rapprochement with the West, but not with Russia.

from the unmet promises of the Revolution of Dignity (even though that impact has been wearing off).

It seems that under the leadership of pragmatic and cautious politicians, averse to radical and risky action, Ukraine has decided to maintain the *status quo*, i.e. tolerate the limited hostilities, sabotage the implementation of the Minsk accords (in which the other side has been greatly helping Kyiv) and wait for a change in the international situation, or perhaps for the end of Vladimir Putin's rule. This playing for time is dangerous, but it is also the least dangerous solution among those which are realistically available.

CONCLUSION: THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF INDEPENDENT UKRAINE

When the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic set out to transform into Ukraine in 1991, global actors and observers formulated various expectations regarding the new state. It was supposed to become a strong nation-(ethnocentric) state and push Russia and 'Russianness' back to the east; or Russia's friendly neighbour, co-operating with Moscow in many spheres (in fact Russia's satellite); or the West's partner, committed to developing a neoliberal economy open to foreign capital; or a state pursuing a liberal social policy, and stepping back to make room for developed civil society, etc. Few reflected about whether those visions were realistic and suited to the actual condition of the Ukrainian state, its social structure, its economy and its dominant beliefs.

Ukraine has not met any of those expectations, whether formulated by the United States, the European Union, the nationalist diaspora organisations, George Soros or the Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia. Or Poland. Nor has it met the expectations of its own people. However, it has survived and withstood constant pressure, and later, also open aggression from Russia. It has built up its central government bodies and the administrative apparatus, reconstructed its economy, albeit not according to neoliberal prescriptions, and allowed society to rebuild itself spontaneously, in its own way. On the one hand, this may not be much, but on the other - it is a great deal.

Back in 1991, Ukraine faced three crucial challenges which it had to respond to at the same time. Firstly, it needed to create itself as a state, develop its defence capabilities (not limited to the military dimension) and find a position in the international community adequate to its potential. Secondly, it needed to develop the foundations for a functioning market economy, not by transforming the Soviet-era command-and-control system, but rather by emerging from an economic non-system created by the chaotic reforms implemented between 1988 and 1991. And finally, the third, seldom noticed challenge concerned adjusting its budding market economy to the requirements of the 'turbo-capitalism'²²⁹ which had gained momentum since the collapse of the Soviet system, and had throughout the world dismantled the mechanisms of post-war free market sys-

²²⁹ The term was coined by Edward Luttwak in his book *Turbo-Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), in which he unapologetically dissects the processes of deregulation and privatisation taking place in the global economy since the 1980s. This term seems more accurate than 'neoliberalism'.

tems with a strong regulatory role of the state, state-guaranteed social security, clear ownership structures and manufacturing (real economy) sectors predominating over the financial sectors. The latter challenge was the most difficult one because the dominant discourse of the 1990s conflated market economy with turbo-capitalism, for instance by dismissing the view that there was a need for the state to play an active role in social and economic life as being a relic of Communist ideology. Part of that challenge was to adjust to the accelerating processes of globalisation processes, including the revolutionary changes concerning the flow of information.

It should also be noted that the changes taking place globally in recent decades have brought about a steady shrinking of the sovereignty of states, which have been losing more and more prerogatives to international institutions and procedures (which is one of the aspects of globalisation). For states and societies which had just gained or regained independence (i.e. those which had to build a new social and economic system from scratch while simultaneously modifying it in the process, rather than adapting an established one), being a part of that process was a nuisance, if not a threat, and created new difficulties, which were unknown and difficult to understand even for states with a long history of stable existence.

1. 'Assets'

Ukraine's greatest achievement during the first quarter of a century of independent existence has been to build a full-fledged state, understood as a system of institutions and procedures of political, economic, social or military nature. The Ukrainian state has many deficiencies, some of which are a legacy of Communism, while some others – are the consequences of choosing to exit Communism in an evolutionary way, by allowing an the oligarchisation of the *nomenklatura* and admitting corruption as an acceptable way to create wealth and make up for the deficiencies of the legal system at all levels of public life.

Ukraine has managed to preserve a large part of its industrial potential, modernise its most obsolete manufacturing capacities (to some degree), preserve the potential of research-intensive sectors of industry, including the space industry²³⁰, and build an IT sector, largely based on outsourcing arrangements,

²³⁰ Ukrainian-produced space rockets have been launched 150 times since 1991; <http://www.nkau.gov.ua/nsau/catalogNEW.nsf/mainU/731F5A089D942FA8C2256FBF002DFA78?OpenDocument&Lang=U>, accessed on 1 December 2016.

although the latter happened despite, and not as a result of, the state's policies. The country has also seen the massive development of 'non-oligarchic' enterprise, which has faced state-created hurdles created by the state at almost all times since independence and was forced to participate in the patterns of corruption, but which nonetheless eased the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet economic system and greatly contributed to the transformation of the Ukrainian people's way of thinking.

With most of the large manufacturing plants having been taken over by the domestic oligarchic capital, the modernisation of industry in Ukraine was slowed down or stalled, but on the other hand, the country managed to retain its national production potential, reducing its economic and political dependence on external actors, especially Russia.

Thanks to its cultural policy, which was at times prudent and at times procrastinating, Ukraine managed to avoid the major conflicts over regional and linguistic differences, which some circles abroad had feared in the early 1990s – and others looked forward to. Contrary to the expectations of the advocates of Ukrainian ethnocentrism and those of the 'Russkiy mir', Ukraine turned out to be pluralist in this respect, rather than divided. Today some authors even believe that the disputes over those differences mainly serve to mask social conflicts.²³¹ While the war has restored significance to the 'national question', it has also demonstrated very clearly that language is irrelevant as a criterion of patriotism.²³²

Ukraine has also managed to raise a generation of conscious citizens, much more open to the world than the older generations, partly owing to the development of information technologies which happened independently of the Ukrainian state's actions and engendered social change in all the societies participating in it. That new openness has made people less attached to previously promoted

²³¹ А. Котляр, А. Ермолаев, Страной руководит корпорация. Государственные институты приватизированы, <https://zn.ua/socium/andrey-ermolaev-stranoy-rukovodit-korporaciya-gosudarstvennyye-instituty-privatizirovany-.html>, accessed on 10 February 2014. The text was written on 7 February 2014, i.e. still before Yanukovich's rule had collapsed.

²³² However, one also finds radical opinions such as these: "Without a basic knowledge of the country's language, the national culture, the true history, man (...) is reduced to crap for foreign cultures", and "If there are 78% of Ukrainians in Ukraine, the percentage of Ukrainian-language television and radio shows, newspapers, magazines, books etc. should be the same." (В. Лизанчук, Антирусификация, или еще раз о мове, <https://zn.ua/SOCIUM/antirusifikaciya-ili-esche-raz-o-move-.html>, accessed on 4 July 2016. The text was published in *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya*, one of Ukraine's leading opinion papers.

traditions, whether Soviet (such as the cult of wartime heroes), or folklore-national (formalised folk culture purged of its original spiritual meaning), and modernised the Ukrainian patriotism (which in some cases meant the resurgence of nationalistic attitudes or the adoption the patterns typical of Western Europe's extreme right).

The Ukrainian society has proven to be unexpectedly mature and has demonstrated its ability to compensate for the state's shortcomings to some extent, in particular when under threat. The former Soviet subservient attitudes have given way to a new, civic attitude towards the state – not in everyone, as the oldest generation is no longer able to revise its established worldviews, but among a growing group of citizens. This much has been proven by the people's reaction to the war.

Finally, Ukraine has also managed to stay independent from Russia. Kyiv has kept out of all the re-integration programmes proposed by Moscow, from the Tashkent Treaty (the defence treaty of the CIS members) to the Eurasian Economic Community. It has not allowed Russia to take control over the system of transit gas pipelines (which was Gazprom's priority for years) or any other key sectors of the national economy. And since 2013, Ukraine has radically reduced its dependence on energy resource supplies from Russia.

