CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC OPINION AND UKRAINIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

Scholarly studies of Ukrainian foreign policy have rarely dealt with the question of public opinion.[1] The conventional wisdom is that Ukraine's foreign policy is a product of elite manipulation designed to extract maximum advantage for themselves, rather than the state and its declared national interests. This chapter does not overturn that conventional wisdom, but seeks to add some nuance to it.

Cross-national research tends to show that public opinion is relatively unimportant in driving foreign policy most of the time, but that public opinion becomes more influential when elites disagree strongly. Foreign policy concerns did not drive Americans who voted for Donald Trump in 2016. To some extent, Ukraine fits this general pattern: an elite disagreement over the EU Association Agreement spurred the Euromaidan protests, which eventually led to President Viktor Yanukovych fleeing the country and new presidential and parliamentary elections. Similarly, the multi-vector foreign policy — seeking close ties with both Russia and the West — can be seen as a result of Ukraine's divided public opinion. However, the influence of public opinion on Ukrainian foreign policy is more limited than in many other democratic states for two reasons. First,

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[1] Victor Chudowsky and Taras Kuzio, "Does Public Opinion Matter in Ukraine? The Case of Foreign Policy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36, no. 3 (September 2003): 273–290.

116 *Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio*

deep flaws in Ukraine's democracy limit the normal influence of public opinion on all kinds of policy questions. Second, Ukraine's leaders have to maneuver within geopolitical constraints.

In this chapter, we seek to generalize the impact public opinion has had on Ukrainian foreign policy in the context of comparative research. There is a large literature on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy, though the vast majority of it concerns a single country, the United States.[2] This literature has focused on four questions. The first three questions are descriptive and explanatory whereas the fourth is normative.

1. What does the public think about foreign policy?
2. What determines the content of public opinion on foreign policy?
3. How much influence *does* the public have on foreign policy?
4. How much influence *should* the public have on foreign policy?

Most research agrees that the public in most countries knows little about foreign policy, and that much of what it does know is wrong. A classic example is the tendency of US citizens to dramatically overestimate the portion of the federal budget that is spent on foreign aid, a tendency they hold with Canadians. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no specific confirmation of this in the case of Ukraine. Given Ukraine's perilous international situation, one might expect citizens to be more knowledgeable, but we do not have any evidence on that conjecture.

Various forces that shape public opinion have been identified. When elites broadly agree on an issue, public opinion tends to follow, in what is known as the "mainstream effect". However, when elites divide over foreign policy it is usually the case that public opinion splits along similar lines, particularly during contested elections, making it difficult to find what (or who) determines public opinion. There are few clear answers, except that popular leaders are generally able to sway public opinion behind them. At least in the United States, experience since the Korean War shows that as casualties increase, support for wars declines.

It is unclear how this might apply to Ukraine's current conflict with Russia which is defined as an Anti-Terrorist Operation rather than a war.

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[2] This discussion is based on that found in Paul D'Anieri, *International Politics: Power and Purpose in Global Affairs,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage, 2014): 145–150.

Typically, societies tolerate much higher costs, including the risking of lives, to resist an external invader than they would accept to invade another country. However, whether the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is viewed as an invasion, a secessionist movement or a mix of the two, might influence society's willingness to sustain high costs over the medium- and long-term.

Overall, however, we know fairly little about what forces drive and shape public opinion in Ukraine. In large part, this is because none of the sources that might typically be regarded as influential have high credibility there. None of Ukraine's leaders have been popular for periods of time long enough to shape opinion. Of Ukraine's five presidents only one has served two terms in office. Moreover, there is considerable cynicism about the news media among Ukrainian citizens who have low levels of trust in state institutions.

On the third question, how much influence the public has on the substance of foreign policy, research seems to show that because people are generally uninterested and uninformed on foreign policy, and because elites often lead them toward some rough consensus, public opinion has relatively little influence on foreign policy most of the time. The exceptions come when two conditions are met: elites divide; and circumstances increase the salience of some particular issue such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks on US soil.

In Ukraine, divided opinion on whether the country should be more oriented toward Europe or Eurasia has arguably had a profound effect on the country's foreign policy because there has been insufficient consensus to support a move in either direction. This though, changed after the criminality of Yanukovych's presidency was fully exposed and Russia's annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine which combined together to produce a major decline in public support for a pro-Russian orientation.[3] This phenomenon is discussed in further detail below.

Lastly, there is the normative question of whether public opinion should have a significant influence on foreign policy. Democratic theory says that people should have a large influence on all policies, and a major strand of international relations research, known as the democratic peace theory, hypothesizes that democracies have materially different foreign policies, especially toward other democracies, than to non-democratic states. Within democracies, there has long been a tension between the

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[3]T. Kuzio, *Putin's War Against Ukraine. Revolution, Nationalism and Crime* (Amazon E-Book, 2017).

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

democratic ideal and the fear that foreign policy should not be overly influenced by people who are uninformed and uninterested.

Our focus is on the third question, what influence has public opinion had on Ukrainian foreign policy? We focus on this question in part because we believe it is most salient: without knowing something about the weight of public opinion, questions about the content and influences on public opinion are less relevant. Moreover, there is insufficient research on the first two questions to underpin a detailed analysis.

The rest of this chapter makes two arguments. First, to the extent that public opinion influences Ukrainian foreign policy, until 2014 the effect was to reinforce stasis rather than drive change. Divisions over whether Ukraine should orient itself towards Russia or the West have prevented leaders from taking the country decisively in one direction or the other. Ironically, the actions of former President Yanukovych and current President Vladimir Putin have shifted Ukrainian public opinion to majorities in support of NATO and EU membership with backing for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Customs Union at an all-time low of under ten percent. Second, despite the correlation between Ukraine's divided public opinion and its multi-vector foreign policy, we cannot attribute too much influence to public opinion, because other factors, including geopolitical pressures and elite interests, also reinforce that outcome. For example, although public opinion has shifted in Ukraine towards a majority pro-Western orientation the unwillingness of President Petro Poroshenko to reduce the power of oligarchs or fight high-level corruption leads to Ukraine fatigue in the West (as under President Viktor Yushchenko) thereby undermining Ukraine's European integration. A key question, to be addressed in the conclusion, is whether the *de facto* redefinition of the citizenry, with the Russian annexation of Crimea and military aggression in the Donbas, will tip public opinion and, in turn, foreign policy. This seems to be taking place. In September 2015, Ukraine's military doctrine for the first time outlined Russia as a threat to its security.[4] Although this was undertaken without input from the public, public opinion has become decidedly negative towards Russian President

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[4]The National Security and Defense Council (in Ukrainian RNBO) discusses a new military doctrine for Ukraine http://www.rnbo.gov.ua/news/2253.html

Putin and Russia for the first time in Ukraine's recent history. Opinion polls show that the majority of Ukrainians blame President Putin, the State Duma and the Russian government for the war and Putin is the most negatively viewed foreign leader among Ukrainians.

