



CHAPTER 2

Conflicting Narratives of the Maidan Massacre in Ukraine

This chapter examines different narratives concerning the Maidan massacre of the Maidan activists and the police on February 18–20, 2014, and previous scholarly studies of this massacre. The dominant narrative promoted by the Ukrainian and Western governments and with some exceptions the media attributed the Maidan massacre of the protesters to the Yanukovich government and his security forces and Berkut anti-riot police. It was uncritically accepted by some scholars. In contrast, most previous scholarly studies, which analyzed it specifically, found that this was a false-flag operation with involvement of elements of the Maidan oligarchic and far-right opposition.

2.1 CONFLICTING GOVERNMENT NARRATIVES OF THE MAIDAN MASSACRE

The dominant narrative promoted by the governments in Ukraine and the West attributed the Maidan massacre of the protesters on February 18–20, 2014, to the Yanukovich government and his security and police forces and generally disregarded killings of the police on the same day and in the same place. The official investigation by the Prosecutor General Office of Ukraine (GPU) charged the special Berkut police company with the massacre of the Maidan protesters on February 20 on the orders of President Viktor Yanukovich and his heads of the Security Service

of Ukraine and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The GPU arrested and charged two Berkut commanders and three members of this police unit with terrorism and the murder of 48 out of 49 killed Maidan protesters and attempted murder of 80 out of 172 wounded protesters on February 20, 2014, on Yanukovych's orders. Shortly before the 10th anniversary of the massacre, Yanukovych, his heads and other senior officials and commanders of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Berkut anti-riot police were charged in absentia for the massacre of the Maidan protesters on February 18–20, 2014. The head of SBU in the Kyiv Region, the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and commanders and members of Berkut units from Kharkiv and Lviv were arrested and charged with the massacre of the Maidan activists on February 18, 2014. However, the Maidan massacre trial verdict by a Kyiv district court verdict in 2023 stated that there was no evidence of any order by Yanukovych and his government ministers to kill the Maidan activists on February 18–20 (Katchanovski, 2024).

Then President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, the head of the National Security and Defense Council Oleksandr Turchynov, and the head of the SBU Valentyn Nalyvaichenko alleged in February 2015 that Vladislav Surkov, an aide of Russian President Vladimir Putin, was personally coordinating foreign “snipers” on the Maidan but presented no supporting evidence. However, Serhii Leshchenko, a member of the Poroshenko's faction in the parliament, revealed that Surkov arrived in Kyiv by plane after the massacre was already over. The Prosecutor General of Ukraine and the head of its department in charge of the Maidan massacre investigation stated later that they did not have evidence about such Surkov's and Russian snipers' involvement in the massacre (SBU, 2015; Shershen, 2015).

Similarly, Andrii Parubii, who became after the overthrow of Yanukovych the head of the National Security and Defense Council and then the speaker of the Ukrainian parliament, claimed that Russian and Belarusian snipers massacred the protesters and that they were located on the roofs of the presidential administration and the National Bank, but he was not certain if they were in Hotel Ukraina (Kalnysh, 2015). The government investigation and the Maidan massacre trial verdict in 2023 determined that there was no participation of Russian snipers or agents in this massacre (Katchanovski, 2024).

The Western governments and organizations, such as the European Union (EU), either explicitly or implicitly, by threatening sanctions,

blamed the Yanukovich government and the government forces for the massacre of the Maidan protesters when and after it happened and before any investigation was conducted. For instance, Joe Biden, then US vice president, spoke to Yanukovich on February 20, 2014, right after the massacre and demanded a withdrawal of the security forces, specifically snipers and paramilitary units which he said were most responsible for the violence and told Yanukovich to leave presidency and Ukraine (Biden, 2017).

However, Biden stated in his official address to the Ukrainian parliament that “snipers on the roofs” massacred the protesters (The Obama, 2015). The US ambassador to Ukraine told Biden during their visit to the massacre site in 2015 that “snipers” were on surrounding buildings (Baker, 2015). US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also stated that the Maidan protesters were massacred by snipers from the buildings: “but actually being there on the ground and sort of putting yourself where these people had been, and looking up at the buildings where the snipers had been shooting down at them gives you a pretty palpable feel for what people had done to stand up for their own democratic right to choose the future of their country” (Secretary, 2023). Biden, Blinken, and the US ambassador to Ukraine blamed the Yanukovich government forces for the massacre. But their statements that the Maidan activists were shot by snipers located in surrounding buildings contradicted the GPU investigation that protesters were massacred by the Berkut police on the ground and not by any snipers in surrounding buildings.

The Prosecutor General of Ukraine stated in June 2014 that he gave videos of the Maidan massacre to the FBI to enhance their quality (Report, 2015a). However, the US and other Western governments did not release their intelligence assessments and other information concerning this massacre, and results of such reported involvement of the FBI in the Maidan massacre investigation also were not revealed.

The Prosecutor General of Ukraine investigators, the Maidan victims lawyers, and with some exceptions, the Ukrainian and Western media denied that Maidan snipers massacred Maidan activists. On November 19, 2014, the Prosecutor General Office claimed during its press conference that their extensive investigation produced no evidence of “snipers” at Hotel Ukraina, Zhovtnevyi Palace and other locations controlled by the Maidan protesters.

