



CHAPTER 2

Euromaidan

2.1 CONFLICTING NARRATIVES OF EUROMAIDAN

This chapter examines the role of the Yanukovich government, the Maidan opposition, Russia, and the West in Euromaidan (Maidan) in Ukraine in November 2013-February 2014. The analysis focuses on the mass protests and key cases of violence before the Maidan massacre, which is analyzed in the next chapter. This study uses political science theories of mass protest, coups, revolution, and regime change and empirical analysis to examine the nature of Euromaidan and the political transition in Ukraine during the Maidan.

The chapter is based on the analysis of numerous sources, such as online live streams and TV broadcasts during the entire Euromaidan, videos, interviews, court decisions, and media reports in Ukrainian, Russian, and English. The analysis includes thousands of videos, interviews, and statements by key political actors involved in the Maidan; testimonies and reports by hundreds of participants, journalists, and witnesses in the media; and the social media. For space reasons, the absolute majority of such primary and secondary sources cannot be cited in this chapter.

The governments and the mainstream media in Ukraine and the West, with some exceptions, as well as many scholars presented Euromaidan as a popular, peaceful, grassroots, and democratic mass protest movement and a revolution in favor of the EU integration and against the undemocratic, corrupt, pro-Russian government of President Viktor Yanukovich. They

attributed major cases of violence during Euromaidan to the Yanukovych government, the government forces, government-hired “titushki,” or agent’s provocateurs working for Yanukovych or the Russian government. Specifically, they almost universally attributed the violent dispersal of Euromaidan protesters on November 30, 2013, to a Yanukovych order and presented it as one-sided violence by the Berkut special police force against peaceful student protesters. Similarly, the killings of 3 Maidan protesters in January 2014 were almost universally attributed to the orders of Yanukovych, his internal affairs and security ministers, government snipers, and/or Berkut special police force.

The same concerns the beating of a female Maidan activist Tetiana Chornovol and disappearance of one of AutoMaidan leaders, Dmytro Bulatov, who was presented as being kidnapped and crucified. Other major cases of violence, such as attacks on the presidential administration on December 1, 2013, the parliament at the end of January 2014, and the parliament and the headquarters of the Party of Regions on February 18, 2014 were blamed on agent’s provocateurs or far-right organizations acting as agent’s provocateurs for the Yanukovych government or the Russian government.

The governments and the mainstream media in Ukraine and the West, with some exceptions, as well as many scholars attributed the removal of President Yanukovych to the mass protests during Euromaidan or the Maidan. They stated that Yanukovych fled Ukraine because of these protests and because of his responsibility for the violence against the protesters, including the Maidan massacre. They called his removal by a vote of the parliament democratic and legal and referred to the mass Euromaidan protests and the political transition as the “Revolution of Dignity.” However, Oleh Tiahnybok, the leader of the far-right Svoboda party, stated that the term “Revolution of Dignity” was invented by a deputy of his party (see Tiagnybok, 2015).

English-language, Russian-language, and Ukrainian-language Wikipedia largely copied Euromaidan narrative presented by the governments and the mainstream media in Ukraine and the West and omitted many scholarly studies whose findings and classification of Euromaidan differed from such narratives (See, for example, Euromaidan (2025) and Revolution of Dignity (2025)).

In contrast, Russian and separatist politicians and the media in Crimea and Donbas, former president Yanukovych and members of his government after Euromaidan often labeled Euromaidan as a “fascist coup” and

the Maidan government as a “fascist junta.” They stated that the removal of Yanukovich was a coup d’état with the US government involvement.

Similarly, and in part based on the narratives by the governments and the mainstream media in Ukraine and the West some previous studies presented Euromaidan as a popular, peaceful, grassroots-based, and democratic mass protest movement and a revolution, in particular “the Revolution of Dignity,” in favor of the EU integration and against the undemocratic, corrupt, pro-Russian government of President Viktor Yanukovich which resorted to violence against the protesters (See, for example, Marples & Mills, 2015; Onuch & Sasse, 2016; Wilson, 2014).

Other scholars highlighted the crucial role of the far right and their violence during Euromaidan (See Ishchenko, 2016, 2020; Katchanovski, 2016a, 2020, 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Kudelia, 2018). Many scholarly studies classify the Maidan transition as a violent overthrow of the government (See, for example, Bandeira, 2019; Black & Jones, 2015; Cohen, 2018; Hahn, 2018; Katchanovski, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2020, 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Lane, 2016; Mandel, 2016; Sakwa, 2015). Some previous studies classify the Maidan specifically as a coup (See, for example, Black & Jones, 2015; Mearsheimer, 2014).

Coups are defined as violent overthrow of the government by a small group of people, typically by the military or other members of the state (See Chin et al., 2021). In contrast, revolutions involve profound and comprehensive political and social transformation as result of typically violent overthrow of an old regime with mass participation (See Katchanovski, 2008; Skocpol, 1995).

