

# **The Far Right in Ukraine During the “Euromaidan” and the War in Donbas<sup>1</sup>**

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes the role of far right in the Ukrainian politics during the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas. The issue of the involvement of Ukrainian far right organizations in the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas have been politicized and polarized. Russian and separatist politicians and the media often presented the “Euromaidan” as a “fascist coup” and the Maidan government as a “fascist junta.” In contrast, the governments and the mainstream media in Western countries tended to present the role of the far right in the “Euromaidan” and in post-Maidan Ukraine, specifically in the conflict in Donbas, as marginal. Previous academic studies generally reached similar conclusions. They focused on numerical strength and electoral support for the far right parties and ignored other aspects of influence of the radical nationalist and neo-Nazi parties, specifically their role in the political violence, such as the Maidan and Odesa massacres and the war in Donbas. However, the number of academic studies of the contemporary far right in Ukraine is generally limited.

The research question is as follows: What is the role of the far right in the Ukrainian politics during and after the “Euromaidan”? This study analyzes the involvement of specific Ukrainian radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations in the “Euromaidan,” the Odesa massacre, and the war in Donbas, their performance in the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and the 2015 local elections in Ukraine. The analysis focuses on major Ukrainian far right organizations, such as Svoboda (Freedom), the Right Sector, the Social-National Assembly, the White Hammer, the UNA-UNSO, Bratstvo, and C14, and paramilitary formations or special police and National Guard units organized and controlled to various extent by them, such as the Azov regiment, Dnipro, Donbas, Aidar, Sich, and St. Mary’s battalions, and the Volunteer Ukrainian Corps. It uses various sources of data, such as online recordings of live broadcasts and videos of the Maidan and Odesa massacres and the war in Donbas, official database of court decisions in Ukraine concerning investigations of the involvement of the far right in major cases of political violence, video recordings of the Maidan massacre trial, information posted on websites and social media groups of far right organizations, and media reports in Ukrainian, Russian, and English languages.

The study shows that the far right organizations had significant but minority representation among the Maidan leadership and protesters, the post-Maidan governments, and in the presidential, parliamentary, and local elections. However, the analysis also shows that the far right organizations and football ultras played a key role during violent attacks, such as attempts to storm the presidential administration on December 1, 2013 and the parliament of Ukraine in January and on February 18, 2014. There is also various evidence of the Right Sector involvement in a violent attack of the Berkut police during its highly publicized dispersal of protesters on November 30, 2013. The Right Sector and Svoboda and smaller organizations had a crucial role in the violent overthrow of the Viktor Yanukovich government, in particular, in the Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police on February 18-20, 2014. The study demonstrates that the Right Sector, the Social-National Assembly/ Patriot of Ukraine, and groups of football ultras were involved in the Odesa massacre on May 2, 2014. This paper also shows that the far right organizations and their volunteer battalions and paramilitary units had a significant role in the civil war in Donbas but a comparably minor role in fighting with several regular Russian military units during direct military interventions by Russia in August 2014 and February 2015. Major implications of this study for the Ukrainian politics and the conflict between the West and Russia over Ukraine are discussed in the conclusion. This paper implies that the far right has significant but not dominant role in the Ukrainian politics during and after

the “Euromaidan.” But far right organizations and their armed units had a key role in major cases of political violence during and after the “Euromaidan,” and they attained ability to overthrow by force the government of the one of the largest European countries.

## **Research Question and Divergent Narratives Concerning the Contemporary Far Right in Ukraine**

This paper examines the role of far right in Ukraine during the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas. These were the most significant and the most contested events in politics in Ukraine since its independence in 1991. They also had an impact on the politics of other countries, such as Russia and the United States and international politics because of the conflict between Russia and the West over Ukraine. (See Black and Johns, 2016; Katchanovski, 2016a; Kudelia, 2016; Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa, 2015; Sakwa, 2015; Wilson, 2014).