However, in a leaked intercepted telephone call with the EU foreign affairs head, the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs referred to one

of the Maidan doctors, in particular, Olha Bohomolets, pointing to the similarity of the wounds among the protesters and police, which served as an indication that the massacre was organized by some elements of the Maidan opposition (Bergman, 2014). Lawyers representing two Berkut policemen stated in court on August 3, 2015, that the prosecution case was falsified and that relatives of victims should ask Andriy Parubii and Petro Poroshenko about those who gave an order to massacre protesters. Parubii was the leader of neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine in the 1990s and the head of the Maidan Self-Defense during the “Euromaidan,” and he became the head of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the speaker of the Ukrainian parliament after the Maidan. Poroshenko, an oligarch and one of “Euromaidan” leaders, became president of Ukraine in May 2014.

The Western governments and organizations generally ignored the Maidan massacre trials and investigations even though this mass killing was one of the most serious human rights violations in contemporary Ukraine and Europe overall and it had crucial political significance beyond Ukraine. Many top Western officials paid tribute to the killed protesters on the site of the massacre during their visits to Ukraine. Such Western governments’ stance concerning the Maidan massacre investigations and trials contrasts with their various public statements and other forms of involvement concerning other politically important criminal cases and trials, such as the Yuliya Tymoshenko trial during the Yanukovich presidency, cases of corruption in the Ukrainian government after the “Euromaidan,” and the successful US administration pressure to remove Viktor Shokin as the GPU head.

Similarly, the EU did not show interest in investigations of this mass killing even though in a leaked intercepted telephone call with the EU foreign affairs chief, the Estonian minister of foreign affairs referred to Olha Bohomolets, the head of the Maidan doctors team, pointing out similarity of the wounds among the protesters and policemen, and indicating that some Maidan leaders hired “snipers” and stonewalled the investigation. The European parliament rejected 17 requests by one of its members to include investigations of the Maidan and Odesa massacres on its agenda (Evroparlament, 2017).

Videos of killings and woundings of many Maidan protesters and shooting by the Berkut special company, along with videos and photos of Omega unit snipers of the Internal Troops and audio recordings of Alfa unit snipers of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), were presented

by the government and the media in Ukraine and the West as definite evidence that the police massacred the protesters. Statements, media interviews, and reports by numerous Maidan protesters and Ukrainian and Western journalists have attributed the massacre to government snipers on the ground and in various surrounding buildings. Similarly, numerous bullet holes in trees, electric poles, and Hotel Ukraina walls from the side of the Berkut and government snipers were presented by the prosecution and the media as clear evidence that they shot protesters.

Conversely, ex-president Yanukovich and former top officials of his government, who fled to Russia following the massacre, as well as the Russian government and media, stated that the Maidan massacre was a part of a coup d'état or a fascist coup by some of the Maidan leaders, radical elements of the Maidan opposition, and the US government. Yanukovich, his ministers, and Berkut commanders denied that they had ordered the massacre and stated that the protesters and the police were shot by Maidan snipers. However, they did not produce specific evidence in support of their claims. Yanukovich along with his heads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Internal Troops, and the Security Service of Ukraine, and Berkut commanders were then charged in absentia for ordering the Maidan massacre of the protesters. However, as noted no such orders were revealed, and the Maidan massacre trial verdict stated that there was no evidence of such orders (Katchanovski, 2023a, 2023b, 2024).

For instance, Yanukovich made such claims in 2017 in his letters to the US President Donald Trump, leaders of Germany, France, Poland and Russia, and the Council of Europe and the European parliament. In these letters, he named such People's Front leaders as Oleksandr Turchynov (the acting president after the Yanukovich overthrow and then the head of the National Security and Defense Council), Andriy Parubii (the head of the Maidan Self-Defense and then the head of the Ukrainian parliament), Serhii Pashynsky (the head of the presidential administration under Turchynov and then the head of the National Defense and Security committee of the Ukrainian parliament), and Arsen Avakov (then the Minister of Internal Affairs) as organizers of the Maidan massacre. Yanukovich stated in his interviews, in his Ukrainian and Russian court testimonies, and in his letter to Trump and other foreign leaders that he had documents and witnesses in support of his claims. But he did not make such evidence public citing potential threats to witnesses in Ukraine.

He called for international investigation of this mass killing and stated that he would then provide such evidence (Pismo, 2017).

An edited version of a BBC interview with Yanukovich was misrepresented by BBC and the Ukrainian media as an admission of his and his police forces responsibility for carrying out the Maidan massacre. However, the transcript of the full Yanukovich interview published on the BBC Russian website shows that he did not admit his and his police forces responsibility for carrying the Maidan massacre and repeated his previous statements about a “coup” by “radicals” but regretted his failure to prevent the massacre (Viktor, 2015; Yanukovich, 2015).

Oleksandr Yakymenko, the SBU head under Yanukovich, testified in a Russian court concerning the “Maidan coup,” that the SBU identified by name several Maidan snipers who massacred the police and protesters, and that they included some Georgians and a former SBU Alfa officer, who then reportedly worked in the Fatherland Party security. He also named Volodymyr Parasiuk, who headed the special Maidan company, established in the Music Conservatory with help of the Right Sector, and his father as Maidan “snipers.” The ex-SBU head stated that during the Maidan massacre on February 20 the SBU located 10 snipers in the Music Conservatory, obtained their photos, and then tracked five of them entering Hotel Ukraina but lost track of other five snipers (Pokazaniya, 2016).