Some previous studies also show escalation of the conflicts in Ukraine during Euromaidan into the Maidan massacre (Katchanovski, 2020; Kudelia, 2018; Myshlovska, 2024; Sakwa, 2015). Some studies also pointed the contribution of Euromaidan to the conflicts in Crimea, Donbas, and ultimately the Russia-Ukraine war (Baysha, 2015; Katchanovski, 2015, 2016b, 2022).

2.2 EUROMAIDAN PROTESTS AND VIOLENCE

Euromaidan protests started at the end of November 2013 following a decision by the Viktor Yanukovich government to postpone the signing of the association and free trade agreement with the European Union. This agreement did not envision the EU accession of Ukraine since the EU refused then to recognize Ukraine even as a potential member (See

Katchanovski, 2011). However, the pro-Western opposition parties and leaders and much of the Ukrainian media backed these protests and presented this agreement as Ukraine joining the EU. Russia provided the Yanukovich government with \$15 billion loan and reduction in gas prices in order to entice him to drop this EU agreement and join the Russia-led Customs Union.

These protests in downtown Kyiv, in particular on the Independence Square which is called the Maidan in Ukrainian, were largely peaceful at first and relatively small. The violence during the protests was also relatively small. For instance, a group of protesters with Svoboda flags and other far-right symbols attacked the police in front of the Cabinet of Ministers building (Shturm, 2013). But they escalated into large-scale protests and violent clashes between the police and the protesters that culminated into the Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police on February 18–20, 2014.

The turning point came with a highly publicized violent dispersal of a few hundred protesters by the anti-riot Berkut special police force on the Maidan on November 30, 2013. Videos, photos, and later admissions by Right Sector leaders and other Maidan protesters showed that the Right Sector activists occupied a part of the Maidan square near a monument to mythical Kyiv founders at the time of the dispersal. This far-right alliance along with its banners appeared on the Maidan on November 29, 2013, i.e., one day before (see Kotsaba, 2013). The Right Sector was organized right before the November 30s dispersal from radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations and football ultras (See Katchanovski, 2020; Chapter 6). The analysis also showed that during the initial police dispersal of other protesters by force nearby Right Sector area-based protesters threw burning wood chunks and various other things at the Berkut special police force, which then beat other protesters in the Maidan square and surrounding streets (See Vypusk, 2013; Interviu, 2013; Zverskoe, 2014).

Ihor Mazur, a Ukrainian National Assembly—Ukrainian People’s Self-Defense (UNA-UNSO) leader, admitted that Right Sector members were present in the Maidan during this dispersal on November 30, 2013 and that they then retreated after a confrontation with the police (Igor, 2014). The website of Tryzub named after Bandera admitted the Right Sector involvement in the clashes with the police on November 30, 2013 on the Maidan, but it was later taken down.

The lists of injured and detained protesters revealed that the absolute majority of them were much older than typical age of students in Ukraine. At the Maidan massacre trial, the Prosecutor General Office (GPU) revealed that 18 policemen were also injured on that day (see Zasadannia, 2018).

There is various evidence that the Maidan opposition leaders, including the far-right ones, had advance information about this dispersal but did not inform the protesters in order to use this violent dispersal to greatly galvanize the mass protests, which were coming to the end on that night. Anatolii Hrytsenko, one of the Maidan politicians, stated that the Maidan leaders knew in advance about this dispersal, because the opposition was able to intercept radio communications of Berkut concerning their deployment for this operation (see Hritsenko, 2014). There are other Maidan protesters who said from the start that Maidan leaders knew in advance about the Berkut dispersal of the Maidan protests on November 30. A leader of neo-Nazi White Hammer made such public warning from the Maidan stage.

The unusual presence of Inter TV crews along with a number of other TV crews at the time of the dispersal around 4:00 am local time and the Inter broadcast of this dispersal also indicate advance knowledge of the police dispersal. A Maidan protester on Facebook reported that she witnessed that an Inter TV operator wanted to leave this square before this dispersal happened at 4:00am, but an Inter TV journalist insisted on staying. A Poroshenko party member of the parliament stated in a live TV program on the Inter TV a few hours before this dispersal that Berkut “was beating students” on the Maidan. Inter TV and other Ukrainian media along with Maidan politicians misrepresented this dispersal of Maidan protesters as an unprovoked and unexpected beating of students and children by the Berkut police on the Yanukovich government order. They generally ignored or omitted the presence of the Right Sector activists and their violence against the police. The Inter television channel was owned by Dmytro Firtash and Serhii Liovochkin. Firtash was an oligarch who supported Yanukovich during the 2010 presidential campaign but then switched to covert backing of Viktor Volodymyr Klitschko, who headed Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) party and became one of Euromaidan leaders. Liovochkin then headed the Yanukovich’s presidential administration, but he belonged to the Firtash oligarchic clan.