Public Opinion and Ukraine's International Orientation

Before 2014, Ukrainian public opinion largely correlated with the dominant trend in foreign policy, the balancing of connections with both the West and Russia. Public opinion is one of three factors that has underscored that consistency, the other two being geopolitics and Ukraine's weak democracy (both of which are discussed below).[5]

Throughout the history of independent Ukraine, public opinion polls have shown significant support for close ties with both Russia and the West. Polling by the Razumkov Ukrainian Center for Economic and Political Studies (hereafter Razumkov Center) asking what should the priority for Ukrainian foreign policy be shows support for Russia ranging from a low of 26.6 percent in April 2002, to a high of 52.5 percent in November 2009, before collapsing to 10 percent after 2014. Similarly, support for the EU ranged from a low of 26 percent in February 2003, to a high of 40.8 percent in November 2012. Even after the Euromaidan, support for prioritizing the EU barely surpassed 50 percent in April 2014, before receding to 47.7 percent in March 2015. In sum, while support for connections with both Russia and the West was significant, until 2014 there was never a majority in support of prioritizing one over the other.[6] It is also the case that some EU members, such as the UK, have long been divided over their country's relationship with the EU, as witnessed in the 2016 referendum on EU membership and in many continental European countries anti-EU populist-nationalist parties are electorally popular. Indeed, Ukraine's nationalist parties (Svoboda and Pravyy Sektor "Right Sector") buck the trend in their support for NATO integration precisely

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[5] Paul D'Anieri, "Ukrainian Foreign Policy from Independence to Inertia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, nos. 3–4 (September 2012): 447–56.

[6] Data reported here are from the Razumkov Centre, "Which foreign policy direction should be a priority for Ukraine? (recurrent, 2002–2015)" at http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/poll.php?poll_id=305.

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

because this is the only means of liberating Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence. They remain ambivalent about membership of the EU because of policies such as those dealing with gay rights and the EU's infringement of national sovereignty.

The power of ethnic Ukrainian identity has been displayed several times in the recent past: in the late 1980s, propelling Ukraine to independence; during anti-presidential protests in 2000 to 2003; the 2004 Orange Revolution; and the Euromaidan from 2013 to 2014. At the same time, many Ukrainians retain strong linguistic and cultural affinity for Russia, and many prefer a world in which close relations with the EU and Russia are not contradictory, a world that appeared plausible until 2014. Language is not a perfect indicator of national allegiance in many countries, whether the US and Canada or Scotland and England (who all speak English) or Austria and Germany (who both speak German). Two thirds of Ukrainian soldiers in the Donbas front lines are Russian speakers and it is therefore wrong to believe that Russian-speaking Ukrainian identity is incompatible with Ukrainian patriotism.[7]

While Ukrainian public opinion has supported integration with *both* the EU and Russia, Ukrainian elites have found themselves constrained by both domestic and international factors from pursuing either form of integration. Neither Russia nor the EU has offered integration that serves the interests of Ukraine's elite. Until 2014, relatively high levels of public opinion in Ukraine's eastern and southern regions supported integration into the CIS Customs Union that Ukrainian presidents were reluctant to implement because they had no desire to become Russian satraps — even when Russia offered integration without the costs of unpopular and tough reforms demanded by the West. Westward integration for Ukraine has faced other difficulties. Ukrainian leaders have consistently blamed the weak implementation of structural reforms on the absence of a membership carrot, which the EU continues not to offer. While EU leaders have stated an unwillingness to put membership on the table unless Ukraine takes more serious steps toward reform, in reality, key EU members such as Germany and the Netherlands have been strongly opposed to EU enlargement into the CIS.

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[7]On the many myths of the conflict see T. Kuzio, "Ukraine's Fog of War: Why the World Misunderstands the Crimean Conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, 21 June 2016. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-06-21/ukraines-fog-war.

Since signing the Association Agreement in 2014, the President and government have pursued fiscal, economic and social reforms, as demanded by the IMF and EU, but these have been made more difficult by the high costs of the war with Russia, economic dislocation and destruction in the Donbas, and coping with an economic and financial crisis inherited from Yanukovych that has placed Ukraine on the edge of default. Reforms in the area of good governance (such as the rule of law, oligarchs and fighting corruption) have made less headway because they directly impact upon the interests of ruling elites.

NATO has been more willing than the EU to engage in serious cooperation with Ukraine, and to contemplate membership, but NATO membership has been much less popular in Ukraine than EU membership. Prior to 2014, support for NATO membership was generally beneath 25 percent, while opposition was generally over 40 percent (as was support for "non-bloc status"). Since 2014, support for NATO membership has grown to 50 percent and opposition has declined.

Nevertheless, Ukraine cooperated intensively in NATO's Partnership for Peace program (PfP) beginning in 1994, signed a Charter on a Distinctive Partnership with NATO in 1997, and opened a NATO Information and Documentation Center in Kyiv in 1998. The disjuncture between public opinion on NATO and government policy is strong evidence that public opinion was not driving Ukrainian foreign policy, even when the two seemed consistent. Ukraine expanded its cooperation with NATO under Eastern Ukrainian Leonid Kuchma who was elected to office on a moderate pro-Russian platform in 1994. The gap between support and opposition to NATO membership grew steadily until 2015, when for the first time support for NATO membership outpolled opposition.[8]

Public Opinion Polls and Theoretical and Comparative Caveats

It is very difficult to know how to connect public opinion polling with policy outcomes. Although Ukrainian and Western public opinion polls in

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[8]Razumkov Centre, "How would you vote if the referendum on Ukraine's NATO accession was held the following Sunday? (recurrent, 2002–2015)," at http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/poll.php?poll_id=46.

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

Ukraine routinely include questions about whether Ukraine should orient itself towards Russia and the CIS Customs Union or the EU and NATO, it is difficult to know how to interpret the results, for all the reasons noted above: public opinion may be ignored by leaders; or it may be driven by leaders; or leaders may be constrained by other factors. Moreover, there is some tendency for Western analysts to assume that public opinion plays the same role in Ukraine that it does in Western democracies, though there is good reason to believe that this is not the case. The institutions that channel voters' views into policy in Western democracies, including political parties, civil societies, and independent media are largely absent in Ukraine and other post-Soviet societies. This may be changing after the Euromaidan with civil society and independent media playing a more prominent lobbying and activist role in Ukraine's political system.