There were direct but covert Russian military interventions in support of separatism in Crimea after the “Euromaidan” with subsequent annexation of this region and in Donbas in a form of direct involvement in combat with regular Ukrainian forces and far right-led battalions and far right paramilitary formations in this region in August 2014 and February 2015. The United States and other Western governments supported politically the Euromaidan” and then both politically and by means of military training and military and financial aid backed the Maidan-led government during the war in Donbas. The issue of far right in Ukraine during the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas has also policy significance in terms of domestic policy in Ukraine and foreign policies of such countries as Russia and the US towards Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine, the Ukrainian-Russian conflict after the “Euromaidan,” and the US policy towards Ukraine and the Russian annexation of Crimea became important and divisive issues during the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States. They included issues related to the Ukrainian far right but the far right links not acknowledged by the media. For instance,

Paul Manafort, the chairman of the presidential campaign of Donald Trump, resigned following publications of Party of Regions lists, which included large payments made purportedly to him in 2012 when he served as a consultant to the Viktor Yanukovich party. However, the issues of the far right involvement in the storming and burning of the Party of Regions headquarters, where these documents were seized, and in the Maidan massacre in general were dismissed or ignored by the US politicians and the media.<sup>2</sup>

The research question in this study is as follows: What is the role of the far right in the Ukrainian politics during and after the “Euromaidan?” This paper specifically analyzes the involvement of radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations in the “Euromaidan,” the Odesa massacre, and the war in Donbas, their performance in the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and the 2015 local elections in Ukraine, and their role in the Ukrainian government and its policies since the “Euromaidan.” This study first examines the divergent narratives and previous studies concerning the far right role during the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas and then presents analysis of the far right in each of the major political junctures.

The question of the far right role is also important because of sharply divergent narratives offered by the media and the governments of Ukraine and the West on the one hand and Russia on the other hand. This issue has a direct bearing on understanding the conflict in Ukraine and international conflict between Russia and the West over Ukraine from an academic perspective. The far right politics in contemporary Ukraine is not well researched and the number of academic studies concerning this issue even after the “Euromaidan” is very limited.

The issue of the involvement of Ukrainian far right organizations in the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas have been politicized and parties involved in the Ukrainian conflict and the conflict over Ukraine generally offered opposite narratives concerning the role of the far

right. The governments and the mainstream media in Western countries and the media, the Maidan opposition, and then the Maidan government in Ukraine generally either presented the role of the far right in the “Euromaidan” and in post-Maidan Ukraine, specifically in the conflict in Donbas, as marginal or ignored this issue. “Euromaidan” has been typically depicted as a democratic, peaceful mass-protest movement which was led by pro-Western parties and which overthrew the authoritarian and pro-Russian government in a revolution, which was often referred to as the “Revolution of Dignity.” Oleh Tiahnybok, the leader of the far right Svoboda party, stated that this term was invented by a deputy of his party.<sup>3</sup>

The governments and the mainstream media in Ukraine and the West, with few exceptions, attributed major cases of violence during the “Euromaidan” to the Viktor Yanukovich government, the government forces, government-hired “titushki,” or agents provocateurs working for the Yanukovich government or the Russian government. Specifically, the violent dispersal of “Euromaidan” protesters on November 30, 2013 and killings of Maidan protesters in January and February 2014 were almost universally attributed to the Yanukovich government and its snipers or special police forces, while the role of the far right in these major cases of violence, which greatly escalated the conflict, was ignored or denied. They often attributed other major cases of violence, such as attacks of the presidential administration on December 1, 2013, the parliament in January 2014, the parliament and the Party of Regions headquarters on February 18, 2014 to agents provocateurs or far right organizations acting as agents provocateurs for the Yanukovich or the Russian government. Some researchers of the far right, such as Anton Shekhovtsov, repeated such claims about agents provocateurs in their popular publications. However, they offered no substantial evidence in support, and no such

evidence was uncovered and made public after the “Euromaidan” by the media or the Maidan government.