Andriy Klyuyev, the former head of the Yanukovich administration, stated in the end of 2016 that one of the Maidan leaders hired snipers from Georgia and the Baltic States. He identified Pashynsky as this leader and one of the Georgian snipers identified in a protocol of his interrogation by senior Right Sector activists. Reported position of this “sniper” matches a sole uninhibited Maidan area building, which is located near Dnipro Hotel and was identified in Katchanovski (2015a, 18–19). Klyuyev also stated that Turchynov, Parubii, and Pashynsky organized the massacre of the police and the protesters and used the Right Sector and leaders of Maidan parties, including far-right Svoboda, in the dark (Eks-glava, 2016). However, he did not provide specific evidence in support of his statements.

The Russian government made similar claims based primarily on statements of Yanukovich, his government ministers, and self-admitted Georgian snipers. It did not produce specific evidence in support of their claims. For example, Putin stated that “the neo-Nazi regime” “had taken

hold in Ukraine after the 2014 coup,” “that was a bloody, anti-state and unconstitutional coup” (Presidential, 2023).

Some international organizations examined the Maidan massacre trial and investigations in their reports, but they did not conduct their own investigations of this mass killing and ignored academic studies of the massacre. They did not question the official investigation conclusions that the government forces on the orders of the Yanukovich government were responsible for the massacre of the protesters and relied on the investigation findings.

An International Advisory Panel of the Council of Europe report in 2015 found that the investigation was stalled, in particular by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the GPU. The report revealed that contrary to the public statements, the official investigation had evidence of “shooters” killing at least three protesters from Hotel Ukraina or the Music Conservatory and that at least 10 protesters were killed by unidentified “snipers” from rooftops of buildings. The initial prosecution charges against the Berkut policemen for killing 39 protesters simply omitted the killings of the other 10 protesters, even though at least 8 of them were shot dead at the same time and place. However, the Council of Europe commission, which did not conduct its own investigation, repeated the official investigation conclusions that Berkut policemen were responsible for killings of the absolute majority of the protesters (Report, 2015a).

Interpol rejected GPU requests to put ex-president Yanukovich, a number of his ministers, and the commander and members of the Berkut special company on its wanted list on murder-related charges for the Maidan massacre because this international police organization deemed that these charges constituted political persecution (Tucker, 2015). The Ukrainian parliament asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) immediately after the overthrow of Yanukovich to investigate this and other cases of political violence during the “Euromaidan.” However, the GPU reportedly informed the court representatives in the fall of 2014 that the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies were not interested in assisting such an ICC investigation (see Katchanovski, 2015a, 8). The ICC did not pursue the Maidan massacre case and other cases of political violence during the “Euromaidan.”

In spite of accusations of their involvement in the Maidan mass killings to seize power in Ukraine, oligarchic and far-right Maidan leaders and organizations were hailed by Western and Ukrainian politicians and the

media as heroes and defenders of democracy. They were invited for government visits and talks at universities in the West.

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded in 2022 to the Center for Civil Liberties. This Ukrainian NGO, which is funded by the Western governments and foundations, run the Euromaidan SOS during the Maidan and after the Maidan. It attributed the Maidan violence, including the Maidan massacre, to the government forces and advocated for the prosecution of the Berkut policemen for the Maidan massacre in Ukraine. A report by Euromaidan SOS, other Maidan organizations, and lawyers of the killed protesters in June 2015 concluded that the government investigation was ineffective and was stonewalled.

The Maidan-led government used the Maidan massacre as a source of its legitimacy and widely commemorated this mass killing and its victims among the protesters. The killed protesters were posthumously awarded Hero of Ukraine titles by President Petro Poroshenko, and his government established February 20 as a day in their honor.

2.2 THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE MAIDAN MASSACRE

The Ukrainian and Western mainstream media, with some notable exceptions, explicitly or implicitly attributed the Maidan massacre to the Berkut police or government “snipers,” dismissed the false-flag massacre as a conspiracy theory, and generally repeated the Ukrainian government statements and prosecution charges at face value (Schwartz, 2018). For example, the New York Times stated for the 10th anniversary of the massacre in 2024 that “in the uprising’s violent, final days police killed more than 100 protesters” (Kramer, 2024). However, the mainstream Western media often follows their reporting concerning conflicts in foreign countries, in particular, Ukraine, based on uncritical indexing of the narratives of their own governments or political elites and the reporting is biased by political factors, such as relationship of foreign countries with the Western countries (see Boyd-Barrett, 2016; Katchanovski & Morley, 2012).

Several dozen journalists from more than dozen countries reported in the media or the social media about witnessing snipers in Hotel Ukraina and other Maidan-controlled buildings and areas, including shooting of Maidan protesters by these snipers, cited eyewitnesses among Maidan protesters about such snipers, or based their reports on such testimonies. For example, journalists from such major Western and Ukrainian media

as ABC, CNN, New York Times, BBC, Guardian, ARD, Bild, Spiegel, La7, TT News Agency, TVP, 1+1, 5 Kanal, ICTV, Novyi Kanal, 24 Kanal, and Kyiv Post reported about witnessing snipers in Hotel Ukraina, cited Maidan protesters about snipers there, or based their reports on such testimonies. Journalists from ITV, TVP, Spiegel, 1+1, ICTV, and other Western and Ukrainian media similarly reported witnessing themselves or cited Maidan protesters about witnessing snipers in other Maidan-controlled buildings and areas, such as Bank Arkada, Zhovtnevyi Palace, the Main Post Office, and Muzeinyi Lane and Horodetsky Street buildings (see Chapters 3 and 5).