Indeed, Ukrainian foreign policy platforms are vague, repetitive, contradictory and populist among pro-Western and pro-Russian political forces in Ukraine.[9] This is a product of weak or non-existent political parties in Ukraine, a similar problem to that found throughout the former USSR. Thus Yushchenko spoke forcefully about NATO membership, but his 2004 election program and that of Our Ukraine never mentioned it as a foreign policy goal. Similarly, Yanukovych and the Party of Regions programs supported *both* CIS Customs Union and EU membership, although dual membership was impossible because countries cannot be members of two customs unions. We tend to take a certain amount of disingenuousness for granted in the statements of Western democratic leaders, and we need to do the same when looking at Ukraine.

Until 2014, public opinion polls gave approximately equal support for Ukrainian membership in CIS structures in Russophone eastern and southern Ukraine and for EU, and to a lesser extent NATO, membership in the Ukainophone West and center of the country. This regional division was clearly evident in voting patterns in the 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2010 presidential elections but not in 1991 or 2014. In the former 4 elections the second round pitted Eastern candidates against Western: Kuchma-Kravchuk (1994), Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko-Kuchma
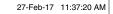
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[9] See Chapter 11 "Military and Security Policy," in T. Kuzio, *Ukraine. Democratization, Corruption and the New Russian Imperialism* (Santa Barbera: Praeger, 2015): 431–456.

(1999) — who had realigned himself as a Western candidate Yanukovych-Yushchenko (2004) and Yanukovych-Yuliya Tymoshenko (2010). The 1991 and 2014 presidential elections were overwhelmed by a referendum on independence in the former and democratic revolution in the latter. In 1991, the only foreign policy question was seceding from the USSR, because the elections were held on the same day as the referendum on Ukrainian independence. In 2014, the pro-Russian camp (Party of Regions, Communist Party) had disintegrated, joined the separatists (pan-Slavic groups) or had lost voters because of Russia's annexation of the Crimea and hybrid war in the Donbas, leaving no viable eastern or pro-Russian candidate.

Four Caveats

Four caveats or complications should be discussed. First, the relationship between majorities and minorities develops from path-dependent legacies, post-communist policies and input from international agents and kin states. Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia and its recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia brought forth no major international sanctions, leading to Russia's policy miscalculation that its annexation of the Crimea six years later would meet a similarly muted Western reaction. After the disintegration of communist regimes in 1991, international agents such as NATO and the EU defined the rules of the game, preventing ethno-nationalist conflict in the new and prospective member states in Central Europe.[10] At the same time, NATO and the EU sent mixed signals by not offering membership to former Soviet countries (outside the three Baltic states) lying within the neighborhood policies of *both* the EU's Eastern Partnership and Russia's *Russkii Mir (Russian World)*. Russia flouted the security assurances (viewed in Ukraine as guarantees) of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which had been given to Ukraine in return for its denuclearization, thereby opening up the possibility of future

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[10]Robert T. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); Barbara Walter, "Information, Uncertainty, and the Decision to Secede," *International Organization* 60, no. 1 (January 2006): 105–135.

Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

nuclear proliferation. Russia wished to overturn the rules of the game rather than continue to abide by the world order established after the end of the Cold War.

An additional aspect of the first caveat is that the majority of Ukrainians know very little about the EU, and in this they are very similar to many existing member states, such as the UK. Many Ukrainians see "Europe" as interchangeable with "the EU", where standards of living are higher than in Ukraine. Primarily western and central Ukrainians make such observations when traveling to Europe for work and business pursuits. Ukrainians also are similar to southern European and some post-communist states in viewing Brussels as a better option than national governments in light of poor governance and high levels of corruption in Rome, Athens, Sofia and Bucharest. EU member states with good governance in northern Europe have lower levels of support for EU membership as well as public majorities against the introduction of the Euro currency. The exception to this rule is Germany; because of the trauma and guilt of World War II, deep EU integration is seen as the best option to dampen German nationalism and dilute the German nation-state. EU membership is also supported by Ukrainians for similar reasons to those held in post-colonial Ireland and Central Europe. That is, joining "Europe" is viewed as the best means to escape the colonial past. If the colonial past is viewed negatively, the level of support for integration into "Europe" is higher. If Russian and Soviet rule is viewed as beneficial rather than colonial, then citizens often seek to return to some form of this rule because for them "Europe" is a distant cultural irrelevance. Because the EU believes so strongly in its *mission civilisatrice,* its Eastern Partnership never envisaged that Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova lie in both the European and the Russian neighborhoods. Thus, Brussels policymakers could never comprehend that some peoples would opt for the *Russkii Mir* over the EU.[11] National minorities in Central Europe look to the EU and Council of Europe for protection, while Sovietophile Russophones look to Russia in Moldova's Transdniester, Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and

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[11] Michal Wawrzonek, "Ukraine in the 'Gray Zone': Between the 'Russkiy Mir' and Europe," *East European Politics and Society* 28, no. 4 (November 2014): 758–780 and T. Kuzio, "Ukraine between a Constrained EU and Assertive Russia," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55, no. 1 (January 2017): 103–120.

Ukraine's Crimea and Donbas. EU policymakers and Western political scientists have believed that the only path for modernization is the EU and West[12] without taking into account Soviet-Russian nostalgia in Eurasia or support for Islamic movements in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

The second caveat refers to the more complicated question of NATO. Through to the 2004 elections, Ukraine had a healthy one-third public support for NATO membership (with one third opposed and another third indifferent), although opinions were regionally divided, and membership had little support in the east and south. Public attitudes changed following the use by Yanukovych's campaign of anti-Americanism in the 2004 elections and the subsequent rise of the Russophile Party of Regions that came to monopolize eastern and southern Ukraine.[13] The Party of Regions, with its heartland in the Sovietophile Donbas and Crimea, was more pro-Russian than centrist parties during Kuchma's presidency. After signing a cooperation agreement with the United Russia party in 2005, it closely aligned itself with Russian policies. The Party of Regions was nearly alone in Eurasia in backing Russia's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia following Moscow's invasion of Georgia in 2008. President Yanukovych fulfilled Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's demands for corrections to Ukrainian domestic and foreign policies that were outlined in his August 2009 open letter to President Yushchenko. Russian intelligence was permitted to infiltrate the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the military, undermining Ukraine's early attempts to thwart Russia's invasion of the Crimea and hybrid war in the Donbas.[14] From 2004 through to 2013, therefore, public support for NATO membership slumped, and opposition grew to a record high. This changed again after 2014, when a combination of Russian aggression, perception of betrayal and collapse of the pro-Russian camp led to a massive rise in public support for NATO membership that, for the first time, surpassed 50 percent.