In contrast, Russian and separatist politicians and the media, former president Yanukovich and members of his government after the “Euromaidan” often presented the “Euromaidan” as a “fascist coup” and the Maidan government as a “fascist junta” which were organized by the US government. Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia, claimed that the Russian government had evidence that the Right Sector coordinated “sniper” shootings” during the Maidan massacre, that the US government maintained contacts with the Right Sector during the “Euromaidan” and that US representatives visited the Right Sector location from which this organization coordinated the shootings. However, no evidence to verify these claims has been made public by the Russian government.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, hacked Soros Foundation documents say that the US ambassador at least partly agreed during with a statement by George Soros that the Right Sector was a Russian FSB plot aimed at destabilizing Ukraine. But no evidence was provided in support.<sup>5</sup>

A certain exception was a leaked recording of a telephone call between the EU foreign affairs chief and the Estonian foreign affairs minister discussing evidence that the Maidan massacre was staged by some elements of the Maidan opposition.<sup>6</sup> But these elements were not identified during this conversation, and therefore it was not clear if they included far right. The Russian media often inflated or misrepresented the role of the far right in these events. For instance, RT and Komsomolskaya Pravda, incorrectly described advancing Maidan protesters on February 20, 2014 as the Right Sector, while NTV wrongly claimed that the special Berkut company members were in fact disguised Right Sector provocateurs because they used yellow armbands.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the Ukrainian government and the media blamed massacre of pro-Russian separatists in Odesa on the separatists setting fire and burning themselves or on the Russian agents and provocateurs. The Western governments and the mainstream media often attributed the mass killings to a fire, implying an accident, or to clashes between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian protesters. The role of the far right in the massacre was generally either denied or ignored by the governments and the media in Ukraine and the West.

The governments and the media in Ukraine and the West mostly presented the war in Donbas as a war between Russia and Ukrain, and they characterized as marginal or ignored the role of the far right in the start and the conduct of this war. For instance, involvement of the Right Sector in the attack on a Sloviansk checkpoint on April 20, 2014 was immediately denied by the Right Sector, the Ukrainian government, including the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the National Security and Defense Council, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ukrainian media. They claimed without any proof that the attack was staged by the Russian military intelligence and that the business card of Dmytro Yarosh, the Right Sector leader, and other such evidence of the Right Sector involvement were fabrications.<sup>8</sup> The Western governments and the media ignored or dismissed evidence of the Right Sector involvement in the Sloviansk attack and stated instead that the responsibility for the attack was unclear and referred to a possibility of a false-flag attack by the Russian Military Intelligence (GRU).<sup>9</sup>

The far right organized and led battalions and paramilitary formations during the war in Donbas were generally ignored by the Western governments and to a lesser extent the media. The US Congress under pressure from the Pentagon removed a ban on US government funding and training of the Azov regiment, which was organized and commanded by the neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine, a paramilitary wing of the Social National Assembly, and was formally a National

Guard unit. This defense appropriations bill amendment, which banned such US funding and training, was previously unanimously adopted by the US House of Representatives in 2015. A similar amendment, which proposed to ban US military assistance to radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations and voluntary police and paramilitary formations under their command was blocked in the US Congress in 2014.<sup>10</sup>

With the exception of this annulled amendment, the US Congress and the Obama administration did not issue any public statements or policy decisions concerning the rise of the far right in Ukraine since the “Euromaidan,” inclusion of far right activists in the Ukrainian government and the police and the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) leadership, and the far right involvement in the Maidan and Odesa massacres and in the start and conduct of the war in Donbas. The US and other Western governments showed little interest in an international investigations of these mass killing and did not release their intelligence assessments and other information that they likely have concerning these massacres. Such puzzling policies contrast with various officials statements and Ukrainian and Western media reports concerning the involvement of the US government in restructuring, training, and funding of the National Police, the National Guard, and the Prosecutor General Office (GPU) in Ukraine and in appointments and dismissals of the Ukrainian prime-ministers and the GPU head, and inclusion of foreign citizens in the Ukrainian government, police and GPU leadership after the “Euromaidan.” Governments of other major Western democracies, such as the UK, Germany, France, and Canada, adopted similar policies concerning these issues.

The US government, governments of other Western countries, and Western-led international organizations, such as the European Union adopted similar stances towards laws and policies in Ukraine after the “Euromaidan” commemorating the Organization of Ukrainian



Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), as national heroes. Both the OUN and the UPA were far right organizations. They collaborated with Nazi Germany in the beginning and in the end of World War II and were involved in the mass murder of Jews, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians. (See Katchanovski, 2013, 2014a, 2015a; Kudelia, 2013; Rudling, 2011). In the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, the OUN and its two factions after a split combined element of fascism with radical nationalism (Katchanovski, 2015a). Declassified CIA documents and other sources show that the OUN and the UPA after the war were used by the US and British intelligence services against the Soviet Union. (Rudling, 2011).