With just some exceptions, these reports without any evidence presented these snipers in the Maidan-controlled buildings or areas as Ukrainian government snipers or implied that they were the government snipers. But soon after the massacre, with some partial exceptions, these and other major media outlets referred to snipers in these Maidan-controlled locations as “a conspiracy theory,” denied their existence, or omitted this and other evidence of such snipers.

The New York Times concluded that the police forces and Yanukovich himself fled because of their fear that protesters could use weapons that were seized during the attacks on the police and SBU headquarters in several regions of Western Ukraine but did not report evidence of the Maidan snipers and assassination attempts agents Yanukovich (Higgins & Kramer, 2015). Similarly, the Daily Beast reported that presented videos and photos of the armed SBU Alfa unit are proof that the Alfa snipers killed the protesters, even though the photos and videos were made at the SBU headquarters after the massacre had already unfolded and the Maidan government investigation found that Alfa snipers did not fire a single shot during the massacre (Dettmer, 2014).

The Western mainstream media with some exceptions, primarily involving a testimony by Yanukovich, did not cover the Maidan massacre trials and investigations. Google news searchers produced no reports of major revelations from these trials and investigations or evidence of the massacre of the protesters by “snipers” from the Maidan-controlled buildings and the massacre of the police by the far-right organizations.

Ukrainian media reports generally, with some notable exceptions, presented the Maidan government and GPU prosecution version of the massacre. This coverage, with some exceptions, omitted major evidence revealed by these trials and investigations that suggested the massacre of the protesters by shooters in the Maidan-controlled buildings and

the massacre of the police by the far-right. While the Ukrainian media reports during and soon after the massacre contained various evidence of “snipers” in Hotel Ukraina and other Maidan-controlled locations, such reports have since become very rare even though the February 20th massacre trial revealed much more such evidence. A book by a pro-Maidan Ukrainian journalist concluded that the Maidan massacre was organized by Yanukovich aides and carried out by the government units, but it mostly relied on results of government investigation and interviews with Maidan politicians (see Koshkina, 2015).

The Ukrainian media and with a few exceptions Western media presented at face value the Maidan massacre trial verdict in October 2023 and the conviction in absentia of three Berkut policemen for the killing of 35 out of 49 of the Maidan protesters as a definite proof that they massacred all protesters. Many media misrepresented the Maidan massacre verdict as a definite proof that there were no Maidan snipers and did not report testimonies by the absolute majority of wounded Maidan protesters, videos, and forensic ballistic examinations at the Maidan massacre trial in Ukraine concerning the snipers in the Maidan-controlled buildings. Similarly, they did not report parts of this trial verdict concerning the shooting of many protesters and Western journalists by snipers in the Maidan-controlled buildings and areas and the lack of evidence of the massacre order by the Yanukovich government and Russian involvement.

There has been a virtual blackout of the Maidan massacre trial verdict’s parts concerning snipers in the Maidan activists-controlled Hotel Ukraina in the Ukrainian media and, with a few notable exceptions, the Western mainstream media. All Ukrainian media reports omitted the verdict’s parts concerning such snipers and many media outlets even claimed that the verdict disproved existence of such snipers in Hotel Ukraina and other Maidan-controlled locations.

The Western media, with a few notable exceptions, also omitted this crucial information. Moreover, Cathy Young in her opinion piece in a partisan neoconservative site Bulwark misrepresented the Maidan massacre trial verdict, branding the revelations about Maidan snipers operating in Hotel Ukraina a “conspiracy theory” and claiming, falsely, that the verdict did not indicate that Maidan protesters were shot from the hotel or other Maidan-controlled locations, and that it did not disprove involvement by Russian snipers. Young has further falsely claimed, contrary to the verdict, that Hotel Ukraina was not controlled

by the Maidan activists and has propagated instead an actual conspiracy theory that police in the hotel could have shot the protesters. Her claims in these regards are contrary not only to the verdict but also to a statement from the far-right Svoboda Party about taking control of the hotel prior to the massacre, to videos of Maidan snipers shooting at protesters and a BBC crew from the hotel, to testimonies both by hotel staff and by the Maidan unit commander in charge of guarding the hotel, and to other evidence presented in scholarly publications. Young even denied that verdict references to shooting from Hotel Ukraina direction meant shooting from this hotel. She also falsely claimed that the Berkut policemen were convicted for the murder of 40 out of 48 Maidan activists.

There were a few major exceptions in the Western media reporting of the Maidan massacre. In contrast to the dominant narrative, *Monitor*, a German TV program, presented evidence of its investigation, showing that snipers were based in Hotel Ukraina and that the Ukrainian government investigation was manipulated (*Monitor*, 2014). The BBC investigation produced similar findings. Investigative reports by the BBC and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* almost a year after the massacre confirmed the presence of armed protesters at the Music Conservatory and their shooting of the police at Maidan (*Gatehouse*, 2015; *Schuller*, 2015). The BBC report also reported a statement of a unidentified GPU prosecutor that he examined a version that both police and the protesters were killed by the same shooters. A Reuters investigation in 2014 reported that the prosecution case against Berkut members was problematic because it relied primarily on videos and photos and misrepresented or ignored some key pieces of such evidence (*Stecklow & Akymenko*, 2014).