2. 'Liabilities'

The main impediment hindering the Ukrainian SSR's transformation into the new Ukrainian state consisted in the weakness of the elites, especially the political leadership; its poor knowledge of the world; and procrastination and negligence (including a disastrous quality of legislation, even at the purely linguistic level). What was missing was a long-term, comprehensive reform programme, or at least a vision of the kind of state that Ukraine should become. The Ukrainian leaders' thinking still runs in terms of years, not decades.

As the new Ukrainian state was unable to replace the civil service, the judges, the police cadres etc. within a short timeframe, the old bureaucratic and corrupt practices became consolidated and were adjusted to the new conditions. After the Communist Party committees were abolished, the bureaucracy, the police and other services started to enjoy complete impunity, which led to a dramatic rise in corruption in everyday situations, especially as the development of enterprise created new opportunities in this regard. However, because corruption was also rampant at the highest echelons of the state, mainly in the

form of the embezzlement of public funds, which reached enormous proportions and created many fortunes, no-one was serious about combating common bribery.²³³ Worse still, the Ukrainian state tolerated the lawlessness of the new rich and of local state functionaries (the Vradiivka case mentioned above was a particularly horrifying case, but it was just one of many).²³⁴

It was only after the Revolution of Dignity that Kyiv took on corruption, especially in the judiciary, under pressure from the public and from the IMF. The reforms were met with resistance from the bureaucracy (especially the judges) and politicians defending their interests. As a result, it took longer than expected to create the necessary legal and organisational basis. The political class and sections of the bureaucracy have been forced to disclose their assets, but it is doubtful that this will be followed by measures to call those who are evidently guilty of corruption and thievery to account. A more important question, though, is whether the new measures will help to curb corruption in the future. According to some observers, the fierceness with which the new anti-corruption measures and regulations have been opposed indicates that they may actually be having some effect.²³⁵ Still, corruption cannot be eradicated with repression alone: what is also needed is a thorough change in both the system and in mentality.

Ukraine has built the institutions of electoral democracy, but it has not managed to implement democratic standards comparable to those achieved by the post-Communist countries in central Europe (and it is that region, and not the mature democracies of Western Europe, that should be the point of reference). Still, the Ukrainian public has embraced pro-democratic attitudes to a sufficient extent to be able to effectively put pressure on the state bodies. However, a radical breakthrough will only be possible with the development of the middle class, which needs to grow bigger and wealthier, better educated and more

²³³ According to 2006 estimates, only a quarter of the total value of bribes, estimated at more than US\$ 8 billion, was related to business activity. After the Revolution of Dignity, the value of the Ukrainian 'bribe market' and the average value of individual bribes increased considerably.

²³⁴ Due to limited space, the problem of organised crime is not addressed here. However, it should be noted that the phenomenon has been at least tolerated by the public authorities and enforcement bodies. Regarding common crime, the number of registered criminal acts rose from 370,000 to 564,000 between 1990 and 2013, but the number of crimes against life has dropped noticeably (from 3200 to 2000 in the case of manslaughter and attempted manslaughter, and from 2,700 to 500 in the case of rape and attempted rape).

²³⁵ See: А. Пасхавер, *Море волнуется*, http://zn.ua/internal/more-volnuetsya_.html accessed on 11 April 2016.

self-assured, because it is in that group's interest to curb the lawlessness of public authorities. For now, the disastrously low level of public confidence in Ukraine has been conducive to keeping business in the grey economy, and thus preserving corruption and blocking the development of civic attitudes.

One of the consequences of the bureaucratic-oligarchic order which has formed in Ukraine concerns the orientation towards short-term profit (a phenomenon similar to rent-seeking), an aversion to investment (which has also been displayed by the state and local administration), and a politically motivated disregard for the interests of the lower strata of society. As a result, Ukraine has experienced a dramatic decline in its infrastructure, including the degradation of the poorly maintained or completely neglected roads, streets and railways, and the closure of provincial schools, culture institutions and healthcare facilities. Many public buildings, including historic monuments, have been left to decay. No reform of social security systems has been undertaken, due to which those systems have collapsed due to underfunding. The environmental situation, which was already very bad in Soviet times, has deteriorated further: the effects of years of neglect, which the new state has tried to fix in only some places, have been exacerbated by a massive increase in the volume of waste resulting from rising consumption, as well as the growing marketing role of packaging and its increased environmental footprint. All those phenomena have undone the effects of decades of civilisational development in Ukraine, and will take decades to reverse even partially.

Ukrainian society, which was quite egalitarian before 1991, has now seen the emergence of drastic inequalities that people find unacceptable. The *nouveaux riches* (not necessarily the great oligarchs) demonstrate their new status through ostentatious consumption, while at the other end of the spectrum, 'redundant people' have emerged, deprived of adequate social security, or indeed any at all. Successive waves of inflation have eroded the people's savings, while the old social maladies such as alcoholism have been joined by a new one: drug abuse.²³⁶

The development model Ukraine has adopted has promoted the growth of large metropolises and led to a decline of smaller cities, and especially rural areas. Because of the progressing modernisation of agriculture, and the dwindling

²³⁶ The rise in drug abuse, in Ukraine and elsewhere, was largely a result of a deliberate 'promotional campaign' by criminal organisations dealing in drugs, which the state failed to counter adequately, and did not even try to counter at all in this particular respect. The number of drug related crimes rose in Ukraine from 7,000 to 34,000 between 1900 and 2013.

demand for labour that comes with it, Ukraine's rural areas will likely continue to depopulate, and hundreds of localities, especially in central and southern Ukraine, will cease to exist.

However, the single greatest failure of the Ukrainian state concerns its dramatic decline in population. Within less than 25 years, the population of the country which did not experience war,²³⁷ natural disasters or massive emigration in that period, shrank by nearly seven million, which corresponds to the population size of the Donbas. The effects of that process cannot be reversed, and it should be expected to worsen.

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When analysing developments in Ukraine and the world (and it should be noted that the pace of global change has also posed new, unexpected challenges to Ukraine), we seldom reflect on the scope of our right to judge one or any other country through the lens of our expectations, which we assume to have been realistically possible to meet. For instance, if we wanted Ukraine to develop in a way similar to Poland's pathway to EU membership, does that give us the right to blame Ukraine for not wanting, or not being able, to take that route? We leave this question open here.

Ukraine has come a very long way over the quarter of a century of its independence, and has achieved a great deal. Today it is a different state, a different country and a different society than it was in the summer of 1991. It did not implement a plan or programme adopted in advance, but acted by trial and error. It therefore made many mistakes, and in many cases has paid a high price. It has failed to achieve many of its objectives, in some cases because it could not pursue them with sufficient skill and perseverance, and in others, because from the start they were beyond the 'horizon of events', lying in the realm of dreams, not opportunities.

Is the bottom line of the Ukrainian nation's first 25 years of real statehood positive or negative? This is open to debate. In our view, it is positive: Ukraine has used more opportunities than it has wasted, and the Ukrainian state,

²³⁷ The consequences of the annexation of Crimea and the war are not included here because they concerned the loss of control (including reporting capacity) over parts of the population, and not a real decline in population. Crimea still has a population of around 3 million, even if they are no longer counted in Kyiv's statistics.

understood as a complex arrangement of institutions, procedures, habits and social attitudes, has built an impressive capacity to identify challenges and respond to them, a potential much bigger than that which it could muster in 1991. Despite all the burdens and missed opportunities, its development has not been blocked.

The assessment of the reach and quality of the change undergone by Ukraine will largely depend on the individual's level of expectations, and to what extent we are guided by prudence in formulating those expectations. If the author may take the liberty at the end to speak in a personal tone and less analytically – those who expect the impossible (or everything at once, which essentially amounts to the same thing), will always be disappointed.

TADEUSZ A. OLSZAŃSKI

TIMELINE: UKRAINE, 1986–2016

Principal developments before 1986

1922

The Soviet Union is established as a federative state, as a result of which Ukraine gains limited autonomy, and is able to consolidate its structural separateness built in 1917 and strengthen its national identity. The existence of the Ukrainian SSR as a 'sovereign socialist Soviet state' will enable Ukraine to peacefully gain its independence in 1991.