Western media in its reporting about far right-led and organized police and paramilitary formations often ignored or minimized their far right origins and their neo-Nazi and OUN-UPA symbols. This contrasts with Western media reports about the neo-Nazi symbols used by far right organizations, such as Patriot of Ukraine, and football (soccer) ultras, their racism, and reliance on violence before the 2012 Euro Cup in Ukraine. Such media coverage also contrasts with stereotypical and biased depiction of Ukrainians during World War II as primarily Nazi collaborators. The Ukrainian media, which gave much more significant coverage to these far-right formations, generally ignored or denied the presence of neo-Nazis in these volunteer formations and presented the far right formations as heroes and patriots defending Ukraine in its war with Russia or in a “hybrid war” with joint separatist and Russian forces.

However, different parties of conflicts often engaged in propaganda and disinformation, and this was the case in the conflict in Ukraine and the conflict between Russia and the West over Ukraine. (See Black and Johns, 2016; Boyd-Barrett, 2016; Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa, 2015). The Russia government had vested interest in inflating the role of the far right in Ukraine and in the violent overthrow of the relatively pro-Russian Yanukovich government to

justify its military intervention and annexation of Crimea in response to this Western-backed overthrow (See Katchanovski, 2015b). Most of the media in Russia, with some notable exceptions, is either under various forms of government control or typically follows the Putin government line.

Similarly, it was in self-interest of the Maidan parties and Maidan leaders in Ukraine to minimize or deny the role of far right and their involvement in the “Euromaidan,” the Maidan and Odesa massacres, and the war in Donbas. The Ukrainian media is largely owned by oligarchs; and most of oligarchs overtly or covertly supported the “Euromaidan” and the Maidan governments for various reasons. All major TV channels and newspapers after the “Euromaidan” generally propagated the Ukrainian government line concerning the “Euromaidan,” the Odesa massacre, and the war in Donbas. A special ministry was created in Ukraine to promote its government propaganda and counter Russian government propaganda.

Various studies show that Western media often followed their respective governments or political elites in covering foreign conflicts, for instance in the case of the US TV coverage of the Russian-Georgian war. (See Katchanovski and Morley, 2012). A study of the Western media coverage of the “Euromaidan,” and the conflicts in Crimea and Donbas highlighted the role of propaganda in shaping the narrative about them. (Boyd-Barrett, 2016). The US and some other Western governments in the case of other recent conflicts misrepresented the causes of the start of the war in Iraq and the Georgia-Russia war, and minimized or ignored the role of radical Islamists in Syria and Libya. Western media coverage of post-communist countries, including Ukraine, was often favorably biased towards countries allied with the West and negatively biased towards non-allied countries, in particular adversaries.

Previous studies of the Ukrainian far right during the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas mostly reached similar conclusions as the Western governments and the media did. Most of them regarded the role of the far right organizations as insignificant or marginal. They focused on numerical strength and electoral support for the far right parties and ignored other aspects of influence of the radical nationalist and neo-Nazi parties, specifically their role in the political violence, such as the Maidan and Odesa massacres and the war in Donbas. (See Risch, 2015; Shekhovtsov and Umland, 2014).

Many scholars also attributed violent attacks of the presidential administration and the parliament during the “Euromaidan” to responses to the government violence and political repressions or to provocations by the Yanukovich government or Russia. Previous studies mostly attributed the Maidan massacre to various government units, such as the Berkut police, SBU Alfa snipers, and the Omega unit of the Interior Troops or considered that they were likely involved, while ignoring or dismissing as unlikely the involvement of the far right in this massacre. (See, for example, Marples and Mills, 2014; Onuch and Sasse, 2016; Wilson, 2014.) However, such conclusions were based on uncritical acceptance of statements of Maidan politicians and media reports without systematic analysis of evidence.