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[12] Saul Neuman, "Does Modernization Breed Ethnic Political Conflict," *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (April 1991): 451–478.

[13] Serhiy Kudelia and T. Kuzio, "Nothing personal: Explaining the Rise and Decline of Political Machines in Ukraine," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, no. 3 (May 2015): 250–278.

[14] T. Kuzio, "Russianization of Ukrainian National Security Policy under Viktor Yanukovych," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 25, no. 4 (December 2012): 558–581.

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

The same rises in support for and declines in opposition to NATO membership are found throughout Ukraine's regions and reflect what political scientists have long known about the impact of war in changing national identity and contributing to state building and national integration.[15] Historically, conflict and wars have enhanced identities, and warfare is one of the main forces that have traditionally shaped identities.[16] Scholars have viewed identity as either the cause of conflict or the result of it.[17] Both of these examples are to be found in the Donbas conflict where "critical junctures" set majorities and minorities on conflict paths, and the dynamics became self-reinforcing and entangled. Communist era path-dependent legacies matter because the Russian and Soviet kin state has historically depicted Ukrainians who hold identities outside the *Russkii Mir* as "traitors," "bourgeois nationalists," and "fascists" who are participating in anti-Russian conspiracies unfurled by Sweden, Austria-Hungary, Nazi Germany, Western democracy promoting foundations, the US, NATO and the EU.[18] The kin state and Donbas separatists viewed regime change during the Euromaidan as a coup leading to the coming to power of "anti-Russian fascists" who sought to repress Russophones.

The third caveat is that domestic rent seeking and power politics together with informal politics were more important than foreign policy for Ukrainian elites. This was as much the case for President Kuchma, who oversaw the rise of the oligarch class during Ukraine's transition from a command administrative to a market economy, as it was for "pro-Western" Yushchenko, whose support for NATO and EU membership

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[15]Viktoriya Sereda, "Ukraine After Euromaidan: What Difference Does a Revolution Make?", *Atlantic Council of the US*, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/ukraine-after-euromaidan-what-difference-does-a-revolution-make. (September 16, 2015).

[16]Anthony D. Smith, "War and Ethnicity: the Role of Warfare in the Formation, Self-image and Cohesion of Ethnic Communities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4, no. 4 (October 1981): 375–397.

Michael Howard, "Ethnic Conflict and International Security," *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 3 (November 1995): 285–295.

[17]Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[18]T. Kuzio, "Soviet Conspiracy Theories and Political Culture in Ukraine. Understanding Viktor Yanukovych and the Party of Regions," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44, no. 3 (September 2011): 221–232.

came a distant second to his personal hatred for Tymoshenko and willingness to collude with the pro-Russian gas tycoon Dmytro Firtash, the gas lobby and pro-Western oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyy, and the oil lobby.[19] Until 2004, Ukrainian multi-vector foreign policy reaped rents for elites and oligarchs from the West *and* Russia, and only when the EU *and* Russia both insisted Ukraine choose which direction it wished to integrate did this lead to a domestic political crisis. The EU was ready to sign the Association Agreement with Ukraine, even though Yanukovych had not released Tymoshenko. Putin sought, through the provision of credits (which were, in reality, bribes), to transform Yanukovych into a Ukrainian "Alyaksandr Lukashenka" and thereby turn Ukraine's foreign policy away from the EU. For Yanukovych and the Donetsk clan, rapacious greed and corruption trumped foreign policy and national interests. However, they and Putin failed to understand the internal dynamics of Ukraine; not only is Ukraine not Russia, as Kuchma famously wrote in a book published in 2003,[20] but the Donbas is not Ukraine.

The final caveat is that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is bound to shape public opinion in Ukraine in ways that might not be easy to predict. Indeed, one of the most important research questions in the coming years will be to trace the impact of the invasion and war on various aspects of public opinion, including policy preferences and national identity. Ukraine successfully resolved Crimean and Donbas separatist challenges in the 1990s, during a period of time when separatist movements defeated central governments in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Developments in Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh followed a similar pattern to Serbia's Kosovo, where conflict erupted after the central government dissolved the regions' autonomous statuses. In 1990–1998, Ukraine peacefully resolved the Crimea issue by upgrading an *oblast* (region) to an autonomous republic while delegating regional economic self-government to the Donbas. In the 1990s, Serbs in

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[19] The gas and oil lobbies are extensively documented in Chapter 10 "Ukrainian Oligarchs: The Gas Lobby, Dnipropetrovsk, and Donetsk" in T. Kuzio, *Ukraine. Democratization, Corruption and the New Russian Imperialism*, 381–430.

[20] Alex Nicholson, "Kuchma Shows Ukraine Is Not Russia," *Moscow Times*, September 4, 2003. http://old.themoscowtimes.com/sitemap/free/2003/9/article/kuchma-shows-ukraine-is-not-russia/236119.html/

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

the former Yugoslavia mobilized with the support of the kin state while Russophones outside Russia largely did not, even when they were not granted citizenship in Estonia and Latvia.[21]

Moldova's regional conflict in the early 1990s came ahead of the ability of the independent state to negotiate a new autonomous status for the Transdniester, and Russian and separatist forces defeated the central government and won control of their region. This most closely resembles Ukraine in four ways. First, Soviet identities are dominant in the Russophone, urbanized and industrialized Transdniester and Donbas, creating a perceived entitlement among local elites to be the natural rulers of the Soviet and independent republics. Second, in neither case did the conflict constitute a civil war, because far more Russophones live outside the separatist enclaves and support the central governments. There are more ethnic Ukrainians than ethnic Russians living in both the Transdniester and Donbas, but their identity is grounded in the Soviet Union where Russian was the language of modernity and advancement. Third, Soviet Russophones in Transdniester and the Donbas mobilized against Romanian and Ukrainian ethnic nationalism respectively, fearing Moldova's unification with Romania in the first instance and Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU in the second.