Italian, Israeli, and US TV documentaries and Macedonian TV showed in 2018–2020 testimonies of seven former members of the Georgian military. They stated that they were members of the Maidan snipers groups, which included snipers from Georgia, the Baltic States, and Parasiuk-led group in Hotel Ukraina and the Music Conservatory, and that they were ordered by Maidan leaders and ex-Georgian leaders to massacre both the police and the protesters and assassinate then President Yanukovich and that they witnessed such massacre by the Maidan snipers or were involved themselves (*InsideOver*, 2017a, 2017b; *MichaelRCaputo*, 2022; *Stephan*, 2018).

In contrast, the Russian media coverage was dominated by the false-flag theory of the massacre. But the media in Russia, with some exceptions, also did not report the revelations from the Maidan massacre trial and investigations. The Russian media often relayed statements about this massacre by Yanukovich and his former government members, who found refuge in Russia, and by self-reported Georgian snipers. However, the Russian media with some exceptions followed the government narratives and was under various forms of direct or indirect government control.

The Western and Ukrainian media with some exceptions also reported at face value claims by the Maidan activists and Maidan opposition leaders that a female Maidan medic was wounded during the massacre, that Tetaiana Chornovol was beaten in retaliation for her participation in Euromaidan protests, that Dmytro Bulatov was kidnapped and crucified, that Yanukovich ordered the violent dispersal of Maidan protesters on November 30, 2013, and that the first three Maidan activists were killed by the government forces in January 2014. The media attributed these cases of political violence to the Yanukovich government, his forces, or pro-Yanukovich “titushki” and omitted evidence that they were staged.

2.3 MISREPRESENTATION OF THE MAIDAN MASSACRE BY WIKIPEDIA

The dominant representation of the Maidan massacre in English-language, Russian-language, and Ukrainian-language Wikipedia is generally based on the dominant narrative by the Western and Ukrainian media and the Ukrainian government investigation that the Berkut police and government snipers massacred the Maidan protesters on the Yanukovich government orders. They generally excluded academic studies of the Maidan massacre and labeled them “conspiracy theories” (Euromaidan, 2024; Maidan, 2024). It is revealing that there are no specific articles concerning the Maidan massacre in English-language, Russian-language, and Ukrainian-language Wikipedia. It is noteworthy that Wikipedia omitted findings of academic studies and the Maidan massacre trial verdict that Ihor Kostenko, a Maidan activist and a Wikipedia editor, was killed by sniper fire from the Maidan-controlled area (Katchanovski, 2024).

The same Wikipedia editors, who misrepresented the Maidan massacre and whitewashed the evidence of involvement of the far-right in this

massacre, also smeared scholars who researched this massacre and white-washed in various Wikipedia articles the contemporary and historical far-right in Ukraine, including the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, their collaboration with Nazi Germany, their ideology and leaders, their “Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the Heroes” greeting, and their involvement in the mass murder of Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians. The same concerns the ideology, symbols, and involvement in violence by such neo-Nazi organizations, as Azov movement and the far-right Right Sector (Katchanovski, Forthcoming).

Such Wikipedia editors, who misrepresented the Maidan massacre and whitewashed the contemporary and historical far-right in Ukraine, in particular, Nazi collaborators, included Nangaf, Wise2 (Prohoshka, Slav70), Bobfrombrockley, Lute88, My Very Best Wishes, and Volunteer Marek. The last five were identified in various publications and online sources, respectively, as far-right Svoboda-linked activist Svyatoslav Gut, Ben Gidley, Tsetsilia Cecilia Tsypina, Andrei Lomize, and Radek Szulga. The last two were also identified as involved in the Wikipedia’s intentional distortion of the Holocaust in Poland (see Grabowski & Klein, 2023). The Wikipedia editor Wise2, who also edited under names of Prohoshka and Slav70, propagated “scientific anti-Semitism” and whitewashed the involvement of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the 1941 Lviv pogroms during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine, justifying it on the basis of “Jewish collaboration.”

The Maidan massacre was also deliberately misrepresented by several dozen identical or nearly identical English-language websites on all major social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, VKontakte, YouTube, Redditt, etc.) and various forums, such as Ukrainska Pravda forum. Such use of multiple fake accounts and pages to mislead people is unauthentic compared to typical social media users and suggests that this was an organized disinformation campaign with likely involvement of Svoboda. These websites were created with involvement of the same Svyatoslav Gut, a far-right immigrant activist linked to Svoboda (see Katchanovski, 2021a).

Another such Wikipedia editor, who uses the handle My Very Best Wishes, whitewashed the fact that monuments in Canada to the Galicia Division and Roman Shukhevych are in fact commemorating a division of the Waffen-SS and a Nazi collaborator. This editor also falsely claimed on Wikipedia’s biographical page on Elon Musk that he was involved in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2.4 PREVIOUS ACADEMIC STUDIES OF THE MAIDAN MASSACRE

Despite its intrinsic significance to the politics and conflicts in Ukraine and between Russia and Ukraine and the West, the Maidan massacre has been the central subject of only a few academic studies. Most of them found that the far-right and oligarchic elements of the Maidan opposition, in particular Fatherland, the Right Sector and Svoboda, were involved in the false-flag Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police (see Katchanovski, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b, 2020, 2023a, 2023b, Forthcoming).