Some scholars cited presence of a few Jews in the Right Sector as evidence of its relative tolerance, but they were unrepresentative of its membership and leadership (Onuch and Sasse, 2016, p. 578). Similar conclusions were derived from presence of a significant number of Russian-speakers in the Azov regiment, but this unit was formed and led by neo-Nazi organizations, which promoted a racist ideology. A number of studies argued that red and black flag and “Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes!” slogan, which were adopted by Maidan leaders and protesters, originated, respectively, in Cossack times and in the Ukrainian Peoples Republic

before they were used by the OUN and the UPA. (Onuch and Sasse, 2016, p. 576; Risch, 2015, p. 143). However, the flag and the greeting in the forms adopted during the “Euromaidan” both by far right organizations, such as the Right Sector, were derived from the flags and the greeting of the Bandera faction of the OUN. (See Katchanovski, 2014b, 2015a).

Some other studies of the far right reached different conclusions. A quantitative research of mass protest actions found that Svoboda party was the most active organization in pro-Maidan protests, while the Right Sector was the most active organization in violent events in Ukraine during the “Euromaidan” (Ishchenko, 2016). Other studies concluded that the far right played a key role in the attacks of the parliament in January and on February 18, 2014 and in seizures of regional administrations in Western and Central Ukraine during the “Euromaidan” (Katchanovski, 2015c, Kudelia, 2016). A comprehensive study found that the far right organizations, such as the Right Sector and Svoboda, were involved in the Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police and that this was a successful false flag operation conducted covertly by along with oligarchic elements of the Maidan opposition in order to overthrow the Yanukovich government and seize power in an asymmetric armed conflict (Katchanovski, 2015c, 2016b). Katchanovski (2016a) concluded that the far right played a key role in the start of the civil war in Donbas. The findings of these studies were replicated by Hahn (2016a, 2016b). However, these studies did not took into account newly available evidence, which, for example, was made public during the Maidan massacre trial.

There is not a single previous academic study devoted to analysis of the Odesa massacre, in particular the role of the far right in this crucial case of violence, whose death toll was close to the death toll of the Maidan massacre on February 20, 2014. The Odesa massacre also was a contributing factor to the separatist conflict in Donbas (Katchanovski, 2016a).

The issue of the far right in Ukraine became heavily politicized during the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas, and this politicization affected research on the far right. Most of a relatively small number of Ukrainian and some Western academic and especially non-academic researches of the far right sided for various reasons with the Maidan protests and the Maidan-led governments. For instance, a letter, signed by many of these researchers, asked journalists and other commentators to abstain from commenting on the far right in Ukraine during the “Euromaidan.” This petition was accompanied by a statement claiming that Dmytro Korchynsky, who was the leader of a far right Bratstvo organization in Ukraine, was in fact a Russia-linked provocateur in “supposedly far right attack” of the presidential administration on December 1, 2013.<sup>11</sup> Two Ukrainian researchers of far right, one of whom previously was a leader of a pro-Russian far right organization in Crimea, even expressed in social media their approval of the Odesa massacre of separatists. Such political partisanship might have affected impartiality of the research on the far right role in the conflict in Ukraine.

### **Data and Methodology**

This paper employs a case study to analyze the far right in Ukraine during and since the “Euromaidan.” It includes the analysis of the role of major far right organizations in the “Euromaidan” protests and major cases of violence, in particular, the Maidan and Odesa massacres, and the war in Donbas, and in the government and the elections since the “Euromaidan.” The analysis relies on political science theories and definitions of the far right organizations. For instance, neo-Nazi organizations are defined as contemporary far right organizations that use elements of national-socialist ideology and Nazi symbols in the original or

modified forms. The neo-Nazi organizations are part of neo-fascist or fascist political spectrum (see, for example, Griffin and Feldman, 2003).

The study uses analysis of numerous sources of original and secondary data. These sources include large numbers of videos, live and recorded online streams and recordings of live broadcasts of the Maidan protests, the Maidan and Odesa massacres, and the war in Donbas. The analysis also employs the official online Ukrainian database of court decisions concerning investigations of these cases of political violence, official video recordings of the Maidan massacre trial on YouTube, websites and social media groups of far right organizations, and media reports in Ukrainian, Russian, and English languages.