After Yanukovich and several members of the Yanukovich government and the Kyiv police chief fled to Russia, they stated or suggested that Liovochkin ordered to disperse the protesters, but they did not provide any specific direct evidence. Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, in all post-Maidan governments made a similar statement concerning the involvement of Liovochkin (see Avakov, 2016). In a leaked telephone conversation, Ihor Kolomoisky said that Liovochkin was aware of the dispersal order because he was the patron of Oleksander Popov, the head of the Kyiv City administration, who was involved in implementing the dispersal order (see Kolomoisky, 2015). The official investigation accused and charged Popov and other members of the Yanukovich government for issuing this order and supervising the dispersal. Liovochkin was the most senior Yanukovich official, who did not flee Ukraine and who was not prosecuted, in contrast to many other Yanukovich associates. The prosecution at the Maidan massacre trial in Ukraine revealed that its investigation has evidence of Liovochkin's "incorrect actions" in "orienting" these Ukrainian officials, who were charged with ordering the dispersal of the Maidan protesters on November 30, concerning this dispersal (Zasidannia vid 17.12.2019 2019).

In a TV interview, an eyewitness reportedly stated that shortly before November 30, 2013 she accidentally overheard a discussion among senior Maidan leaders about the planned police dispersal of the Maidan protesters and possibility that it would lead to violence.

She identified Andrii Ilienکو, Andrii Parubiy, and Serhii Pashynsky as the Maidan leaders who were involved in this discussion (Pidsluhala, 2014). They were not well-known names at the time but would be linked to other cases of violence later during Euromaidan. Ilienکو was a member of the parliament from Svoboda party. Parubiy was a former leader of the neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine, a paramilitary wing of the Social National Party of Ukraine, before this party was rebranded as Svoboda in 2004 and before the Patriot of Ukraine became a paramilitary wing of the SNA, which was formed by the Kharkiv organization of the SNPU. Parubiy and Pashynsky were members of the Ukrainian parliament from the oligarchic Fatherland Party at the time of the Maidan protests.

Mass protests against the Yanukovich government and its decision to suspend the free trade and association agreement with the EU in November 2013-February 2014 were the most visible part of Euro-maidan. There were an estimated few hundred thousand protesters in

Kyiv and other regions of Ukraine on December 1, 2013. They assembled largely in response to the violent dispersal of protesters by the Berkut a day before and were spurred as a result of the deliberately one-sided and misleading media coverage of this dispersal.

Videos and photos show that protesters according to Google Earth maps occupied some 40,000 square meters on Kyiv's Independence Square (Maidan) and the main street, Khreshchatyk on December 1. With the approximate average density of more than two people per square meter, the peak number estimate is at least 100,000. While the Ukrainian Interior Ministry under Yanukovich deflated the number of demonstrators in Kyiv, estimating it at 40,000, the Maidan opposition leaders and many leading Ukrainian and Western mass media outlets inflated the number in the several hundred thousand range, and in cases, of the New York Times and Inter TV channel, at more than a million (Katchanovski, 2013).

The footage and live streams and admissions by the Right Sector leaders and activists showed the violent attack on presidential administration on December 1, 2013 during a massive protest rally against the violent police dispersal of the demonstrators on November 30. These videos and footage showed some of the attackers with neo-Nazi symbols of the Patriot of Ukraine (Massovye, 2013). The footage also showed other groups of attackers shouting "Ukraine above all" slogans used by far-right organizations and obscene chants used by Ukrainian ultras. There are recordings of Andrii Dzyndzia hijacking a bulldozer and then trying to ram into the Interior Troops line protecting the presidential administration (see Dzyndzia, 2013).

Although Svoboda publicly distanced itself from violent attacks of the presidential administration and the parliament, the evidence, such as presence of some Svoboda flags and activists, live streams, and social media posts, clearly indicated that at least some Svoboda and C14 members and activists linked to them were involved in these violent attacks. There was similar evidence of Svoboda's participation in seizures of regional administrations, primarily, in Western Ukraine and storming and occupying Kyiv City administration on December 1, 2013. Svoboda and its C14 affiliate also formed some paramilitary self-defense companies during Euromaidan. C14, a Neo-Nazi youth organization affiliated with Svoboda, led a paramilitary Self-Defense unit, which helped Svoboda to forcibly occupy the Kyiv city administration during the mass protests against the Yanukovich government and the police violence.

The tent city on the Independence Square and the stage there became permanent centers of the mass protest which was televised and streamed live over the entire Ukraine. The Berkut police tried to disperse the Maidan protesters in the tent city on December 10, but then stopped as result of the resistance by the protesters and the reported order from the Yanukovych government as a result of the pressure from the United States and the EU during the visit by Viktoria Nuland to Ukraine.