1932–1933

The *Holodomor* (Great Famine), a catastrophic famine affecting most of Ukraine's territory. According to many authors, it was deliberately caused by the Soviet leadership (it is beyond any doubt that Soviet policy deliberately exacerbated the consequences of the famine). According to reliable estimates, the *Holodomor* claimed around 3 million lives (around 10% of Ukraine's rural population).

1941–1945

The USSR is involved in World War II, Ukraine's entire territory is transitorily occupied by the Germans. The number of casualties is estimated at 5–8 million, and damage to property at 40%. After post-War reconstruction, Ukraine will not regain the same potential it had before the War within the Soviet state. The consequences of both demographic disasters, i.e. the *Holodomor* and the War, are still felt today.

1944–1945

Eastern Galicia, western Volhynia, Transcarpathia, northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia are incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR. The administrative consolidation of lands with predominantly Ukrainian populations is completed, inadvertently defining the future borders of the Ukrainian state.

1954

The Russian SFSR transfers the Crimea oblast and the separate city of Sevastopol to the Ukrainian SSR. As a result of the move, which was made purely for technical and administrative reasons, Crimea later became part of independent Ukraine.

1985

A programme for reforms to the Soviet state (*perestroika*) is proclaimed. An anti-alcohol campaign is launched which undermines the state's financial stability.

1986

26 April. A disaster occurs at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. The costs of the rescue operation, which goes on for many months, weaken the Soviet economy. A national revival begins in Ukraine.

19 October. A bill on individual economic activity is passed in the USSR. It is the first step towards legalising the private sector and the beginning of its dynamic development.

1987

27 January. The policy of *glasnost* is proclaimed, which considerably undermines the power of censorship.

18 June. A general amnesty is declared, which also includes political prisoners (most of whom were Ukrainians) and army deserters.

6 July. Crimean Tatars stage their first demonstration in Moscow, which marks the beginning of their fight for the right to return from Central Asia to Crimea.

1988

20 February. An ethnic Armenian uprising begins in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous oblast, which later transforms into the Armenian-Azerbaijani war (within the USSR). The war will continue till 12 May 1994, and will become the longest and bloodiest 'post-Soviet' military conflict.

26 May. A bill is passed in the USSR permitting co-operatives (private businesses) to hire workers. Most restrictions faced by the private sector are abolished.

7 July. Members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (the main dissident organisation of the 1970s, recreated in 1987) transform the Group into the Ukrainian Helsinki Union (a political organisation), which on 30 April 1990 becomes the first democratic party in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Republican Party.

13 November. The first ‘independent’ demonstration is legally organised in Kyiv by the environmental group *Zelenyi Svit* and joined by 10,000 demonstrators.

16 November. Estonia is the first Soviet republic to declare *suverenitet*.

1989

6 February. The Round Table negotiations begin in Poland, in the aftermath of which the Communist party agrees to share power with the opposition. The Communist regimes in the Warsaw Pact countries start to collapse.

15 February. The last Soviet soldiers leave Afghanistan.

17 May. Greek Catholic bishops, priests and believers go on hunger strike in Moscow. The strike continues for four months, the strikers demand legalisation of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine. In autumn the same year, Greek Catholic communities which used to operate underground, start taking over church buildings (closed down or used by Orthodox communities). In March 1991, Cardinal Lubachivsky, the Church’s leader, arrives in Lviv.

4 June. The Communists in Poland lose the general elections, and in the aftermath, the first non-communist government is formed in Poland on 12 September under the leadership of Tadeusz Mazowiecki (ministers nominated by the Polish Communist party (PZPR) will step down in July 1990).

18-24 July. Miners in the Donbas stage massive strikes, raising economic demands (following similar strikes in the Kuznetsk Coal Basin in Russia). In the aftermath, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopts a bill on the republic’s economic independence.

23 August. A human chain links Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, marking the beginning of the Baltic states’ path to independence.

8-10 September. The Ukrainian People’s Movement for Reconstruction, a nationwide civic league which had been forming since July, holds its founding congress. Some of the delegates call for independence, support for which is growing.

17 September. 100,000 people rally in Lviv on the anniversary of the annexation of the Western Ukraine by the Soviet Union and in defence of the Greek

Catholic Church, sparking a series of mass patriotic rallies in the western oblasts and Kyiv.

28 September. Gorbachev has Volodymyr Shcherbytsky removed from office. Shcherbytsky was the first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the last 'Brezhnev-era' chief of republic-level party structures (in office since 25 February 1972).

10 November. The border between East and West Germany is opened. Communist regimes in Europe collapse one after another, ending with the execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu on 25 December.

1990

21 January. A human chain, formed by more than one million people to celebrate the anniversary of Ukraine's 1918 Unification Act, links Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv with Kyiv.

31 January. The Russian Orthodox Church transforms its Ukrainian dioceses into an autonomous patriarchal exarchate.

7 February. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union abolishes the leading role of the party.

4 March. Elections are held to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, based on majoritarian representation principles. Non-Communist organisations also take part as the Democratic Bloc, gaining a quarter of the seats. In June Leonid Kravchuk becomes the speaker of the Supreme Council (*Verkhovna Rada* in Ukrainian). Meanwhile, representatives of the People's Movement of Ukraine gain a significant majority of mandates in the oblast and city soviets in Eastern Galicia in the elections to these bodies. The Movement's leader Vyacheslav Chornovil becomes the head of the Lviv Oblast Soviet. The region gains *de facto* autonomy which will last until the proclamation of independence.

11 March. Lithuania proclaims independence.

5 June. A *sobor* of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which had been operating within the Ukrainian diaspora, is held in Kyiv. This marks the beginning of the processes that will lead to the schism within the Ukrainian Orthodox community and its division into two churches, one recognising the

supremacy of the Moscow Patriarch, and the other the supremacy of the Patriarch of Kyiv.

11 June. The Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR introduces a Kyiv time zone.

12 June. The Russian SFSR proclaims *suverenitet*, marking the beginning of the so-called *suverenitet parade*. On the same day, the Federation Council of the USSR establishes a working group for the preparation of a new Union Treaty.

16 July. The Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopts the declaration of the *suverenitet* of Ukraine while keeping the country's original name (355 votes for, 4 against).

23 September. The constitution of the Ukrainian SSR is amended by formally abolishing the leading role of the Communist party, putting republic-level legislation above Union legislation, establishing the Supreme Court of the USSR as the highest appellate court, and establishing the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

2–17 October. The so-called 'Revolution on Granite', a student protest in central Kyiv, calling on Ukraine to break the negotiations of the new Union Treaty and demanding the resignation of the Masol government. The hunger strike is joined by around 300 people. The parliamentary opposition withholds support for the protesters, who are massively supported by the inhabitants of Kyiv (for example by a demonstration on 15 October with a turnout of 100,000 people, during which a first attempt to bring the national flag into the Supreme Soviet building is made). The developments speed up the evolution of views and attitudes of the Kyiv-based *nomenklatura*. Before, on 1 October, the People's Council's calls for a general strike under the same slogan fail to bring a result.

25 October. The second congress of the People's Movement of Ukraine formulates a programme for independence.

28 October. The Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopts a language bill granting Ukrainian the status of state language, and providing for the Ukrainianisation of the republic's structures within five years.

12 November. The Polish foreign minister visits Kyiv. The two sides sign a declaration on the principles and basic directions of the development of Polish-Ukrainian relations.

19 November. A treaty between the Russian SFSR and Ukrainian SSR on the principles of mutual relations is signed, which recognises Ukraine's territorial integrity, among other provisions.

1991

10 January. Attempts at crushing the independence movements in Lithuania and Latvia, bloody clashes in Vilnius.

20 January. A referendum is held in Crimea. With a turnout of 81%, 93% of the voters, i.e. 76% of all eligible to vote, favour granting Crimea the status of a 'USSR entity', i.e. a Union republic. In the wake of the vote, the authorities of the Crimea oblast establish the government of an autonomous republic, and on 12 February Kyiv restores the Crimean Autonomous SSR.