### **The “Euromaidan”**

The analysis shows that all major far right organizations in Ukraine, participated in the “Euromaidan.” Their common goal was more or less a national revolution which would overthrow the pro-Russian Yanukovich government and forge the Ukrainian nation. Svoboda party was the most significant and popular such organization. Svoboda was founded as the Social National Party (SNP) around the time when Ukraine became independent in 1991. It combined radical nationalism and some neo-Nazi features, which were exemplified by its name and its use of a modified Wolfsangel as a party symbol. But the party changed its name in 2004 to Svoboda, which means Freedom in Ukrainian. It tried since to moderate publicly its ideology in order to increase its popularity beyond far right supporters and beyond its base in Galicia. (Katchanovski, 2012; Polyakova, 2014; Rudling, 2013). Svoboda reported that between 2 to 5 thousand out of some 15 thousand party members around that time were permanently present on the Maidan.<sup>12</sup> While this number of permanent Svoboda protesters is likely inflated, videos and livestreams of

protests often showed large numbers of Svoboda flags, which represented a significant proportion of flags in many protest actions.

The Right Sector was formed by smaller far-right political organizations and groups of football (soccer) ultras in the beginning of the Maidan protests. It was an alliance of radical nationalist Organizations, such as Tryzub (Trident) named after Bandera and the UNA-UNSO, neo-Nazi organizations, such as the Social National Assembly (SNA), Patriot of Ukraine (the paramilitary wing of the SNA), and the White Hammer, and groups of ultras who mostly had similar ultranationalist and neo-Nazi orientation. Therefore, the Right Sector can be classified based on political science definitions as a partially fascist or semi-fascist organization. The Right Sector reached several hundred members by the end of the “Euromaidan.”

Members of Svoboda and the Right Sector combined with members of other relatively small far right organizations, such as the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and Bratstvo, and ultras constituted a minority of the Maidan protesters during the “Euromaidan” in Kyiv City. In comparison, the peak number of protesters during the biggest Maidan demonstration on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 was approximately 80,000-120,000 people. This estimate is calculated from an aerial video of the protest, a Google Earth Professional map based estimate of protester-occupied area on Kyiv’s Maidan (Independence Square) and surrounding streets of some 40,000 square meters, and the average density of two to three people per square meter.

However, the analysis shows that the role of the far right in violent attacks and other cases of political violence during the “Euromaidan” was much more significant than their numerical presence among protesters. The “Euromaidan” protests started in the end of November 2013 following a decision by the Yanukovich government to postpone a signing of the association and

free trade agreement with the European Union. These protests in downtown Kyiv were initially largely peaceful but some of them also included far right protesters. For instance, a group of protesters with Svoboda flags and other far right symbols was filmed attacking the police in front of the Cabinet of Ministers building.<sup>13</sup>

The turning point came with a highly publicized violent dispersal of a few hundred protesters by the anti-riot Berkut police on the Maidan on November 30, 2013. Videos, photos, and later admissions by Right Sector leaders and other Maidan protesters show that the Right Sector activists occupied at the time of the dispersal a part of the Maidan square near a monument to mythical Kyiv founders. Their analysis also shows 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 police, which then beat other protesters on the Maidan square and surrounding streets.<sup>14</sup> Ihor Mazur, a UNA-UNSO leader, admitted that Right Sector members were present on the Maidan during this dispersal on November 30th and that they then retreated after a confrontation with the police.<sup>15</sup>

There is various evidence that the 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.<sup>16</sup>

The unusual presence of Inter TV crews along with a number of other TV crews, such as from 1+1 TV channel owned by oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, during the night of the dispersal, the Inter broadcast of this dispersal around 4:00am local time, and their representations of this



dispersal as an unprovoked and unexpected police beating of students while ignoring or downplaying the presence of the Right Sector activists and their violence against the police also indicate advance knowledge of the police dispersal and its planned and selective coverage. The Inter television channel was owned by Dmytro Firtash and Serhii Liovochkin. Firtash was oligarch who supported Yanukovich during the 2010 presidential campaign but then switched to covert backing of Viktor Klychko, who headed UDAR party and became one of the “Euromaidan” leaders. Liovochkin then headed the Yanukovich presidential administration, but he belonged to the Firtash-led clan. Several members of the Yanukovich government, and the Kyiv police chief after they fled to Russia stated that Liovochkin gave the order to disperse the protesters, but they did not provide any specific direct evidence. Kolomoisky in his leaked telephone conversation said that Liovochkin was aware of the dispersal order because he was patron of Oleksander Popov, the head of the Kyiv City administration, who was involved in implementing the dispersal order.<sup>17</sup> The official investigation named 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.