Live Internet video streams showed that the largely peaceful protests turned much more violent following calls by radical Maidan activists to advance towards the Ukrainian parliament in the middle of January 2014 after the adoption by the Yanukovych Party of Regions dominated parliament of the laws aimed at curtailing the Maidan protests. These laws restricted to certain extent the freedoms of assembly and protest and were called “dictatorial laws” by the Maidan opposition and much of the Ukrainian media. But there were many similar laws in Western democracies.

The advance towards the parliament was stopped by the Berkut police and the Internal Troops on Hrushevskiy Street and violent clashes with the activists, including the far-right Right Sector and football ultras, turned into a violent standoff between the law enforcement and the Maidan protesters. Live Internet streams and videos showed that the Maidan activists attacked the Berkut police and Internal Troops with Molotov cocktails, stones, salutes, and burning tires. The Berkut police and the Internal Troops shot at the activists with rubber bullets and beat them with rubber batons. Many police and Internal Troops members and Maidan activists were injured. The protesters who resorted to violence were in a minority, but they were the most active part of Euromaidan. The Maidan opposition leaders, such as Volodymyr Klitschko and Petro Poroshenko, initially publicly condemned the December 1st attack of the presidential administration and the January attack of the Ukrainian parliament as “provocations.”

However, videos, testimonies, admissions by some Maidan leaders, and other evidence show that the Maidan opposition leaders mobilized mass protests and promoted their violent radicalization with help of staged violence. The killings of the first three protesters at the end of January 2014 were attributed by the Maidan opposition and the media in Ukraine and the West to the government forces, despite the evidence that these were false-flag killings. These killings greatly escalated the conflict by turning it into conflict with fatalities.

However, unreported Pechersk court decisions suggested that the Prosecutor General Office investigated members and leaders of UNA-UNSO, one of the founding organizations in the Right Sector, for shooting these protesters (Ukhvala, 2015). The official investigation determined that these three protesters were killed from a few meters distance in the Maidan-controlled areas, while the police lines were several dozen meters away from the Maidan positions.

A Kyiv prosecutor said in 2019 that he spoke with the forensic expert who examined the body of Sergey Nigoyan, the Armenian protester, and that “there everything is unambiguous,” “the shot was from behind at a maximum distance of three–five meters and gun wads were found,” and “that is it definitely was not policemen who killed him.” (Gubin, 2019). A popular Ukrainian blogger reported that the Security Service of Ukraine knows who in fact shot dead this Armenian protester on the Maidan in January 2014 because it has a video recording of a group of people in the Maidan-controlled Trade Union building hiding a firearm and discussing his killing right after it happened. The Trade Union building was the headquarters of the Maidan leadership and the Right Sector during the Maidan. He revealed a Security Service of Ukraine report concerning its covert video surveillance of a Right Sector chemical explosions lab in the Trade Union building during the Maidan (See Kak, 2019).

Another evidence that these were false-flag killings is the absence of the moments and exact locations of killings of two of these protesters in livestreams, videos, photos, and confirmed eyewitnesses of these killings in the heavily covered area of a violent confrontation between the protesters and the police. A video published by a Ukrainian media outlet five years after these killings also provided evidence that a Belarusian far-right protester was killed from a Maidan-controlled area and not by the Berkut police. The video shows that he was shot while he was behind a barricade from burned buses that covered him from the Berkut police (Gubin, 2019).

The investigation confirmed that the Armenian protester was shot by pellets used in hunting. The killed Belarusian protester was a member of the UNA-UNSO. The ethnicities of these killed protesters also suggest that they were not random victims but were selected in order to propagate Euromaidan as ethnically inclusive and diverse and to garner support for Euromaidan among people from Armenia and Belarus. A Ukrainian reporter wrote on her Facebook page that a leader of the neo-Nazi White Hammer told her off the record that these two protesters were killed by

their own and that this was one of the reasons for the subsequent split of the White Hammer from the Right Sector (Melnikova, 2015).

Like in the case of the Maidan massacre, the prosecution stated that forensic examinations four years after the massacre reversed the previous examination findings without any explanation and claimed that these three protesters were killed from a distance between 7 and 21 meters. But the same investigation stated before that the police was then further from the protesters (4 goda, 2018). The live streams and videos showed the same.

Nobody is charged with the killings of these Armenian, Belarusian, and Western Ukrainian protesters for 10 years since their murders, which were used by the Maidan leaders and the far right to mobilize mass protests and justify their violence. The evidence suggests that they were killed in a false-flag operation with possible involvement of the far right and that the investigation of their killings after the Maidan was stonewalled and fabricated for this reason and the actual killers were covered-up. The Ukrainian and Western media with a few notable exceptions did not report such evidence and continued to propagate fake news about killings of these and other Maidan protesters by the Berkut police or government snipers.