16 February. The oblast soviets of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil, controlled by the People's Movement of Ukraine, establish the Galician Assembly (*Halytska Asambleia*), an autonomous co-ordination structure.

24–26 February. NATO forces taking part in Operation Desert Sabre defeat the Iraqi army, whose training and arms are modelled on the Soviet army.

28 February. Serbian Krajina proclaims independence. The Serbian-Croatian war begins.

17 March. An all-Union referendum on the future of the Soviet Union is held, but it is boycotted by the Baltic republics, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova. In Ukraine, people generally support the option of keeping the reformed Soviet Union, and for adhering to Ukraine's Declaration of *sovereignty*. In eastern Galicia, there is universal support for independence. The campaign 'No to the Union Treaty' starts in Ukraine.

27 June–6 July. In the aftermath of the Ten-Day War, Slovenia gains independence and Yugoslavia begins to break up.

28 June, 1 July. The Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance are dissolved.

5 July. The Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR establishes the office of President of the Republic, and calls a presidential election on 1 December.

31 July. The Soviet-American START I treaty, which had been negotiated since 1982, is signed. It provides for a reduction of strategic nuclear arsenals. The United States' desire to see the treaty implemented was one of the reasons why the US did not want the Soviet Union to break up.

1 August. The US President visits Kyiv and delivers a speech criticising the Union republic's aspirations to independence.

3 August. Gorbachev announces that the new Union Treaty will be signed on 20 August. Ukraine is not expected to join.

19-21 August. The Yanayev coup, a failed attempt by Communist conservatives to overthrow Gorbachev. In the aftermath, most Soviet republics proclaim independence.

24 August. The Supreme Soviet of Ukraine adopts a resolution on the proclamation of independence of Ukraine (321 votes for, 2 against), and then the Act of Independence (346 for, 1 against) and calls a referendum to obtain popular endorsement for this act. It also passes bills on depoliticising the prosecution authorities, the Ministry of the Interior and the KGB, but the bill on de-communising the entire state apparatus is rejected. There is no reaction from Moscow. The Act also states that the new state's official name is to be Ukraine.

26 August. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine issues a decree suspending the activities of the Communist Party of Ukraine (its assets had been nationalised the day before, and on 30 September the party is banned). This marks the beginning of the rapid dissolution of the structures of the party, the *Komsomol* and other bodies. The Communist Party of Ukraine will be re-established in June 1993, and banned again in 2015.

4 September. The state flag is raised on the dome of the *Verkhovna Rada* building. The Soviet emblems on its façade will survive until the spring of 2000, and the five-pronged star on the flag mast until February 2014.

12 September. The *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine adopts a bill stating that Ukraine is the legal successor of the Ukrainian SSR, and partly of the Soviet Union.

10 October. The *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine adopts a bill on citizenship, granting Ukrainian citizenship to all permanent residents of the country.

1 December. In the referendum, 90.32% of voters (28.8 million people) vote for independence, with a turnout of 84.18% (31.9 million). In Crimea, 54.2% vote for independence, with a turnout of 67.5%, and in Sevastopol 57.1% vote in favour, with a turnout of 63.7%, which means that in both cases around a third of all those eligible to vote voted for independence.

Leonid Kravchuk is elected president (61.6% of the vote in the first round). His main rival, Vyacheslav Chornovil, gets 23.3% of the vote.

In a local referendum organised in the Transcarpathia oblast, 78% of the voters are for 'special self-government' (effectively autonomy) for the oblast. Kyiv ignores the referendum; in the aftermath, in May 1993, a so-called Temporary Government of Transcarpathian Ruthenians is created. However, despite behind-the-scenes support from Moscow, political separatism in Transcarpathia does not develop, while the Ruthenian movement (which claims that the inhabitants of Transcarpathia are ethnically distinct from the Ukrainians) becomes an instrument of the local post-*nomenklatura* elites.

2 December. Poland recognises the independence of Ukraine, followed by Canada and Hungary (on 3 December). Prior to the conference in Viskuli, Ukraine will have been recognised by only 13 states, mostly post-Communist (Russia on 5 December) and Latin American countries. By 24 December it will have been recognised by another 14, including Sweden, Norway and Switzerland.

8–9 December. The presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus meet in Viskuli, in the Belarusian part of the Belovezha Forest. The agreement establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States is signed, and the Soviet Union effectively ceases to exist. The agreement is ratified by the parliaments of Ukraine and Belarus on 10 December, and by the parliament of Russia on 12 December (on the same day Russia terminates the 1922 Union Treaty). On 21 December, the agreement is signed again in Alma-Ata (now Almaty), this time with the other former Union republics (except the Baltic states and Georgia). Ukraine will never ratify the CIS Statute signed on 22 January 1993; it will remain a founding member but never becomes a member.²³⁸

25 December. Gorbachev leaves the Kremlin, and the Soviet flag is replaced by the Russian one. The Soviet Union formally ceases to exist as a subject of international law.

²³⁸ Kyiv has apparently forgotten about this, as in October 2016 the Ukrainian foreign minister announced that Ukraine was looking at options for withdrawing from the CIS.

The United States recognises the independence of Ukraine. In the days that follow, all the world powers follow in its footsteps (Israel on 25 December, Germany and India on 26 December, China on 27 December, France, Italy and Japan on 28 December, the United Kingdom on 31 December). The Holy See recognises Ukraine on 8 August 1992.

1992

3 January. Soldiers and reservists of the former Soviet armed forces stationed in Ukraine start to take oaths of allegiance to Ukraine. Ultimately around 60% of all the troops take the oath. The Black Sea Fleet is not part of the oath campaign.

10 January. A temporary currency known as the *karbovanets* (coupon) is introduced. Initially it circulates in parallel to the rouble, but as of April it is the sole currency for cash transactions, and as of November, also for non-cash transactions.

15 January. The *Verkhovna Rada* adopts a new national anthem (music only). On 22 January, the state flag is adopted, and the coat of arms on 19 February.

5 February. The Supreme Council of Crimea proclaims its independence and calls a referendum on 2 August to confirm the decision; following Kyiv's firm reaction, the declaration of independence is repealed and the referendum cancelled.

2 March–21 June. The war in Transnistria. A group of Ukrainian volunteers from the UNA-UNSO take part in the military operations on the separatist side.

4 March. The *Verkhovna Rada* adopts a bill on the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and in June the first privatisation programme is announced. The privatisation of large enterprises proceeds with difficulty, and many of them are taken over by their former managers.

22 June. Estonia adopts a national currency. The rouble zone begins to disintegrate.

25 June. The Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate is proclaimed in reaction to the Moscow Patriarch's refusal to grant autocephalous status (canonical independence) to Ukraine. The move leads to a schism within Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

14 August 1992–27 December 1993. The war in Abkhazia. A group of Ukrainian volunteers from UNA-UNSO fight on the Georgian side.

22 August. Mykola Plaviuk, the exiled president of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), hands over the republic's insignia to President Kravchuk, along with a declaration stating that Ukraine is the legal successor to the UNR and will continue its traditions.

3 September. Ukraine joins the International Monetary Fund.

13 October. Leonid Kuchma, then director of the Pivdenmash plant, is nominated as prime minister. The nomination marks the beginning of the political career of Ukraine's future president, who will hold the office for two terms.

18 November. The President of Ukraine is given the power to issue decrees with the force of parliamentary bills.

12 November. The *Karbovanets* becomes the sole currency in Ukraine. The country finally leaves the rouble zone.

1993

26 January. Viktor Yushchenko is appointed the governor of the National Bank of Ukraine (based on a recommendation from his predecessor Vadym Hetman and the members of the agricultural sector *nomenklatura*). This marks the beginning of Yushchenko's political career.

7 June. Miners in the Donbas start a massive strike, this time controlled by the mine managers. It is the largest strike in the history of Ukraine (including the Soviet period): 230 of the 250 of coal mines and nearly 500 other businesses go on strike. Their demands include autonomy for the Donbas. In the aftermath of the strike Kuchma's government collapses and a snap election is called.