An eyewitness stated in a TV interview that shortly before November 30 she accidentally overheard a discussion among senior Maidan leaders about the planned police dispersal of the Maidan protesters and that it would be violent. While the reliability of this account cannot be taken for granted, she named Andrii Ilienکو, Andrii Parubiy, and Serhii Pashynsky as the Maidan leaders involved in this discussion.<sup>18</sup> They were not household name at the time, but would be linked to other cases of violence later during the “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, 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 SNP. Parubiy and Pashynsky at the time of the Maidan protests were members of the Ukrainian parliament from the oligarchic Fatherland party.

In his 1999 article in a Social National Party publication, Parubiy referred to both the US and Russia as barbarians fighting against the “white race spirit” and approvingly quoted a French National Front representative statement that France and Ukraine were stopping the “Asian hordes,” respectively, in Western Europe and the East.<sup>19</sup> He projected a more moderate image after leaving the Patriot of Ukraine and the SNP in 2004, but he never publicly renounced his neo-Nazi background. Parubiy publicly stated in a Ukrainian newspaper interview in 2008 that his political orientation and ideological foundations did not change since he left the Social National Party.<sup>20</sup> He became the commander of the Maidan Self-Defense, a paramilitary organization which was organized later during the “Euromaidan” and included various companies, including the Right Sector company.

Videos and live streams and admissions by the Right Sector leaders and activists show a key role of the far right in 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 recordings show some of the attackers with neo-Nazi symbols of the Patriot of Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> They also show other groups of attackers shouting “Ukraine above all” slogans used by far right organizations and obscene chants used by Ukrainian ultras. Andrii Dzyndzia was filmed hijacking a bulldozer, which then tried to ram into the Interior Troops line protecting the presidential administration.<sup>22</sup> He joined the Azov battalion at the time of its formation by the Patriot of Ukraine and the SNA. Similarly, Korchynsky, the leader of the far

right Bratsvo organization and a former leader of the UNA-UNSO, was filmed on this bulldozer during the attack. He fled Ukraine soon afterwards to avoid prosecution, but returned after the overthrow of Yanukovich and organized and led the St. Mary's battalion on the basis of his Bratsvo organization under formal command of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A leader of the Kyiv branch of the SNA and UNA-UNSO leaders admitted the involvement of the Right Sector, which included both these organizations, in the December 1 attack.<sup>23</sup>

Similar video evidence, neo-Nazi symbols of certain groups of the attackers, and later admissions of their involvement by the Right Sector leaders and activists, including Yarosh, show a key role of the far right organizations in the attack attempt on the parliament in January 2014.<sup>24</sup>

While Svoboda publicly distanced itself from violent attacks of the presidential administration and the parliament, there is also evidence, such as presence of some Svoboda flags and activists, live streams, and social media posts, indicating that at least some Svoboda and C14 members and activists linked to them were involved in these violent attacks. There is similar evidence concerning Svoboda participation in seizures of regional administrations, primarily, in Western Ukraine and in storming and in occupying Kyiv City administration on December 1, 2013. Svoboda and its C14 affiliate also formed some paramilitary self-defense companies during the "Euromaidan." C14, a Neo-Nazi youth organization affiliated with Svoboda, led a paramilitary Self-Defense unit, which helped Svoboda to occupy by force the Kyiv city administration during the mass protests against the Yanukovich government and the police violence. Yevhen Karas, the C14 leader, was photographed giving a fascist salute, and the group uses neo-Nazi symbols.<sup>25</sup>

There is also certain evidence of the far right involvement in killings of the first three Maidan protesters on January 22, 2014. These killings greatly escalated the conflict by turning it into conflict with fatalities. Their killing was attributed by the Maidan leaders and the most of the Ukrainian media to the Berkut police. However, unreported Pechersk court decisions suggest 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.<sup>26</sup> The official investigation concluded that they were killed in the Maidan-controlled areas from distances of a few meters, while the police lines were several dozen meters away from the Maidan positions. Another evidence that these were false flag killings is absence of the moments and exact locations of their killings 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. At least one of the protesters was shot by pellets used in hunting. This first victim was Armenian, while the second killed protester was a Belarusian member of the UNA-UNSO. The ethnicities of these killed protesters also suggest that they were not random victims. 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 one of the reasons for the subsequent split of the White Hammer from the Right Sector.<sup>27</sup>