Fourth, ethno-nationalist conflicts are a product of dynamics among majorities, minorities, agents and kin states, but such frameworks would be difficult to apply to the Ukrainian and Moldovan minorities as both countries have cross-cutting cleavages where Russophones support both sides of the conflict. Political scientists have found it difficult to define contemporary Soviet nationalism (good examples being Belarus and the Donbas), because it defies many of the theoretical aspects of how nationalism is traditionally defined within an ethno-cultural and civic community. In the USSR, Soviet and Russian identities were merged, and Russian nationalists, unlike nationalists among the non-Russians peoples, did not seek independence for their republic and the Russian SFSR did not

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[21] Chapter 8 "Russians and Russophones in the Former USSR and Serbs in Yugoslavia: A Comparative Study of Passivity and Mobilisation," in T. Kuzio, *Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Nationalism: New Directions in Cross-Cultural and Post-Communist Studies* (Hannover: Ibidem-Verlag, 2007), 177–216.

therefore declare independence from the USSR. Scottish and Ukrainian separatist parties exist; English and Russian do not. Censuses that have traditionally asked questions that pigeonhole citizens into Ukrainian or Russian speaking groups, such as studies by Arel and Wilson,[22] or into a single ethnicity have failed to capture Soviet multiple identities where people feel close to two or more cultures and languages. Constructivist theories of multiple identities, where competing layers become salient during different periods and critical junctures, have yet to be applied to Ukrainian politics.[23] Ukraine has competing, mutually exclusive identities in its Western-Central region and multiple identities in its Eastern-Southern regions, which date back to the pre-Soviet period and have been reinforced by Soviet nationality policies. Timing and sequencing in ethno-nationalist conflicts are important in explaining critical junctures of how and why, as seen in why conflict emerged during the Euromaidan but not a decade earlier in the Orange Revolution.[24] In Russia, Belarus and the Donbas, the disintegration of the USSR is viewed as a negative critical juncture. This was followed by the unification of the Donetsk clan and rise of the Party of Regions (2000), the failed (2004) and subsequently successful state capture of Ukraine (2010), and revolutionary regime change (2014).[25] Exogenous shocks can plunge states into conflict, as in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. The pace of conditions for conflicts escalates until ripeness provides space for conflict resolution,[26]

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[22] Dominique Arel and Andrew Wilson's approach to Ukrainian identity politics are based on Rogers Brubaker's frameworks, which are discussed in T. Kuzio, "'Nationalising States' or Nation Building: A Review of the Theoretical Literature and Empirical Evidence," *Nations and Nationalism*, 7, Part 2 (April 2001): 135–154.

[23] R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); David Laitin, *Nations, States, and Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[24] Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism," *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (April 2007): 341–369.

[25] S. Kudelia and T. Kuzio, "Nothing Personal: Explaining the Rise and Decline of Political Machines in Ukraine".

[26] I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

while the role of kin states is crucial in the emergence and resolution of conflicts, as seen when comparing Turkey's policies in Bulgaria and Albania's in Kosovo and Macedonia on the one hand and Russia in the Crimea and Donbas on the other.[27] A weak Albania bowed to international pressure not to intervene, whereas Russia, empowered by a decade of high oil prices, ignored international opprobrium and intervened and created the worst crisis in East-West relations since World War II. The Russian kin state continues to train and supply Donbas separatist forces in breach of the Minsk 1 and 2 accords. Russia had always been strongly opposed to NATO enlargement but from 2008 to 2009 also began to look negatively at EU enlargement, even though in the case of the Eastern Partnership there is no membership offer.

International actors seek negotiated settlements that would lead to cultural and territorial autonomy or federalism for minority groups.[28] But, if the strategic goal of the kin state is far greater than merely protecting minority rights, as in the Donbas, Russia's pursuit of federalism will be viewed as an attempt to transform Ukraine into an ungovernable entity. Ukrainians and Western policymakers view Russian support for federalism not as benign interest in minority groups but as "Bosnianization", wherein Ukraine would become a weak state maintained within the Russian sphere of influence and no longer pursuing the goal of European integration. Realist scholars such as Mearsheimer and Menon and Rumer[29] have articulated arguments in favour of Ukrainian "neutrality"

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[27] Maria Koinova, *Ethnonationalist Conflict in Postcommunist States. Varieties of Governance in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Kosovo* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2013).

[28] Strathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[29] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September–October 2014): 77–89. Rajan Menon and Eugene Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015). Two decades earlier Mearsheimer had argued that Ukraine should remain a nuclear weapons power; see his "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 50–66.

that resemble those made by Russia in the pursuit of the ending of Ukraine's European integration.

Limited Influence of Public Opinion

The Ukrainian public has a higher interest in politics than the average European or American; Ukrainians devour political talk shows that last for two or more hours. Yet they also have relatively little input into domestic, foreign and security policies; their participation is limited to little more than being asked by pollsters if they support tough policies against corruption and which direction they support for Ukraine's integration, into the EU or the CIS.

Public opinion has a limited influence on foreign policy in Ukraine for all the reasons it is limited in any democracy: public opinion competes with a wide range of domestic and international factors for influence. In Ukraine, however, the role of public opinion is limited further by the fact that Ukraine is a very imperfect democracy with path-dependent legacies of Soviet cultural influences that shape interaction (or the lack thereof) between the public and the elite. In addition to external geopolitical and internal regional influences, therefore, the oligarchic or patrimonial nature of Ukrainian politics strongly influences what interests are represented in foreign policy making. Therefore, we focus on three factors in Ukraine's imperfect democracy that limit the influence of public opinion on foreign policy beyond what we might expect in other democracies. First, the oligarchic nature of Ukrainian politics means that leaders are more constrained by clan politics than by public opinion. Second, in contrast to more institutionalized democracies, Ukrainian political parties are so weak and disconnected to voters that they do not provide a channel through which public opinion can influence foreign policy. Third, as a geopolitically weak state confronted by immensely more powerful actors (Russia to the East and the EU to the West), Ukraine has relatively little latitude even in the best of circumstances.

The multi-vector policy that was prevalent especially during Kuchma's Presidency in 1994 to 2004, is therefore often seen primarily through a democratic lens as a genuine reflection of Ukraine's regional diversity. At the same time, however, this multi-vector foreign policy reflected the

regional origins of the President and his need to secure rent from (and pro-vide benefits to) oligarchs and allies on both sides of the regional divide.[30] Only by doing so could he build a coalition that kept him in power.