Similarly, the analysis of the evidence and the Ukrainian government investigation show that highly publicized kidnapping of Dmytro Bulatov, the Automaidan leader, was staged. The Ukrainian police closed on March 27, 2020, its investigation of kidnapping, torture, and crucifixion of Dmytro Bulatov during the Maidan because the investigation determined that the crime “was absent” and could have been “staged.” The documents from his investigative criminal case show that associates of Bulatov in the Automaidan testified in 2014 after the Maidan and in 2019 that he staged his own abduction, torture, and crucifixion. One of them testified that Bulatov told him shortly before his disappearance that he planned to stage his own abduction. Another testified that she heard from Bulatov and other Maidan activists about need for some “fiery information” in order to regain popularity of the Automaidan and that his staged abduction accomplished this. Other Automaidan leaders testified that there was no rationale for Bulatov’s kidnapping and torture because he was removed from the Automaidan leadership a couple of days prior, and they regarded his staging his own kidnapping as a real possibility. Two of them also testified that the light wounds and his appearance did not match his statements about being kidnapped and tortured for a week without food.

A government forensic expert determined in his expert report for the investigation after the Maidan that Bulatov's wounds, including a cut off a piece of his ear, could have been inflicted by himself or by someone else with his agreement using sterile materials and disinfecting wounds, because they did not have any signs of infection. The government forensic expert also determined that there was no damage on his hands that would be consistent with Bulatov being handcuffed (Skrepy, 2020). This is consistent with a testimony by Davyd Zhvania, who was a member of the Maidan leadership during Euromaidan and headed the election campaign of the Petro Poroshenko party in 2014 and the parliamentary committee during and after the Maidan. He stated that Maidan leaders, whom he named, staged the abduction and crucifixion of Bulatov and most other high-profile cases of violence, such as the Maidan massacre (Otkrytoe, 2020).

Zhvania stated that her beating was staged by the Maidan leaders, similarly to the abduction of Bulatov. The Ukrainian trial sentence of the men who beat a female Maidan activist Tetiana Chornovol at the end of December 2013 stated that this was a traffic-related conflict. Zhvania also stated that the abduction of two other protesters, one of whom perished, was also staged by the Maidan leaders (See Otkrytoe, 2020).

2.3 PUBLIC OPINION CONCERNING EUROMAIDAN

Polls show that Ukrainians were almost evenly split on the issue of support of the Maidan, in particular, there was strong regional divide between majority support in Western and Central Ukraine and opposition in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. A poll by the Democratic Initiative Foundation (DIF) and the Razumkov Center during Euromaidan in the end of December 2013 found that half (50%) of Ukrainians supported Euromaidan protests, while 42% opposed them. Similarly, 46% of Ukrainians preferred the EU membership path, while 36% favored the Customs Union led by Russia. Yanukovych was favored by 30% of the potential voters in the first round of the presidential elections (Hromadska, 2013).

The poll by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) and Sosis on January 24-February 1, 2014 showed that 47% of Ukrainians supported Euromaidan, while almost similar percentage of respondents (46%) did not support it. The difference was within the statistical margin of error. The KIIS poll on February 8-18, 2014 showed that Euromaidan was supported by the absolute majorities of the respondents in the West

(80%) and in the Center (51%) of Ukraine. In contrast, a minority, 20% of residents of the South and 8% of respondents in the East supported Euromaidan (Attitude, 2014).

The Razumkov Center survey in December 2020 showed that 34% of the respondents in Ukraine would have supported the “Euromaidan” if it would happen at the time of the survey. Conversely, 11% would have supported “Antimaidan,” while 40% would have backed neither of them (see *Ukrayina-2020* 2020). The majority of respondents in Western Ukraine (71%) and plurality in the Center (46%) in the Razumkov Center survey in 2015 would have supported the Maidan, while the majorities in the East, the central government-controlled Donbas, and the South stated that they would have backed neither. The difference between the percentage of Maidan supporters and the combined percentage of the Maidan opponents would be significantly higher if the Russian-annexed Crimea and separatist-controlled Donbas were included in the survey sample.

The analysis of polls, videos, and photos shows that protesters were primarily from Western Ukraine and Kyiv City and other parts of Central Ukraine. The DIF/KIIS poll of Euromaidan protesters in Kyiv during large weekend rallies on December 7 and 8 found that about half of them were from Kyiv, while another half arrived from other regions. The reason for participation of the absolute majority (70%) of the respondents was the beating of the protesters on November 30, while 54% were driven by the non-signing of the EU association agreement, while 39% wanted to change the government (*Maidan-2013* 2013). The DIF/KIIS poll of the protesters stationed on the Maidan in Kyiv on February 3, 2014 showed that they were getting more radical and more dominated by Western Ukrainians. Close to half (48%) of the protesters stationed on the Maidan were from Western Ukraine, compared to 20% from the Center, 18% from the East and the South, and 12% from Kyiv City (Vid, 2014).