The first academic study of the Maidan massacre concluded that it was not a failed attempt by the government to suppress the “Euromaidan” protests but a successful false-flag operation, which was organized and covertly conducted with involvement of elements of the Maidan oligarchic and far-right opposition and concealed groups of “snipers” in order to win the asymmetric conflict during the “Euromaidan” and seize power in Ukraine (Katchanovski, 2014a, 2015a). Its updated and revised version, which analyzed even greater volume of various kinds of data and was published in a peer-reviewed journal, produced similar conclusions (Katchanovski, 2023b).

Another peer-reviewed article presented more evidence of far-right involvement in the Maidan massacre, in particular public admissions by some members of the far-right organizations in killing and wounding the police and court decisions revealing GPU investigations of such involvement (Katchanovski, 2020). Another study in a peer-reviewed journal examined the Maidan massacre trial and investigations and their implications for the Russia-Ukraine war and relations. It found that “the absolute majority of wounded Maidan protesters, nearly 100 prosecution and defense witnesses, synchronized videos, and medical and ballistic examinations by government experts pointed unequivocally to the fact that the Maidan protesters were massacred by snipers located in Maidan-controlled buildings” (see Katchanovski, 2023a).

Katchanovski (2015a) study was used by the GPU in their investigation of the Maidan massacre. An earlier version of the video appendix of the author with over 80 witness testimonies concerning snipers in Maidan-controlled buildings and areas was admitted as evidence and presented during the Maidan massacre trial in Ukraine (Katchanovski, 2019a; Sudova, 2021, 24:29).

There is not a single scholarly study of the Maidan massacre that was based on the analysis of primary sources and disproved major findings of scholarly studies by the author. Major findings of original studies by Katchanovski (2014a, 2015a, 2016a) were replicated by Hahn (2018). He stated that “independent investigations by numerous organizations and a plethora of video and audio evidence support Katchanovski’s findings: Germany’s *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a BBC documentary film, a documentary film by Beck-Hoffman, among several others” and “moreover, the trial’s revelations, Maidan regime General Prosecutor Office (GPO) court appeals, and resulting court decisions began to undermine the Maidan myth and support Katchanovski’s version of events...” (see Hahn, 2018).

Many other academic studies also stated or regarded as plausible, in particular based on studies by the author and other sources, that the Maidan massacre was perpetrated with the involvement of the Maidan opposition, in particular the far-right (see, for example, Bandeira, 2019, 206–207; Cohen, 2018a; Hahn, 2018; Lane, 2016; Mandel, 2016; Sakwa, 2015, 90–92).

The author’s previous academic studies of the Maidan massacre were cited overwhelmingly favorably by over 100 other scholars and experts (Google Scholar, 2024). They include the following noted scholars and experts who accepted the findings of these studies or wrote positively about them in their academic and media publications: David Lane (Cambridge University), Jeffrey Sachs (Columbia University), Jack Matlock (Duke University and the former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union), Richard Sakwa (University of Kent), Stephen F. Cohen (New York University), Anatol Lieven (Quincy Institute), Volodymyr Ishchenko (Free University of Berlin), Nicolai Petro (University of Rhode Island), Ray Taras (Tulane University), Suzanne Loftus (Quincy Institute), Oliver Boyd-Barrett (Bowling Green State University), Gordon Hahn (Center for Terrorism and Intelligence Studies), Glenn Diesen (University of South-Eastern Norway), Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira (University of Brasília), David Mandel (UQAM), Michael Dunford (University of Sussex), Dieter Segert (University of Vienna), Greg Simons (Uppsala University), Mikhail Molchanov (University of Victoria), J. L. Black (Carleton University), Illia Kononov (Carleton University), Asier Blas Mendoza (University of the Basque Country), Jacques Sapir (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Kees van der Pijl (University of

Sussex), John Ryan (University of Winnipeg), Samir Saul (University of Montreal), Michel Seymour (University of Montreal), John Foster (former Canadian diplomat and World Bank official), and Alfred de Zayas (former UN Independent Expert) (Favorable, 2023).

For example, Jeffrey Sachs, University Professor at Columbia University and the former adviser to three UN Secretaries-General, wrote that “Professor Ivan Katchanovski of the University of Ottawa has written powerful academic studies, reviewing the evidence of the Maidan Uprising and finding that most of the violence and killing originated not from Yanukovych’s security detail, but from coup leaders themselves, who fired into the crowds, killing both policemen and demonstrators” (Sachs, 2023). David Lane, Professor at Cambridge University, noted that “not only the 2014 audiotape of the Estonian foreign minister who opined that this was the work of groups within the Maidan, but also the detailed research of Ivan Katchanovski shows quite convincingly that the deaths were the work of right wing agitators” (Lane, 2016).

Similarly, Stephen F. Cohen, Professor at New York University, stated that “it was long said that the snipers had been sent by Yanukovych, but it has now been virtually proven that the shooters were instead from the neofascist group Right Sector among the protesters on the square (see, for example, the reports of the scholar Ivan Katchanovski)” (Cohen, 2018b). Alexander R. Sich, Professor at Franciscan University of Steubenville, wrote that “moreover, a report by the International Advisory Panel, set up by the Council of Europe, presented evidence corroborating the conclusions of Katchanovski’s study—including accusations that the Ukrainian investigation of the “snipers’ massacre” on the Maidan was deliberately and systematically falsified and stonewalled at the highest level in Ukraine, in particular by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor General office, as a part of the cover-up” (Sich, 2015). Jack Matlock, Visiting Scholar at Duke University and the former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, wrote that “in fact, most of the sniper fire came from buildings controlled by the demonstrators” citing “Ivan Katchanovski, “The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: Revelations from Trials and Investigations,” NYU Jordan Center News” (Katchanovski, 2021b; Matlock, 2021).