Pro-Western integration rhetoric has been prominent among all five of Ukraine's presidents, including Yanukovych, but the foreign policy goal of integrating with Europe has conflicted with the domestic unwillingness to adopt European norms and practices, particularly in the fields of the rule of law and corruption. Kuchma and his national security adviser Volodymyr Horbulin supported EU and NATO membership from the late 1990s and 2002, respectively, that clashed with massive corruption, emer-gence of oligarchs, attacks on journalists and election fraud. In the 2004 elections, Kuchma backed Yanukovych's candidacy. Yushchenko spoke most forcefully about NATO and EU membership but did the most to undermine the prospects at a time when US politicians such as Vice President Dick Cheney forcefully supported bringing Ukraine into NATO. Yanukovych fulfilled President Dmitri Medvedev's demand to drop the goal of NATO membership by the adoption of a so-called non-bloc for-eign policy. However, his continued support for the EU Association Agreement was undermined by the imprisonment of opposition leaders, which was incompatible with European values. This confused foreign policy was most emblematic of Yanukovych's and the Party of Regions' foreign policy but was also prevalent in other Ukrainian Presidents. To give an erroneous example, Yanukovych waged an anti-American election campaign in 2004, during the same time that Ukraine had the third largest military contingent in Iraq in support of US strategic objectives. Since then, Russia's annexation of the Crimea and hybrid war intervention in the Donbas have dramatically increased public support for NATO. But, going forward this will be unsustainable in the face of opposition from key European members.

Kuchma's Dnipropetrovsk origins influenced his multi-vector foreign policy to lean toward the West. In contrast, Yanukovych's base in the more Sovietized Donbas ensured his variant was more focused towards Russia. Nevertheless, in both cases foreign policy was aimed at securing patron-

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[30]T. Kuzio, "Neither East nor West: Ukraine's Security Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no. 5 (September–October 2005): 59–68.

age and rents for a small elite, and at maintaining that elite in power. Foreign policy had little to do with public opinion or with Ukrainian national interests, and it was focused on short-term objectives.

The long record of vacillation on implementing structural reform demonstrates the endurance of machine politics in Ukrainian foreign policy. Both "pro-European" and "pro-Russian" governments had adopted stabilization policies but had never seriously pursued the structural reforms demanded in IMF assistance packages in 1998, 2008 and 2010. Ukrainian oligarchic groups profited immensely from partial reform equilibrium, in which an economy that is partially marketized and partially state controlled offers enormous rent-seeking opportunities.[31] Anders Aslund argues that partial reform equilibrium has led to the enrichment of a few because big businessmen have captured the state in Ukraine, more than any other post-communist country. Aslund writes, "At present, Ukraine stands out as the last post-communist outpost where tycoons wield substantial political power".[32]

Identifying who among individual, political and business elites or clans are pro-Western or pro-Russian has proven to be difficult, because their foreign policy preferences are highly contingent on where economic advantage lies. Ihor Kolomoysky, for example, is a Dnipropetrovsk-based oligarch who has been a financier of pro-Western political parties (Our Ukraine, Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms [UDAR] and Arseniy Yatseniuk's Popular Front), has opposed Russia vociferously, and has funded volunteer battalions fighting Russian forces in eastern Ukraine. At the same time, he is Ukraine's most notorious corporate raider, and as such has much to lose from radical reform.[33] Similarly, the gas lobby, Ukraine's most pro-Russian oligarchic group is led by Western Ukrainians, the regional group typically depicted as anti-Russian nationalists.[34] Gas

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[31] Joel S. Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions," *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (January1998): 203–234.

[32] Anders Aslund, *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute of International Economics, April 2015), 29.

[33] Matthew A. Rojansky, "Corporate Raiding in Ukraine: Causes, Methods and Consequences," *Demokratizatsiya* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 424.

[34] On the gas lobby see T. Kuzio, *Ukraine. Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Santa Barbera: Praeger, 2015): 394–408.

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

mogul Dmytro Firtash has passed the corrupt gas franchise effortlessly from Kuchma to Yushchenko to Yanukovych and Poroshenko, while maintaining his group's control over it.

The gas lobby had cordial relations with Yushchenko, but also penetrated the senior echelons of the Party of Regions, gaining the positions of Chief of Staff (Serhiy Lyovochkin), Security Service Chairman (Valeriy Khoroshkovsky), Foreign Minister (Kostyantyn Gryshchenko) and Minister for Energy (Yuriy Boyko). When Yanukovych's ouster loomed in January 2014, Lyovochkin resigned as Chief of Staff, and three months later Firtash brokered a deal with opposition leaders Poroshenko and Vitaliy Klitschko. By encouraging Klitschko to withdraw from the Presidential race (to run for mayor of Kyiv instead), Firtash secured Poroshenko's election and his indebtedness to Firtash. "We got what we wanted — Poroshenko as President and Klitschko as Mayor," Firtash bragged to a Viennese court.[35] Thus, while millions of Ukrainian voters officially determined who the President would be, oligarchs decisively shaped the field.

The major challenge to a multi-vector foreign policy came under the Presidency of Yushchenko (2005–2010) and two Tymoshenko governments, when a serious effort was made to reorient the country toward the EU. During Kuchma's Presidency the EU was not offering Ukraine either membership or a lighter version of integration, and Russian President Putin had yet to regard any agreement between Ukraine and the EU as unacceptable. Under Yushchenko, both of these factors changed. The European Union became more open to a relationship with Ukraine from the launch of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, while Putin reacted to the Euromaidan with greater hostility than to the Orange Revolution.

Despite Yushchenko's intentions, and despite the increase in tension with Russia under his rule, a balanced foreign policy remained in practice if not in rhetoric. This might be attributed to public opinion, which as before, was divided between favoring a pro-European and pro-Russian orientation. It can also be attributed to oligarchic politics, which continued

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[35] Johannes Wamberg Andersen, "Firtash Claim Kingmaker Role in Ukrainian Politics," *Kyiv Post*, May 7, 2015. http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/firtash-claims-kingmaker-role-in-ukrainian-politics-388070.html.

to benefit from partial reform equilibrium and especially from the corrupt gas trade, which both undermined Ukraine's independence and also yielded billions of dollars in rent.