The KIIS poll on February 8–18, 2014 showed that 43% of Ukrainian residents named the “outrage with the corrupted regime of Yanukovych” as the main reason for the majority of people to participate in protests. Nearly a third of respondents (30%) selected “the West influence that aims to include Ukraine in its sphere of political interests” as the main reason for Euromaidan protests. The absolute majority in the East (57%) and close to half of the residents of the South (44%) regarded the West

influence as the main reason, in contrast to 17% in the Center and 5% in Western Ukraine (Attitude, 2014).

The Razumkov Centre Poll in December 2019 found that 46% of the respondents in Ukraine regarded Euromaidan events as “the Revolution of Dignity,” 23% as a coup, and 18% as change of government by not entirely legitimate means. 38% of the residents of Ukraine would have supported the Maidan if it were to happen then, while 10% would have backed the Antimaidan and 39% supported the neither. The poll did not include the most anti Maidan regions of Ukraine, the Russian-annexed Crimea and separatist-controlled Donbas (Stavlenia, 2019).

2.4 MASS PROTEST, REVOLUTION, COUP, OR REGIME CHANGE?

The popular violent mass protests during the Maidan would be consistent with definitions of mass protests and political but not social revolution. However, the mass Maidan protests failed to bring down the Yanukovych government. He was overthrown by means of the Maidan massacre of the Maidan protesters and the police and assassination attempts that were perpetrated with covert involvement of small number of the Maidan oligarchic leadership and the far-right members with backing of elements of the state. Such kind of political transition fits the definitions of a coup.

Analyzes of synchronized videos and audio recordings of the massacre, witness testimonies, admissions by Maidan snipers and activists in the media and social media, and Maidan massacre trials and investigations revealed various evidence that four killed and several dozen wounded policemen and at least the absolute majority of 49 killed and 172 wounded Maidan protesters were massacred on February 20, 2014 by snipers in Maidan-controlled buildings and areas in a false-flag operation organized and perpetrated with involvement of the elements of the Maidan oligarchic and far-right opposition alliance. The Maidan massacre trial verdict confirmed that many protesters were shot by snipers in the Hotel Ukraina, and this hotel was “activist controlled.” (See Chapter 3; Katchanovski, 2025b).

The commander of the far-right-linked group of the Maidan snipers right after the massacre issued an ultimatum for Yanukovych from the Maidan stage to resign by the next morning and threatened the use of force if he would not resign. Parubiy, the head of the Maidan Self-Defense said that his ultimatum was a decision made by “the institutional bodies

of the Maidan,” and it was adopted by a military council set up by the Maidan Self-Defense and the far-right Right Sector (see Kalnysh, 2015).

The Yanukovich treason trial revealed various witness testimonies and other evidence that he fled from Kyiv and then Ukraine not because of his responsibility for the Maidan massacre but because of a number of assassination attempts by the Maidan forces, in particular the far right, and after their attempts to capture him and his residence near Kyiv and likely execute him (Katchanovski, 2020, 2023a).

Witnesses testified at the Yanukovich treason trial that right after the Maidan massacre the presidential motorcade was shot at a checkpoint, which was manned by activists with Right Sector and Svoboda flags and that the bullets hit one of the cars and a gun of one of the Yanukovich bodyguards. Helicopter pilots, who flew Yanukovich in Ukraine after the massacre, testified that the air traffic controllers relayed them an order from Maidan leaders to land the helicopter with Yanukovich under threat of its being shot-down by military planes. The witness testimonies also referred to information received by his security personnel about a plan involving Svoboda activists to assassinate him during a congress in Kharkiv where he flew after the Maidan massacre, and then on the road near Melitopol (See Eks-okhoronets’, 2018; Katchanovski, 2020, 2023a).

Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of Ukraine, revealed that he received information about a plot to assassinate Yanukovich around the time of the Maidan massacre. He stated that this plan was called “Ceausescu” after the last name of the last communist leader of Romania, who was assassinated by soldiers soon after snipers massacred the anti-government protesters in a false-flag operation (U Kravchuka, 2018). The former Romanian president, prime minister, and a number of other leaders of the “Romanian revolution” were charged by the Romanian prosecutors in 2018 and 2019 with crimes against humanity for using deliberate disinformation and diversion right after they seized power in 1989 to provoke false-flag mass killings (Romanian, 2018).