The number of such scholars and experts who accepted the findings of the Katchanovski’s original studies of the massacre or wrote positively about them in their publications exceeded dozens of times a few negative ones, which were largely politically motivated and ad hominem by those

who openly supported Maidan, including the illegal overthrow of the Ukrainian government, and accepted at face value claims by the Maidan leaders and the media.

As Sich (2015) noted, “unfortunately, apart from Marples, most responses have indeed been ad hominem attacks directed against Katchanovski.”

For instance, Taras Kuzio relied on such false claims and ad hominem attacks, which he also directed at many other scholars (see Carl, 2022; Marples, 2020). His Twitter page profile included a Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) member with the red and black flag (Twitter, 2022). The Ukrainian Insurgent Army was organized by the far-right Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Bandera faction) (OUN-B), and a large part of their leaders and members collaborated with Nazi Germany and were involved in the mass murder of Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians (see Himka, 2021; Katchanovski, 2015b, 2019b; Rudling, 2011). The far-right Right Sector regarded itself as a successor of the UPA and the OUN-B and used their red and black as its official symbol.

Kuzio, David Marples, and William Risch published their criticism in non-academic and non-peer-reviewed online publications. Marples, history professor, changed his original views since his blog post in October 2014 concerning the first draft of the Maidan massacre paper, which was presented by the author at the Ukrainian Studies seminar at the University of Ottawa. He wrote subsequently that “responsibility for the 100 murders in Maidan” remained unclear and attributed the killings mostly to “snipers firing from the rooftops of nearby buildings” (Marples, 2020).

The claims by the critics that the academic studies by the author were politically motivated, that there were no Maidan snipers, that this was “a conspiracy theory,” that Hotel Ukraina was not controlled by the Maidan opposition, that only forensic ballistic experts can determine which party of the conflict shot the Maidan activists, that the investigation by the Prosecutor General Office was taking long time because resource constraints and the large number of victims are shown to be false in this book, in previous peer-reviewed journal articles, and in various other publications by the author.

The author is a Ukrainian and Canadian political scientist originally from Western Ukraine and attended the first Ukrainian opposition demonstrations and rallies in Kyiv in 1988–1991. The author faced expulsion from the Kyiv National Economic University in 1990 and

was prevented from pursuing graduate education in the Soviet Union for writing the final undergraduate thesis (in Ukrainian) because it was based on theories of Max Weber and Western economists and concluded that the Soviet system was bound to collapse. The author is a life-long supporter of liberal democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and peace in Ukraine and publicly called before, during, and after the Euromaidan for the European Union accession of Ukraine, and opposed the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Dyer, 2022; Katchanovski, 2007, 2014b, 2018). However, it is professional and ethical duty of scholars to rely on evidence and not on political views or other considerations.

Similarly, the absolute majority of wounded Maidan protesters, several hundred witnesses, videos, government ballistic forensic experts, and the Maidan massacre trial verdict confirmed that many Maidan activists were shot from Hotel Ukraina and that this hotel was controlled by the Maidan forces, in particular, the far-right Svoboda Party, which also stated before the massacre that it took this hotel under its “guard” and “control” (see Katchanovski, 2023a, 2023b, Chapter 3, 4, 5, 6). The entire department of the Prosecutor General Office in Ukraine was created to investigate violence during the Maidan, in particular, the Maidan massacre. This was one of the most documented cases of mass killing in history with thousands of eyewitnesses, primarily Maidan activists and Ukrainian and foreign journalists and video recordings of the massacre.

Another study corroborated the findings of the far-right involvement in the massacre of the police and argued that the violence was initiated by the Maidan protesters, who killed and wounded many policemen, and maintained, based on secondary sources, that the Berkut police then in response massacred the protesters (Kudelia, 2018). Ishchenko (2016, 2020), based on an analysis of a database of major protest events during “Euromaidan,” found significant involvement of the far-right in violence but did not specifically examine the Maidan massacre.

In contrast, some other studies of the “Euromaidan” attributed the massacre of the protesters to the Berkut anti-riot police or snipers from the Security Service of Ukraine and Internal Troops (see, for example, Marples & Mills, 2015; Wilson, 2014). However, they were not based on a comprehensive analysis of this crucial case of political violence and uncritically accepted claims by the Maidan politicians and the Ukrainian and Western media concerning the massacre perpetrators and organizers. The Maidan opposition leaders during and immediately after the massacre publicly accused the government snipers from SBU Alfa and Internal

Troops Omega units and the special Berkut company of perpetrating the massacre of the protesters on the Yanukovych orders.

Wilson (2014) stated citing Maidan activists and Ukrainian media reports that government snipers, led by Internal Troops and SBU Alfa commanders, massacred Maidan protesters from the government buildings and Hotel Ukraina and Kozatsky Hotel and one of the snipers was killed in Hotel Ukraina. However, the Internal Troops and SBU Alfa commanders, named as being in charge of the massacre, were not charged by the prosecution in Ukraine and some of them continued to serve in commanding positions after the Maidan. The evidence, such as statements of Svoboda leaders before the massacre about taking Hotel Ukraina under their control, videos, and testimonies of Maidan protesters and the hotel staff, showed that Hotel Ukraina and Kozatsky Hotel were under the Maidan control during the massacre (see Katchanovski, 2015a, 2020, 2023a, 2023b).