Ukrainian foreign policy is also constrained by important legacies in Ukrainian-Russian relations and Putin's view, common to a majority of people in Russia, that Ukrainians and Russians are the same people who are destined to live together in the *Russkii Mir*.[36] Kuchma *and* Yanukovych, both from eastern Ukraine, found that agreeing to Russian demands merely led to further demands, rather than mutually acceptable compromises. Where it impeded rent-seeking, (e.g., the gas trade), Yanukovych declined Russian pressure to establish a consortium over Ukraine's gas pipelines. Nevertheless, this failed to satisfy the Russian leadership, who continued to refuse to renegotiate the 2009 gas agreement, forcing Ukraine to pay the highest gas price in Europe and import cheaper Russian gas from Germany via Central Europe. This confirmed a long-established tendency of Russia to be dissatisfied with both pro-Western *and* pro-Russian Ukrainian presidents, because Moscow viewed their defense of Ukraine's sovereignty by the refusal to integrate into the CIS Customs Union as a manifestation of Ukraine's anti-Russian nationalism. Putin believed he had resolved his Ukrainian problem through his favorite method of "Kadyrization";[37] that is, buying regional leaders. Russia's offer of a $15 billion loan to Yanukovych, Putin's new Ukrainian "Kadyrov," was meant in exchange for him to drop the EU Association Agreement.

The profound weakness of political parties in Ukraine means that one of the potentially most powerful means of channeling public opinion is absent.[38] The standard view of parties in liberal democracies is that they are essential for channeling societal opinion into legislation and policy. In Ukraine, the underdevelopment of the political party system cuts off

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[36] Michal Wawrzonek, "Ukraine in the 'Gray Zone': Between the 'Russkiy Mir' and Europe," *East European Politics and Society* 28, no. 4 (November 2014): 758–780.

[37] This refers to Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.

[38] T. Kuzio, "Impediments to the Emergence of Political Parties in Ukraine," *Politics* 34, no. 4 (December 2014): 309–323; Chapter 7 "The Electoral Law: Cause or Effect of Weak Parties?" in P. D'Anieri, *Understanding Ukrainian Politics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007): 148–173.

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

this channel of public influence. Thus, many of Ukraine's leading parties in various elections have carried the names of the individuals behind them, including the Bloc of Yuliya Tymoshenko (BYuT), the Bloc of Viktor Yushchenko, the Party of Vitaly Klitschko (UDAR) and so on. Only two parties based in eastern Ukraine (the Communist Party of Ukraine, and the Party of Regions) managed to create an enduring party organization that had roots deeper than a single individual. For this reason, the array of parties changes in every election cycle.

The reasons for the weakness of Ukrainian political parties are numerous and similar to trends found throughout Eurasia. Institutionally, electoral laws and the rules of the parliament have led to relatively weak incentives for politicians to make the sacrifices needed to forge strong parties. To the extent parties represent an asset in campaigning and winning office, prominent oligarchs and politicians tend to create parties around themselves, rather than around ideologies or common interests. Poroshenko has created three parties with Solidarity in the title, the first merged with four parties to form the Party of Regions, the second merged with others to form Yushchenko's People's Union-Our Ukraine and third is allied to UDAR since the 2014 elections. For these reasons, parties tend to rise and fall with the elites who form them, rather than the other way around. Once this system emerged in the 1990s, it offered some equilibrium and is now resistant to change. Although Ukraine has experienced two major democratic revolutions, it has no single political party that would be defined as such in political science; it has instead oligarch-funded projects created for single electoral cycles.

In a 2015 poll by the Razumkov Center, respondents were asked, "How much do you trust each of the following social institutions?" Only 13 percent said they "fully trust" or "rather distrust", parties, while 40 percent said they "rather distrust" them, and 35 percent said they "fully distrust" parties. More broadly, the same poll showed low levels of trust in nearly every other public institution (with only the armed forces, the National Guard, the Church and Ukrainian mass media mustering over 50 percent responding "fully" or "rather" trust).[39] As 2014 Eurobarometer data show, Ukrainian's low trust in parties matches that of the EU (14 percent overall, ranging from a low of 5 percent in Spain to a high of

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[39]Razumkov Centre, "How much do you trust the following social institutes," http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/poll.php?poll_id=1030 (March 2015).

34 percent in Denmark) with membership of parties declining in many Western democracies.[40]

In turn, parties have been very weak in the Ukrainian parliament. As a result, parliamentary deputies are, to a large extent, "free agents," able to defect from party leaders with a high degree of impunity. Only Yanukovych was able to forge and maintain a reliable parliamentary majority, but he did so largely through bribery, *kompromat* and coercion, not through normal party means. Leaders other than Yanukovych have struggled to build a situational majority for every piece of legislation they wish parliament to pass.

Because the behavior of the individual deputies is relatively unconstrained by their parties, voters choosing a party (in proportional representation) or choosing a candidate according to party affiliation have only a very weak notion of what that politician or party might actually do. In most functioning democracies, in contrast, parties run on well-established platforms, members of parliament can be sanctioned (e.g., by not being nominated or supported in the future), and parties that renege on their commitments can expect to be sanctioned by voters. These mechanisms are far from perfect, even in the best-functioning democracies, but in Ukraine they are largely absent and made worse by oligarch funding of political parties, from the Communists through democratic centrists to center-right national democrats.

Ukraine's Soviet legacy has contributed to ideologically vacuous political parties because pre-Soviet political party legacies are too far removed in history. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, political parties were viewed negatively because the institution of political parties was associated so closely with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Ukraine and the post-Soviet world (outside the three Baltic states) have been faced by an ideological void that has been filled by nationalism, populism, neo-paternalism and patron-client relations that has manifested itself in ruling parties led by the former senior Soviet *nomenklatura* and the security forces. Ukraine's ideological void has translated into cynicism and intellectually weak party political programs that are rarely implemented when politicians come to power and have no relationship to public opin-

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[40]European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 82, Tables of Results, ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_anx_en.pdf (Autumn 2014).

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

ion. Meanwhile, the flip-flopping of pro-European party leaders such as Yushchenko, Yatseniuk and Poroshenko has deepened distrust among voters.

Ukrainian foreign policy is tightly constrained by geopolitical factors, so even if public opinion were clear and had a channel to influence the government, the range of options would be very limited. On one hand, Russia has been at best skeptical (under Borys Yeltsin in the 1990s and early Putin) and at worst hostile (Putin from 2007 to 2008) to Ukraine's independence, and Russia has used a variety of measures both to limit Ukraine's independence and to undermine democracy there. Six years prior to the beginning of conflict in 2014, Putin told President George W. Bush at the NATO summit in Bucharest that Ukraine was not a real state, and it was not entitled to its Eastern and Southern regions (defined as "New Russia" from 2014 to 2015). On the other hand, the EU has been uninterested in Ukraine as a potential member, has been more focused on integrating new members, has been further put off by Ukraine's inability to reform, and certain key EU members such as Germany and France have prioritized good relations with Russia.