31 August. Prime minister Leonid Kuchma resigns (his resignation is accepted only on 21 September). A further confrontation between the president and the leadership of the *Verkhovna Rada* leads to an early election on 27 March, and a presidential election on 26 June 1994.

22 September. President Kravchuk designates the Donetsk entrepreneur Yukhym Zvyahilsky as acting prime minister and personally takes the lead

in the government. The move is a *de facto* abolition of the office of prime minister. The miners' protests subside as a result, but Ukraine experiences several months of governmental chaos.

24 September–6 November. Civil war in Georgia over the attempted return to power of Zviad Gamaskhurdia, the president ousted in a bloody coup on 6 January 1992.

3–4 October. The constitutional crisis in Russia, which had been mounting since March, ends with an attempted coup by supporters of the Supreme Council speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, which is brutally suppressed by President Yeltsin. The Supreme Council is disbanded, and in the aftermath, a clear separation of powers is introduced in Russia, with significantly stronger powers for the executive.

10 November. Members of the totalitarian sect YUSMALOS Great White Brotherhood try to seize the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. The sect's leaders are arrested and the Brotherhood ceases to exist.

1994

14 January. The presidents of Ukraine, Russia and the United States sign a memorandum on transferring the strategic nuclear weapons deployed in Ukrainian territory to Russia. The process of transferring the warheads continues until mid-1996.

30 January. Yuriy Meshkov is elected president of Crimea. Shortly afterwards, the republic's 1992 constitution is restored and a referendum on Crimea's independence is called. President Kravchuk cancels the referendum decree, but otherwise Kyiv tolerates the Crimean leadership's separatist ambitions for more than a year.

9 February. Ukraine joins NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

27 March, 10 April. Parties with a Communist orientation win the parliamentary elections (128 mandates of the 330 that were filled). Right-wing movements and parties win 83 mandates. Because of the obligatory turnout threshold of 50%, in some constituencies the voting has to be repeated several times, but still it proves impossible to elect the full number of 450 parliamentary deputies.

14 April. Ukraine signs a Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with the European Union.

29 June, 1 July. The presidential elections. Leonid Kuchma is elected in the second round (52.15% of the vote). The transfer of power from Kravchuk to Kuchma is the first instance of a democratic succession of power in the post-Soviet states.

11 October. President Kuchma delivers his policy statement 'On the path of radical economic reforms'. The first attempt is made at introducing market economy mechanisms; it collapses in May 1995.

22 November. After lengthy disputes, Ukraine ratifies the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear state.

5 December. The so-called Budapest Memorandum is signed, under which the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation offer guarantees of security to Ukraine in return for it giving up nuclear weapons.

11 December-31 August 1996. The First Chechen War. A group of UNA-UNSO volunteers take part on the Chechen side.

1995

17 March. The *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine repeals the constitution of Crimea and abolishes the office of the republic's president, while at the same time confirming the terms of Crimea's autonomy. A protest by the Crimean authorities is suppressed in Kyiv without bloodshed; on **6 May** Meshkov leaves Crimea for Russia. Crimean separatism disappears for many years.

8 June. The president and the speaker of the *Verkhovna Rada* sign the Constitutional Agreement.

18 July. Funeral of Patriarch Volodymyr (Romanyuk), the leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate. UNA-UNSO militias provoke riots during the funeral (the first in independent Ukraine) and a brutal reaction from the *militsiya*. In violation of previous arrangements, during the riots the patriarch is buried on the pavement in front of the entrance of the Saint Sophia Cathedral.

19 November. Ukraine is admitted to the Council of Europe as the second CIS member after Moldova.

1996

27 May. President Kuchma nominates Pavlo Lazarenko, a Dnipropetrovsk oligarch, as prime minister (Lazarenko succeeds Yevhen Marchuk, a cadre officer of the KGB and the first head of the Security Service of Ukraine). Mounting rivalry over the natural gas market between the Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk clans. Lazarenko is dismissed on 2 July 1997.

16 June. A failed attempt to assassinate Lazarenko takes place in Kyiv (according to some observers, the attempt was feigned). The conflict between the Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk clans over shares in the domestic gas market enters a hot phase.

28 June. After all-night deliberations, the *Verkhovna Rada* adopts the constitution by 315 votes in the presence of the president. Kuchma signs the constitution on **12 July**, following which the parliamentary deputies (except the 75 Communists) swear on it.

2 September. Monetary reforms: the *karbovanets* is replaced by the *hryvnia* at a rate of 100 000 : 1. The old banknotes remain in circulation until 16 September. Ukraine is the last post-Soviet state to carry out monetary reform.

19 September. Ukraine and the United States declare that their relations are a 'strategic partnership'. In May 1997, the same status is given to relations with Poland and Russia, and later with more than a dozen other countries.

3 November. Yevhen Shcherban, an oligarch and parliamentarian, is assassinated at the Donetsk airport. The conflict between the Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk clans ends. The Donetsk oligarchs are forced to give up their monopolistic aspirations, and President Kuchma imposes a 'non-aggression pact' on the clans, under which the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts gain informal autonomy.

1997

30 May. Signature of the Ukrainian-Russian Treaty on Friendship, Co-operation and Partnership, which had been initialled back in 1995, and of an agreement regulating the status of Russia's navy in Crimea. Under the latter, the Black Sea Fleet is to be stationed in Sevastopol until the end of 2017. Russia only ratifies the treaty in December 1998, and in December 2008 it is extended for another ten years.

2 June. Signature of the Ukrainian-Romanian treaty of Partnership and Co-operation (the last of Ukraine's treaties on mutual relations with neighbour countries).

9 July. NATO and Ukraine sign the Charter on Distinctive Partnership.

27 August. Signature of the Founding Act on mutual relations between NATO and the Russian Federation, which paved the way towards NATO enlargement. Thanks to efforts by Polish diplomacy, among others, its signature was conditional on the previous regulation of Russian-Ukrainian relations and the signature of the NATO-Ukraine Charter.

1998

1 March. The Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between Ukraine and the EU comes into force.

29 March. Parliamentary elections are held (for the first time under the mixed system, with half the deputies elected in first-past-the-post constituencies, and the other half in proportional elections). Parties representing the oligarchs gain a majority in the new *Verkhovna Rada*.

22 April. Vadym Hetman, the first governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, and at that time an influential parliamentarian and patron of Yushchenko's career, is assassinated in Kyiv. His death thwarted the formation of an independent 'banker clan', and prevented Yushchenko from running in the 1999 presidential election.

13 August. The Russian currency market collapses. Ukraine proves to be fairly resilient (the exchange rate of the hryvnia decreases by around 80%). Despite short-term losses, the crisis makes imports less profitable and contributes to the economic revival in Ukraine.

1999

25 February. Vyacheslav Chornovil, the leader of the People's Movement of Ukraine and Kuchma's potential rival in the presidential elections, dies in a car accident. His death seals the divisions within the Movement and its subsequent marginalisation.

2 March. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary join NATO (Ukraine's other western neighbours, Romanian and Slovakia, will join in 2004).

24 March–10 June. NATO airstrikes against Yugoslavia.

12 June. KFOR is created, Ukraine deploys 1300 troops in Kosovo.

31 October, 14 November. Presidential elections. Leonid Kuchma is elected for a second term in the runoff (with 56.2% of the vote).

6 December. Conclusions of the governmental commission on the OUN-UPA are announced, paving the way towards the rehabilitation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.²³⁹

22 December. The *Verkhovna Rada* approves Viktor Yushchenko's nomination as prime minister. Thorough economic reforms begin.

31 December. Russian president Boris Yeltsin resigns. Beginning of Vladimir Putin's rule.

2000

16 April. A referendum on constitutional amendments is called by Kuchma, preceded by a ten-day period of early voting. The amendments proposed by the president are backed by 82–90% of voters, with a turnout of 81%. The referendum results are clearly fraudulent. The president does not try to implement the amendments 'endorsed' by the rigged referendum.