The parliament vote to oust Yanukovich for “abandoning presidency” was unconstitutional, did not follow impeachment procedures specified in the Ukrainian Constitution, and lacked the required 338 constitutional vote majority. The vote was done under duress, and its 328 “yes” result was fabricated. According to the official parliament record, 248 deputies out of 450 were registered at the opening (Ofitsiynyi, 2014). Many Yanukovich party deputies switched loyalty, but many others voted under threat of violence by the far-right group of Maidan snipers, the

Maidan Self-Defense, and a mob which surrounded the parliament. The commander of the far-right-linked Maidan company of snipers admitted that his group impelled, by force, deputies from the Yanukovich Party of Regions to vote for his removal (see Kovalenko, 2014). The number of present deputies in various videos of this vote was about 262 (See, for example, Al Jazeera, 2014). A member of Maidan leadership, who headed then a parliamentary committee, stated that Maidan opposition leaders seized duplicate cards of absent deputies and used them to fraudulently inflate this vote as well as other votes that put leaders of Fatherland and Svoboda, which were involved in the false-flag Maidan massacre, in top government positions (see Katchanovski, 2024).

There is also various evidence of the US-led regime change during the Maidan in Ukraine. The Ukrainian foreign minister during Euro-maidan testified at the Maidan massacre trial in Ukraine in 2019 that a senior US State Department official Victoria Nuland in her meeting with him and Yanukovich at the very start of Euromaidan on December 5, 2013, proposed to sack the Mykola Azarov cabinet, restore the constitution of 2004, and to conduct early parliamentary and presidential elections (see Zasadnannya vid 3.12.2019 2019). This de facto meant a peaceful regime change and the same points as were the demands of the Maidan opposition. Yanukovich eventually accepted all these US administration demands and first fired Azarov and his Cabinet of Ministers and then signed the agreement with the Maidan opposition leaders and French, German, and Polish foreign ministers on February 21, 2014 (Katchanovski, 2025a).

An intercepted telephone call between Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador in Ukraine prior to February 20, 2014 shows them discussing which specific Maidan opposition leaders, specifically Arseniy Yatseniuk, can be in the Ukrainian government after Yanukovich offered the positions in his government to the opposition leaders following the sacking of the Azarov and the Cabinet of Ministers (Marionetki, 2014). John McCain, the influential US Senator, stated in his CNN interview during his and other US politicians visit to Kyiv in December 2013 that they were trying to “bring about a peaceful transition” in Ukraine (i.e., the government change) (see McCain, 2013).

Similarly, US Senator Chris Murphy, who also backed the Maidan anti-government protests during his visit to Ukraine, stated shortly after the Maidan:

I think it was our role, including sanctions and threats of sanctions, that forced, in part, Yanukovych from office... We have not sat on the sidelines. We have been very much involved. Members of the Senate have been there. Members of the State Department have been on the Square. The Obama administration passed sanctions. The Senate was prepared to pass its own set of sanctions, and as I've said, I think that the clear position of the United States has, in part, been what has helped lead to this change in regime... If, ultimately, this is a peaceful transition to a new government in Ukraine, it will be the U.S. on the streets of Ukraine who will be seen as a great friend in helping make that transition happen. (Murphy, 2014)

Nuland and various other senior US and EU officials and politicians also publicly supported Euromaidan by visiting the Maidan. US and EU leaders also publicly condemned use of force by the Yanukovych government against the Maidan protesters and threatened to impose sanctions. Yanukovych ordered to stop such attempts by the police and the Internal Troops to clear the Maidan on December 10, in late January, and on February 18 in part because of such pressure from the Western leaders (Katchanovski, 2025a).

US President Barack Obama stated that “we had brokered a deal to transition power in Ukraine” after the massacre and before Yanukovych fled, but the US president or other American government officials did not release any specific information about the nature of this involvement (PRES, 2015). Yanukovych and Putin stated that right after the Maidan massacre there was an agreement with Obama but that the US president broken it. Mykhailo Dobkin, the former governor of Kharkiv Region, confirmed this. He said that when they met in Kharkiv in February 2014, Yanukovych told him that he had guarantees from Obama and Putin concerning the implementation of the agreement which he signed (Dobkin, 2017). Putin and the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov suggested that Obama pushed for signing a deal between Yanukovych and the Maidan leaders but that the Maidan opposition broke the deal and seized the power the next day (see Obama, 2019). The deal signed on February 21, 2014 stipulated that the Yanukovych government would not use force against the Maidan and that the Maidan forces would disarm.

Then US Vice President Biden revealed in his memoirs that during the Maidan massacre he called Yanukovych and told him that “it was over; time for him to call off his gunmen and walk away” and “he shouldn’t expect his Russian friends to rescue him from this disaster,” that “Yanukovych had lost the confidence of the Ukrainian people, I

said, and he was going to be judged harshly by history if he kept killing them.” Biden wrote that “the disgraced president fled Ukraine the next day—owing to the courage and determination of the demonstrators—and control of the government ended up temporarily in the hands of a young patriot named Arseniy Yatsenyuk.” The US vice president also revealed that he “had been warning him for months to exercise restraint in dealing with his citizens.” (Biden, 2017).