Russia, under democratic President Yeltsin and nationalist Putin, has viewed Ukrainian presidents as "nationalists" because of their opposition to integration into Russian-led CIS integration projects, Russia's "sphere of influence" and the *Russkii Mir*. This has been compounded by an entrenched Russian unwillingness, which has grown over time, to recognize Ukrainian sovereignty, especially its territorial integrity. Putin has repeatedly stated that Ukrainians and Russians are "one people," which *de facto* rules out Ukraine forging a future outside Moscow's sphere of influence. Ukrainian leaders have been unsuccessful in their endeavors to forge equal relations with Russia, which has offered Kyiv the status of a mere vassal state.

It has been immensely challenging for Ukraine to carve out its independence between Russia and the EU. One solution advocated by some Western scholars, especially those who identify with the realist school, is that Ukraine should accept some form of "neutrality" and drop the goal of EU and NATO membership as a way to assuage Russia's fears and its nationalism. It does not appear, however, that Russia would actually accept such a status, for two reasons. First, it appears that Russia wants a subor-

dinated Ukraine, not an independent and neutral one, similar to that of Austria and Finland during the Cold War. Second, for Russia, the threat from Ukraine is not primarily geopolitical, but rather democratic: to the extent that Ukraine succeeds as a democracy and rule-based de-Sovietized state, it disproves the argument, central to Putin's "managed democracy," that real democracy will not work in the successor states of the former USSR.

Following the Orange Revolution, the Ukrainian government actively pursued NATO membership, in spite of the fact that public opinion in Ukraine consistently opposed it. Only in 2015, did Ukrainian public opinion in favor of NATO membership cross the 50 percent mark.[41] But, there was only serious talk that Ukraine might be offered a NATO MAP (Membership Action Plan) on one occasion at the 2006 Riga summit. The collapse of the Orange Revolution coalition as well as Yushchenko's willingness to bring Yanukovych back to power undermined Western confidence in Yushchenko and in the prospects for real reform in Ukraine. Moreover, there never was consensus in NATO in favor of Ukrainian membership. Germany, Italy and France, among others, oppose the idea of Ukrainian membership, as they do EU enlargement.[42]

Public support in Ukraine for EU membership rose to an all-time high (67 percent) after the Russian intervention in the Donbas,[43] but this is not the relevant factor for Brussels or EU member states. The EU has consistently been reluctant to make any commitments relating to membership to Ukraine, and the potential for Ukraine to be offered a path toward membership is more remote than ever, due to internal crises in the EU and Russia's militant opposition. Instead, Ukraine was offered an Association Agreement without membership. In 2016, following the successful "No" campaign in the April referendum of that year, the far

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[41] Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes and Jacob Poushter, "NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid," *Pew Research Center*, http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid/ (June 10, 2015).

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio

right and far left in the Netherlands threatened to de-rail the ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement unless the EU agreed to additional documentation that stated the Association would not lead to future membership for Ukraine.

The Association Agreement (which has been offered to Georgia and Moldova as well as Ukraine) is viewed by many as "enlargement-lite".[44] The Association Agreement requires Ukraine to undertake deep structural reforms without the inducement of future membership, and with far less financial support than was given to Central Europe.[45] In terms of public opinion, this meant that the Ukrainian government would have to implement very unpopular reforms without any promise that the goal — EU membership — was on the table even if reforms were implemented successfully. From the EU perspective, the reforms needed to be implemented regardless of whether Ukraine were ever to become a member.

Conclusions

As is the case in most societies, public opinion has a limited influence on Ukrainian foreign policy. The limits on the influence of public opinion are similar to those in other countries: various factors constrain decision makers' range of options, and various other actors vie with public opinion for influence. In the case of Ukraine, geopolitical and geo-economic constraints seriously limit the government's range of options. Oligarchs have more influence than the public, and the dynamics of oligarchic politics influence decision making more than public opinion. Moreover, the weakness of Ukrainian political parties narrows one of the channels through which public opinion typically influences policy in many democracies.

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[44] Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson, *The Limits of Enlargement-lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, European Council on Foreign Relations, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR14_The_Limits_of_Enlargement-Lite._European_and_Russian_Power_in_the_Troubled_Neighbourhood.pdf (June 2009).

[45] "Slipping away from the West," *The Economist*, http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2015/05/ukraine (May 21, 2015).

Moreover, Ukrainian public opinion on foreign policy has been divided on the most important question — the question of orientation toward the West or Russia. That divided public opinion has in some respects constrained policy makers: for most of Ukraine's independent history, a decisive move either toward the West or toward Russia would alienate a significant portion of the electorate; and as was demonstrated in late 2013, that opposition could lead to protests that could lead to regime change. At the same time, however, divided public opinion has removed the government's need to actually accomplish any particular foreign policy goal. Multi-vector foreign policy has allowed leaders to focus foreign policy on maintaining a coalition of rent-seeking oligarchic groups.

In 2014, the Ukrainian electorate itself changed, with Russia's annexation of Crimea and hybrid war intervention in eastern Ukraine. It does not appear that citizens of the Crimean region or the two Russian proxy states in the Donbas (Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic) will participate in electoral politics in Ukraine any time soon. The implication is that the balance of power and balance of public opinion in Ukraine has shifted significantly. With an estimated 3.5 to 4 million of the most pro-Russian voters gone from Ukraine, we would expect foreign policy to change dramatically. In future elections, it will be much harder to elect a pro-Russian politician like Yanukovych, who won by fewer than a million votes and in a minority of regions in 2010. Poroshenko running for re-election in 2019 will not face a pro-Russian candidate against whom he could mobilize negative votes, as did Kuchma in 1999.

The other major question going forward is what effect the public will have on the war effort. We would not expect that public opinion would directly affect the goals or strategy of the Ukrainian military, but if morale falls so that people cease supporting the effort, and it becomes widely acceptable to avoid conscription, it may become impossible to prosecute the war the way the government might like. That might compel making concessions the government would otherwise rather avoid. Another growing factor in Ukrainian politics is the military and veterans who together with their families are estimated to represent 15–20 percent of voters.

142   *Paul D'Anieri and Taras Kuzio*

In the traditional sense of leaders "listening" to public opinion, Ukrainian citizens appear to have less influence than citizens in other democracies. However, to the extent that they choose to rebel against corrupt leaders and fight or not to fight to keep Russia at bay, they may determine the fate of Ukraine.

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