16 September. Georgiy Gongadze, a noted Kyiv-based journalist, is kidnapped and murdered.

25 November. The anniversary of the *Holodomor* is officially celebrated as a public holiday for the first time (nationwide celebrations had been organised since 1990).

28 November. Oleksandr Moroz presents the so-called Melnychenko tapes to the *Verkhovna Rada*. The tapes, of questionable origin and credibility, imply that Gongadze's kidnapping had been inspired by President Kuchma. Moroz's allegations trigger a political crisis that will continue until the 2004 presidential elections.

²³⁹ The text was published in *Den* on 6 December 1999.

15 December. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant is officially closed down (electricity production stops at the last functioning unit). For technical reasons, the plant will have to continue operating 'in liquidation' for several more decades.

2001

19 January. Yulia Tymoshenko dismissed from her post as deputy prime minister for energy. On **13 February**, she is arrested on corruption charges concerning her business activities in the first half of the 1990s. After her release on **9 April** she becomes the leader of the opposition to President Kuchma.

9 March. A massive demonstration against the president in Kyiv ends with a brutal police intervention provoked by the UNA-UNSO. Shocked by the events, the protesters temporarily suspended any activities aimed at forcing Kuchma to resign.

26 April. Viktor Yushchenko's government collapses. Anatoliy Kinakh is appointed the next prime minister and his government follows the same main directions as Yushchenko's cabinet did, but with less determination.

23–27 July. Pope John Paul II visits Kyiv and Lviv.

11 September. Terror attack on the World Trade Center in New York.

25 October. The land code is adopted, which *inter alia* introduces property rights to agricultural land. The implementation of regulations authorising free trade in agricultural land is suspended, and remains in suspension until the present.

5 December. The first census in independent Ukraine. The previous one was conducted in the USSR in 1989, and the next one, which was originally planned for 2011, is yet to be conducted.

2002

31 March. Parliamentary elections are held (under mixed electoral regulations). Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine Bloc receives the most votes, but it is the pro-Kuchma parties that form a parliamentary majority.

11 April. Allegations that Ukraine illegally sold radar units to Iraq (which later turn out to be unfounded) deepen Ukraine's international isolation, which started in the aftermath of the Gongadze killing. In the following months, the United States steps up pressure on the Ukrainian president to resign.

16 September. Start of the 'Rise up, Ukraine' campaign, organised by Yulia Tymoshenko, and aimed at forcing the president to resign. The first demonstration in Kyiv is very large (mainly thanks to the support of the Communists), but later the campaign loses momentum. Our Ukraine distances itself from the campaign.

21 November. The *Verkhovna Rada* approves the nomination of Viktor Yanukovich, then the chief of the Donetsk Oblast State Administration, as prime minister.

2003

20 March. Kyiv sends a chemical and radiation defence battalion to Kuwait in a gesture of support for the anti-Iraqi coalition.

19 September. Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus establish the CIS Common Economic Space as a formula for re-integration of the post-Soviet economic space. The agreement remains a dead letter.

30 September–23 October. Crisis caused by Russia's decision to build a bridge to connect the Taman Peninsula with Ukraine's Tuzla Spit in the Kerch Strait; the threat of armed incidents. Kyiv manages to get Russia to stop the construction and recognise Tuzla as belonging to Ukraine. The outcome boosts President Kuchma's ratings; a patriotic mobilisation in Ukraine follows.

2 November. The rigged parliamentary elections in Georgia trigger mass protests (the Rose Revolution) and force President Eduard Shevardnadze to resign on **23 November** while the election results are declared invalid. The events are the first in a series of so-called 'colour revolutions', and are watched closely in Ukraine. Activists from Georgia's *Khmara* movement will later train pro-Yushchenko activists in Ukraine.

30 December. The Constitutional Court in Ukraine rules that Kuchma's second term is his first term under the new Constitution, which means he is eligible to run for one more term. Kuchma nonetheless chooses not to run for president again.

2004

1 May. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia join the EU. Romania, Ukraine's last non-EU western neighbour, will join in 2007.

14 June. The Krivorizhstal steelworks conglomerate is privatised by a consortium of companies owned by the top oligarchs Rinat Akhmetov and Viktor Pinchuk. The transaction is the most widely publicised of Ukraine's corrupt privatisations, but at the same time it represents a battle which the Ukrainian oligarchs won against the lobbyists of foreign (Russian and Indian) steel companies. Criticism of that move will become one of the topics of the presidential campaign. After the Orange Revolution, the transaction will be invalidated and the company sold to ArcelorMittal on 24 October 2005 after a new tender.

23 June. A constitutional amendment weakening the president's powers is passed at the first reading (it will be ultimately adopted on 8 December).

5 September. Viktor Yushchenko falls sick with a mysterious disease, commonly believed to have been caused by poisoning (the causes have never been fully explained). It disrupts his campaign, but his popularity unexpectedly increases on a wave of sympathy.

31 October. The first round of presidential elections. Viktor Yanukovych gains a very narrow lead over Viktor Yushchenko (40.12% versus 39.15%). Yushchenko's supporters and foreign observers express critical opinions about the vote.

21 November. Second round of presidential elections. Exit polls point to a clear victory for Yushchenko, while the initial results published by the Central Electoral Commission show a narrow advantage for Yanukovych. It is commonly believed that massive irregularities took place during the voting. Yushchenko calls for protests (the rally in central Kyiv had been prepared in advance).

22 November. Yushchenko supporters gather for a rally in Kyiv and start an occupation of Independence Square. The mayor of Kyiv backs the protests. The Orange Revolution begins.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ For a detailed timeline of those events, see Wojciech Stanisławski, *The orange ribbon. A calendar of the political crisis in Ukraine*, autumn 2004, OSW, Warsaw 2005 (a version in Ukrainian entitled *Pomaranchevyi bant* is also available).

24 November. The Central Electoral Commission announces the official election results which proclaim Yanukovych the winner (49.4% to 46.61%). The USA, NATO and the EU refuse to recognise the results.

25 November. The Supreme Court bars the official publication of results, pending the resolution of the complaint filed by Yushchenko's staff.

27 November. The *Verkhovna Rada* rules that the announced results do not reflect the will of the voters, and its speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn suggests that the second round of voting should be repeated.

28 November. A congress of members of city and oblast councils from eastern and southern Ukraine is held in Severodonetsk. The participants recognise the election of Yanukovych as legitimate, and threaten to hold a referendum on autonomy for southern and eastern Ukraine (but not on separation from Ukraine, as the media incorrectly claimed). No further steps are taken.

3 December. The Supreme Court rules that it is impossible to determine the result of the second round of voting, and orders that the vote be repeated on 26 December.

8 December. The *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine adopts the constitutional amendment initially passed in June (483 votes in favour). This is a compromise aimed at resolving the crisis and safeguarding the interests of Yushchenko's opponents. Viktor Yushchenko proclaims the victory of the Orange Revolution.

26 December. Viktor Yushchenko is elected president (51.99% versus 44.20%). He is sworn in on **23 January 2005**.

2005

24 January. Yulia Tymoshenko is appointed prime minister after embarrassing disputes within the president's circle (Yushchenko initially refuses to deliver on his pre-election commitment concerning the prime minister's post).

21 February. The EU-Ukraine Action Plan is signed.

8 September. In the aftermath of a serious political conflict within Yushchenko's circle, the Yulia Tymoshenko government collapses and Petro Poroshenko loses his post as secretary of the National Security and Defence Council.

On **22 September** Yuriy Yekhanurov becomes the new prime minister. The new leadership thus irreversibly wastes its transition period, when the 1996 constitution was still in place and Yushchenko had broader powers, and thus seals the disintegration of the 'Orange' political camp.

2006

1 January. The constitutional amendment adopted on 8 December 2004 comes into force. Some provisions concerning the status of deputies and the functioning of the parliament will only be enacted after the parliamentary elections.