Some other studies, which briefly examined the Maidan massacre, relied on a model of killing of three Maidan protesters. The SITU model was produced by a New York architecture company for Maidan lawyers, but the Maidan massacre trial refused to admit it as evidence. This model misrepresented the directions of the gunshots by misrepresenting the locations of wounds of these three protesters compared to their wound locations in forensic medical examinations by Ukrainian government experts for the Maidan massacre investigation and the trial (see Katchanovski, 2023a).

Similarly, many previous studies, which uncritically relied on narratives of the Ukrainian and Western governments and the media and ignored primary sources, represented the Euromaidan as a popular movement, which turned into a revolution, and which was a political protest against the authoritarian government, especially its reliance on violence, and by support of integration of Ukraine into the European Union. They also attributed violent attacks of the presidential administration and the parliament as response to the government violence and political repressions or as provocations by the Yanukovych government or Russia. They regarded the role of the far-right organizations during the Maidan as insignificant or marginal (see, for example, Marples & Mills, 2015; Wilson, 2014).

Killings of Armenian, Georgian, Jewish, and Polish protesters and the presence of the Right Sector during funeral of Oleksander Shcherbaniuk, a Jewish protester, were mentioned in about dozen stories in major US, Israeli, and Scandinavian media as evidence of the diversity of the

protesters, their massacre by the government snipers, and tolerant or moderate nature of Right Sector, an alliance of radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations (Elgot, 2014; Snyder, 2014).

However, the previous studies did not examine in depth and in detail all publicly available evidence revealed during more than 10 years after this massacre by Maidan massacre trials and investigation, and in the media, and social media. The nearly 1,000,000,000-word Maidan massacre trial verdict issued in October 2023 is not examined by previous studies. There is not a single previous book-length study of the crucial massacre in Ukraine. Since this crucial case of political violence is highly politicized, academic analysis of the revelations from the trials and investigations could help to determine which party of the “Euromaidan” conflict was involved in this mass killing. This book fills this gap and analyzes in depth systematically and comprehensively all publicly available evidence of this crucial massacre in Ukraine.

Over 100 Western media outlets, including popular American, Danish, Dutch, German, Spanish, and Swiss, reported or cited the Maidan massacre studies by the author, overwhelmingly favorably. Their number is dozens of times higher than the few Western and Ukrainian media, which reported negatively concerning these Maidan massacre studies, such as above-mentioned misrepresentation by Cathy Young in *Bulwark*. They include the following popular American, Austrian, Canadian, Danish, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian, New Zealand, Norwegian, Spanish, and Swiss media outlets, which reported positively concerning these studies by the author: *The Nation*, *Huffington Post*, *Courthouse News*, *Jacobin*, *Consortium News*, *Counterpunch*, *Grayzone*, *Truthout*, *Canadian Dimension*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Limes*, *Panorama*, *Wired Italy*, *CTXT*, *Diario16plus*, *El Nacional*, *Der Standard*, *Ekathimerini*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *La Razon*, *Ny Tid*, *SCOOP*, and *Weltwoche*.

For example, Lev Golinkin (2016) wrote in *The Nation* magazine:

The darkest evidence of the far right’s involvement comes from Ivan Katchanovski, a professor at the University of Ottawa, who researched the events of February 20, 2014, “Maidan snipers massacre” when mysterious gunmen killed over 50 people. In addition to being the crucial turning point that led to Yanukovich’s abdication, the massacre is the climax of Winter on Fire. Katchanovski argues, with considerable forensic and other evidence, that far-right groups not only provoked fighting by shooting at the police but also carried out the murder of Maidan protesters in a false-flag operation. The Kiev government has been unable to provide a definitive explanation to what happened that day.

Wired Italia magazine noted that “although the direct responsibility for the massacre has never been fully ascertained, Ivan Katchanovski, a Ukrainian-Canadian political scientist at the University of Ottawa, has for years collected overwhelming evidence showing that the snipers were not affiliated with Yanukovich’s government, but far-right agents” (Mossetti, 2023). A Spanish CTXT article referred to “The most convincing academic study of that massacre, by Professor Ivan Katchanovski of the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa” (Poch, 2022). A publication in *El Nacional* (Spain) stated “all the available information, gathered over the years by the political scientist, Dr. Ivan Katchanovski, is what has been presented at the trial and considered as valid evidence by the court. The result of their investigation has been confirmed by the sentence, noting that the policemen killed and wounded, like the vast majority of protesters (both dead and wounded), were attacked by snipers in buildings and areas controlled by Maidan activists” (Talegón, 2023).

Similarly, more than 50 Ukrainian media reported concerning these Maidan massacre studies by the author, overwhelmingly favorably. Such popular media of differing political orientation that reported positively included the following: *Apostroph*, *Avers TV*, *Kommentarii*, *Kontrakty*, *112*, *NewsOne*, *RBK Ukraine*, *Strana*, and *Ukraina Moloda* (see, for example, Ivan Katchanovski, 2016; TRK, 2019). However, the Ukrainian and Western media overwhelmingly propagated the narratives that the massacre was perpetrated by the Berkut police or government snipers and often omitted author’s previous scholarly studies of the Maidan massacre (Baldwin, 2023).

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