The far-right Svoboda party leader and the deputy head of the Ukrainian parliament from Svoboda stated in their separate interviews that a Western government representative during their and other Maidan leaders meeting told them a few weeks before the Maidan massacre that the Western governments would turn on Yanukovich after casualties among protesters would reach 100 (Braty, 2017, p. 94). The Maidan opposition right after the massacre called the killed Maidan protesters the “Heavenly Hundred.” Some Maidan protesters and other people, who were not on the Maidan and died from illnesses and other causes were included in the “Heavenly Hundred” to bring the number of the victims to 100. The US and other Western governments blamed the Yanukovich government and his forces for the massacre of the Maidan protesters. They also immediately recognized the new Maidan government after the seizure of the presidential administration and the parliament by the Maidan Self-Defense and the parliament vote to remove Yanukovich even though such actions violated the agreement signed on February 21, 2014 by Yanukovich, the Maidan opposition leaders, and representatives of France, Germany, and Poland which stipulated withdrawal of the government forces from downtown Kyiv, disarmament of the Maidan activists, early presidential elections, and the investigation of the Maidan massacre with involvement of the Council of Europe.

There is no publicly available evidence of the direct involvement of the US or other Western governments and forces in the Maidan massacre. But these governments de facto backed the overthrow of the Ukrainian government in spite of evidence that this overthrow was perpetrated by the elements of the Maidan oligarchic and far-right opposition by means of the false-flag mass killing of the Maidan protesters and assassination attempts against Yanukovich.

Ukraine becoming a US client state right after the Maidan is indirect evidence of the US-led regime change. The Ukrainian media, Ukrainian and US officials, and a declassified transcript of a meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine also revealed that the US and

other Western governments told the Maidan government leaders not to use military force during the Russian annexation of Crimea in order to avoid a war with Russia (See Chapter 4; Katchanovski, 2015; U.S., 2015). The nearly perfect alignment of the Ukrainian and US government policies after the Maidan is also consistent with Ukraine becoming a US client state and remaining during the Russia-Ukraine war. The US administration was involved in the Maidan government decision to use force in the separatist conflict in Donbas (Chapter 5). The use of Ukraine as a proxy for a proxy war with Russia after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and the US and UK blocking of a peace deal to end the war in April 2022 also show that Ukraine was a client state.

Then a member of the Ukrainian parliament from the Poroshenko's ruling party and the current adviser to President of Ukraine Zelenskyy stated in 2015 that "Pyatt and the U.S. administration have more influence than ever in the history of independent Ukraine." A rare report in the US media noted that "Americans are highly visible in the Ukrainian political process. The U.S. embassy in Kiev is a center of power, and Ukrainian politicians openly talk of appointments and dismissals being vetted by U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and even U.S. Vice President Joe Biden." (See Bershidsky, 2015).

Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned American economist who was invited to serve as an economic advisor to new prime minister Arsenii Yatseniuk right after the Yanukovich government overthrow, stated that the US government "definitely contributed to the overthrow of Yanukovich... I know this from inside, not just from outside. I know from top people involved in these issues." (Jeffrey, 2023). Renowned American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said based on his insider sources in the US intelligence and the government: "We certainly did overthrow [of the Ukrainian government] with a lot more American involvement than the press knows about right now." (CN, 2023).

Various evidence shows US administration involvement in appointments and dismissals of top Ukrainian government officials and in key policy decisions in Ukraine since the Maidan. For example, the Ukrainian media reported that then US Vice President Joe Biden requested to put Arsenii Yatseniuk, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, and foreigners in the Ukrainian government (Mostovaia, 2015). Yatseniuk became the prime minister, Nalyvaichenko the head of the Security Service of Ukraine, and the former president of Georgia and his former Georgian government officials occupied various positions in the Ukrainian state. Ukrainian

media reports and tapes of phone calls between then US Vice President Joe Biden and President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko revealed that he had say in Poroshenko's decision to dismiss Yatseniuk as prime minister and in appointing his successor. The tapes, Ukrainian media reports, and public admission by Biden showed that he was involved in dismissal of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and approval of his successor's appointment (See FLASHBACK, 2019; Listen, 2020; Mostovaia, 2015, 2016).

The declassified transcript of the Trump and Zelenskyy phone call shows the same client-patron relationship between Ukraine and the United States (Read, 2019). The client-patron relationship between Ukraine and the US enabled the use of Ukraine as a US proxy during the Russia-Ukraine war (See Chapter 9).

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