Russia cuts off natural gas supplies to Ukraine for the first time, demanding that Kyiv accept a drastic price rise. Ukraine responds by collecting gas destined for European countries from transit gas pipelines, but after several days it is forced to capitulate. On **4 January** gas supplies resume. In the days that follow, Moscow threatens to cut off gas supplies during the price negotiations.

17 February. The United States officially recognises Ukraine as a market economy.

26 March. Parliamentary elections (held under proportional regulations) are won by the Party of Regions. As a result, on **4 August** Viktor Yanukovych becomes prime minister again.

2007

2 April. President Yushchenko dissolves the *Verkhovna Rada*, alleging that the parliamentary majority has violated the constitution (the decision itself is dubious from the constitutional point of view), and calls a new election for 27 April. A political crisis begins, which ends when the elections are postponed till autumn.

30 September. The Party of Regions wins the early parliamentary elections (held under proportional regulations) but the government is formed from the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defence. On **19 December** Yulia Tymoshenko becomes prime minister again.

2008

4 April. NATO refuses to award a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine.

16 May. Ukraine joins the WTO (membership negotiations for which started back in December 1993).

8–12 August. The Russian-Georgian war. Immediately after the war, a number of publications appear in Russia which discuss a possible Russian-Ukrainian war based on a similar scenario.

15 September. In the aftermath of the bankruptcy of the New York-based Lehman Brothers bank, the American sub-prime crisis transforms into a global financial crisis, and later into a crisis of the real economy. Ukraine is particularly severely hit by the dwindling demand for steel products, which is related not only to the crisis but also the end of China's Olympics investments.

8 October. President Yushchenko dissolves the parliament and calls another early election on **7 December**. The decision triggers a political crisis that will end on **12 November** with Yushchenko backing down on his decision (before which the Administrative Court in Kyiv will invalidate the president's decree). A political success for Yulia Tymoshenko.

2009

1 January. Russia again cuts off natural gas supplies to Ukraine, demanding a drastic price rise. Gas supplies to the EU are again reduced. On **18 January**, Prime Minister Tymoshenko accepts the extremely unfavourable terms of gas supplies from Russia (her conflict with President Yushchenko greatly contributed to the adverse outcome of the negotiations, which also involved representatives of the EU).

6 June. Viktor Yanukovych terminates the agreement on a grand parliamentary coalition and the introduction of anti-democratic amendments in the constitution which had been negotiated with Tymoshenko. The initiative to introduce the amendments had come from Tymoshenko.

27 November. The Eurasian Customs Union is created by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

2010

7 February. Viktor Yanukovych wins the presidential election, defeating Yulia Tymoshenko (48.9% versus 45.5% in the second round; in the first round Yanukovych's advantage was 35.3% versus 25.1%).

11 March. A government under Mykola Azarov is formed.

21 April. The presidents of Ukraine and Russia sign the so-called Kharkiv agreements, which reduce the price of gas paid by Ukraine in return for an extension of the Russian navy's stationing in Crimea to 2042, with the possibility of further extensions. The agreement, which Ukraine was forced to sign because of the unfavourable terms of gas supplies negotiated in early 2009, is perceived as treason by patriotic sections of society, and boosts Yulia Tymoshenko's popularity again.

1 October. The Constitutional Court restores the June 1996 version of the constitution, thus making the government subordinate to the president again.

10 October. The Eurasian Economic Community, designed to rival the European Union, is established under the aegis of Moscow; in 2014, the Community will transform into an Economic Union. Russia starts (futile) efforts to get Ukraine to join, which would have rendered Ukraine's future association with the EU impossible.

16 November. The Tax Maidan begins. This is a protest by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs against a new tax code. Protests in the Independence Square are joined by several tens of thousands of people, and around one million throughout the country. In the aftermath Yanukovych vetoes some of the new code's provisions.

17 December. Beginning of the Arab Spring, i.e. social protests and revolutions in Arab countries, which will continue until 26 October 2013.

2011

13 January–23 November. Civil war in Libya, during which European NATO members intervene with air strikes. The war leads to a lasting destabilisation of the Libyan state; a new civil war will erupt on 16 May 2014.

26 January. The outbreak of the civil war in Syria; the lasting destabilisation of the Syrian state. The mass flow of refugees to Turkey will lead to the refugee crisis in 2015.

5 August. Yulia Tymoshenko is arrested on corruption charges; on 11 October she is sentenced to 7 years in prison for abuses of power during the gas

negotiations in 2009. Her conviction is a violation of the unwritten political agreement dating back to Kuchma's presidency.

1 October. Entry into force of the pensions reform which *inter alia*, introduced a so-called second pillar (individual pension accounts), extended the retirement age for women from 55 to 60, and for men working in the public administration from 60 to 62 years, and reduced the future pensions of the civil service. The reform, implemented under pressure from the IMF, did not solve any of the problems of the Ukrainian pension system.

2012

5 June. The *Verkhovna Rada* adopts a bill regulating the status of the official language and minority languages, and replacing the old Soviet-era bill from 1989. The bill comes in for harsh criticism from the opposition as allegedly promoting 'Russification'. The opposition protests for several days in Kyiv (the so-called Language Maidan), but the protests are not particularly energetic.

19 July. The Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union is initialled.

28 October. The Party of Regions wins the parliamentary elections (held under mixed regulations), but the fragmented opposition parties also confirm their strength. The elections are deemed to have been the dirtiest in the history of Ukraine.

24 December. A new government is formed, led by Azarov. The cabinet includes member of the so-called 'family' (a group of politicians and entrepreneurs associated with Viktor Yanukovich and his son Oleksandr).

2013

26 June. In Vradiivka (Mykolaiv Oblast) police officers rape Iryna Krashkova. Violent protests erupt in response (involving an attempted storming of the police building), which end with the 'Vradiivka march' to Kyiv in July. Opposition parties try to exploit the event politically, but in vain. The Vradiivka rebellion may be seen as a prelude to the Revolution of Dignity.

27 October. Presidents Yanukovich and Putin secretly meet in Sochi. According to unconfirmed reports, Putin demands that Kyiv give up the plans to sign the

Association Agreement with the EU and threatens to take away Crimea from Ukraine as the mildest measure.

21 November. A week before the planned signature of the Association Agreement, Kyiv announced its withdrawal.

Student demonstrations begin in Independence Square in Kyiv and in Lviv, and also in other cities. The protests are initially apolitical, with the opposition leaders struggling to organise their own, separate rallies. In later October, the protests gradually subside.

30 November. In the night, special police forces brutally attack a handful of protesters remaining in Independence Square. Some demonstrators find refuge in the St. Michaels Monastery (the church of the Kyiv Patriarchate). The ostensible brutality of the police triggers widespread outrage and rekindles the protests.

1 December. A massive demonstration is held in central Kyiv, in the course of which the Maidan becomes permanently occupied by the protesters and transformed into a camp, and later a fortress. The Maidan Self-Defence is created. Towards the end of the demonstration, some protesters try to get into the president's office on Bankova street; militants attack the security forces and the police responds brutally. These events may be seen as the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity.

17 December. The presidents of Russia and Ukraine meet in Moscow. Yanukovich obtains a temporary decrease in the price of natural gas and a promise that Russia will invest US\$15 billion in Ukrainian treasury bonds. The success encourages Yanukovich not to yield to the protests.

2014

16 January. The *Verkhovna Rada* adopts a package of bills limiting the freedom to demonstrate and the freedom of speech (in the latter case, the new rules are modelled on Russian solutions). Because of the scandalous abuse of procedure during their passing, the new rules are illegal. They are repealed on **28 January.**

Several hours later, an attempt by the protesters to march from the Maidan to the *Rada* building ends in clashes in Hrushevsky street.

22 January. At night, Hrushevsky street sees the first fatalities.

23 January. The process of the opposition seizing administration buildings outside Kyiv begins. Within several days, the government loses control of the western oblasts.

28 January. Prime Minister Azarov resigns, but his government continues to operate 'in a state of being dismissed'. President Yanukovych fails to nominate a new candidate for prime minister.

18–20 February. Bloody fighting in central Kyiv, ending with a massacre of insurgents on Institutskaya street (the so-called Heavenly Hundred). Negotiations between the opposition and Yanukovych take place in parallel. The bloodshed means that Yanukovych loses any chances of staying in power for even a short time.

21 February. The *Verkhovna Rada* restores the 2004 constitution (386 votes for), and, by a special bill, releases Yulia Tymoshenko from prison. Opposition leaders reach an agreement with Yanukovych, under which a presidential election is to be held in the autumn of 2014, but the people on the Maidan reject the deal. At night, Yanukovych flees from Kyiv, and several days later leaves Ukraine. Prime Minister Azarov and many presidential aides also flee or go into hiding.

22 February. The *Verkhovna Rada* speaker Volodymyr Rybak resigns, thanks to which it is possible to legally elect Oleksandr Turchynov as the new speaker (285 votes for). The *Rada* deposes President Yanukovych (329 votes in favour); Turchynov is now acting president, in his capacity as the *Rada* speaker. Arseniy Yatsenyuk is nominated as prime minister (his government is formed on 27 February). A new presidential election is called for 25 May.

In Kharkiv, council delegates representing the self-governments of the eastern and southern oblasts of Ukraine hold a congress. Yanukovych, who is in Kharkiv at that time, chooses not to take part in the congress, thus undermining its potential political significance. The decision also marks his ultimate withdrawal from Ukraine's political life.

27 February. Beginning of destabilisation in Crimea. On **11 March**, the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea adopts a declaration of independence; on **16 March** a referendum is held on accession to the Russian Federation, and on **21 March** President Putin signs documents formalising the annexation of Crimea. Kyiv practically fails to respond at all.

28 February. The *Verkhovna Rada* repeals the 2012 language bill. The decision does not come into force (Turchynov, acting as the Rada speaker, refuses to sign it and does not allow the bill to be reconsidered), but information about the repeal is exploited by the opponents of the new leadership in Ukraine and abroad.

1 March, 9 March. Supporters of the pro-Russian option hold rallies in Kharkiv and other cities in eastern Ukraine, demanding the 'federalisation' of the state. The so-called 'Russian Spring' begins, which will enter a heated phase in mid-March. Under the impression of the annexation of Crimea, the campaign subsides everywhere except the Donbas.

6 April. A demonstration in Donetsk ends with the seizure by force of the local government building. The next day the rebellion leaders proclaim the 'Donetsk People's Republic' (the 'Luhansk People's Republic' will be proclaimed on 27 April), and in the following days, they take power in most cities of the Donetsk Basin. Ukraine's reaction is inconsistent; the launch of the Anti-Terror Operation announced on **13 April** is not followed by any forceful measures, which at that time could still have suppressed the rebellion within a day.

15 April. The first clashes between the Ukrainian armed forces and the separatists near Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, where volunteer formations from Russia have arrived by then. Fighting begins throughout the Donbas, mainly involving volunteer forces. The separatists are better armed and trained (particularly the volunteers' Russian instructors), but the Ukrainian volunteers are more determined. Over time, the fighting intensifies and the uncoordinated clashes transform into a regular war, with the growing involvement of Russia. In early June, the separatists dismantle Ukrainian border posts, gaining the possibility of uncontrolled contact with the Russian Federation.

2 May. Clashes between supporters of Ukraine's unity (mainly football fans) and pro-Russian formations in the streets of Odessa. The police tolerate the use of firearms by pro-Russian militants. In the final phase of the clashes, a fire breaks out in the trade union headquarters, in which several dozen people representing the pro-Russian option are killed (the total number of casualties is 74). In the aftermath, separatist sentiments in Odessa subside.

25 May. Petro Poroshenko is elected as president in the first round of voting (54.7% of the vote). The process of re-establishing legal government in Ukraine after the February coup is complete.

12 June. The presence of regular units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Donbas is confirmed for the first time, marking the *de facto* beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian war.

24 June. President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk cause a government crisis, which leads to the dissolution of the *Verkhovna Rada* and early elections.

27 June. The second part of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement is signed (the first part was signed on 30 March). On **19 September**, the Agreement is ratified by the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine and the European Parliament. However, the process of ratification by the EU member states remains incomplete, because the already taken decision to ratify was overturned in a referendum in the Netherlands on 6 April 2016. In this situation, those provisions of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) which do not fall into the exclusive competence of the member states are being implemented on a provisional basis. This provisional implementation also does not cover many of the political provisions. The progress towards the abolition of visas for Ukrainian nationals comes to a standstill.

1 July. A general offensive by Ukrainian armed forces (regular and volunteer) begins. On 5 July, Ukrainian forces seize Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, and move forward towards Donetsk and Luhansk. In late July, the Ukrainians come very close to suppressing the separatist rebellion, but act too slowly and without sufficient determination.

17 July. The separatists shoot down a Malaysian airliner (298 people, mostly Dutch nationals, are killed). The incident draws Western public opinion's attention to the Donbas war.

11 August. The separatist forces launch a counter-offensive with the decisive support of heavily armed Russian units. The *dobrobaty* [voluntary units] suffer a severe defeat near Ilovaisk, Ukraine loses Saur-Mohyla and Novoazovsk, and in early September the Russians try unsuccessfully to seize Mariupol.

5 September. The ceasefire (i.e. the first Minsk accords) comes into force. Despite that, fierce fighting over the Donetsk air terminal, which started in May, will continue until 21 January 2015; major clashes will also continue at other sections of the frontline.

26 October. The pro-Western political groups (the Petro Poroshenko Bloc, the People's Front and *Batkivshchyna*) gain a stable majority in the parliamentary

elections. For the first time, the Communists do not make it to the *Rada*. The election results are greatly influenced by the involuntary absence of the Crimea and Donbas voters and the disintegration of the Party of Regions. Because of the mixed election rules, no deputies are elected from the 27 first-past-the-post constituencies in Crimea and Donbas.

27 November. Arseniy Yatsenyuk becomes prime minister, and the government is formed on **2 December**. Within a couple of months, ‘internal opposition’ emerges within the ranks of the ruling coalition (comprising the Radical Party and *Batkivshchyna*).

2015

12 February. A new ceasefire agreement (Minsk II) is concluded, which envisages a ‘special status’ (*de facto* broad autonomy) for the ORDLO. Kyiv accepts the unfavourable conditions under pressure from Germany and France.

18 February. The end of the battle of Debaltseve; the Ukrainian forces are defeated. The city, which was supposed to remain on the Ukrainian side under the Minsk accords, is taken over by the separatists. Large-scale military operations come to an end, but incidents along the ceasefire line will continue, and the several attempts at fully implementing the ceasefire will fail.

30 March. The police clash with amber miners in the Zhitomir oblast; the incident highlights the exploitative extraction of amber in the northern part of Volhynia which has been going on since the previous year, and the state’s loss of control over that area.

June. The rapid increase in the numbers of refugees from the Middle East arriving in the EU transforms into a political crisis threatening the stability of the EU.

4 November. The Petro Poroshenko Bloc succeeds in the local elections, but the government camp as a whole emerges weakened. In most regions, the old, corrupt local political arrangements stay in power.

2016

14 April. Yatsenyuk is dismissed, Volodymyr Hroysman becomes the new prime minister. The move means that President Petro Poroshenko assumes full responsibility for the state.

23 June. In the British referendum, 52% vote to leave the European Union.

24 August. During the night preceding the independence anniversary celebrations in Kryve Ozero (Mykolaiv oblast) police officers kill a handcuffed detainee. In the morning, riots erupt with the attempted lynching of the policemen. The event, which is often compared to the Vradiivka incident in 2013, reveals that the process of building the new police force is not perfect, and that tensions persist in provincial Ukraine.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The President of Poland is the only foreign head of state to attend the celebrations in Kyiv. The military parade in Kyiv is the first display of the new military uniforms of Ukraine's forces. On the day of the anniversary, 43 major armed incidents take place on the Donbas frontline; one Ukrainian soldier is killed and four are wounded.

Warsaw, July - November 2016