Displays by a part of Maidan protesters of neo-Nazi symbols, such as swastika, SS signs, the Celtic cross, and 14/88 sign, whose numbers refer to a White supremacist statement and “Heil Hitler,” in different Maidan-controlled areas also indicate presence and toleration of members of neo-Nazi organizations, groups, or their sympathizers among the protesters.

However, the far right organizations on the Maidan much more widely used symbols adopted from the OUN and the UPA, their historical predecessors, such as a red and black flag,

and greetings and chants “Glory to Ukraine - Glory to Heroes,” “Glory to the Nation,” and “Ukraine above all.” The Right Sector adopted this flag and this and other far right organizations, such as Svoboda, adopted such greetings from the Bandera faction of the OUN (OUN-B). They regarded themselves as ideological heirs of the OUN to various extent. The Bandera faction of the OUN adopted this flag and greetings at the time of its collaboration with Nazi Germany in the beginning of 1941. They were modeled after symbols and greetings of other fascist or semi-fascist parties, including the Nazi party. Red and black colors of the OUN-B flag symbolized Blood and Soil that resembled Blut und Boden concepts in Nazi ideology and symbols. “Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes!” greeting was in a 1941 OUN-B congress decision accompanied by a fascist-style hand salute, and in this form it resembled greetings and the hand salutes used by the Nazi Party in Germany, the National Fascist Party in Italy, and Ustasha in Croatia (see Katchanovski, 2014b, p. 214). “Ukraine above all” resembled “Germany above all,” a German anthem reference emphasized during the Nazi rule. The non-far right Maidan leaders, parties, and protesters also started to use the “Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes” greeting during the “Euromaidan” by borrowing it from the far right parties, but they ignored or denied the fascist origins of this greeting.

### **The Maidan Massacre**

The violent clashes of protesters with the police and “titushki” and the mass killings started when the protesters tried to break police lines and attack the parliament on February 18, 2014. This happened during a “peaceful march,” which was organized by the Maidan opposition leaders, specifically Oleksander Turchynov, a leader of the Fatherland party, Andrii Parubiy, the commander of the Maidan Self-Defense, and Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of the Right Sector.<sup>28</sup>

The protesters included the Maidan Self-Defense companies, in particular the Right Sector company.

Live streams of the rally showed that the protesters led by Svoboda deputies tried to break through and attacked police cordons near the parliament. Videos show that another group of the Maidan protesters attacked and burned the Party of Regions headquarters nearby.<sup>29</sup> The head of the Kyiv branch of the SNA later stated that they burned this building.<sup>30</sup> Videos from the scene also show Tetiana Chornovol, a former activist of the UNA-UNSO, among the attackers. A Party of Regions computer specialist was killed during this attack and burning of the Party of Regions headquarters, and he became the first casualty of the Maidan massacre. The Maidan government investigation blamed without any evidence the Yanukovich government agents provocateurs for the attack and burning of the Yanukovich party headquarters and included the computer specialist among the killed Maidan protesters.

There is also evidence of the involvement of the Right Sector in killings of the police and Internal Troops during these clashes and subsequent attempts by the Berkut to disperse the protesters from the Maidan on February 18-20, 2014. A Kyiv court ruling specifically referred to Right Sector activists as suspects in an investigation by the Prosecutor General Office in killings and wounding the police on the Maidan. In addition to two wounded attackers of a separatist checkpoint in Sloviansk during the Right Sector attack on April 20, 2014, the court decision listed at least 12 cell phone numbers of Right Sector activists, who were also investigated concerning their involvement in the killing and wounding the police on the Maidan. The court ruling stated that these two wounded attackers used the same weapons in the Sloviansk checkpoint attack as were used to kill two Internal Troops servicemen and wound three other policemen on the Maidan on February 18.<sup>31</sup> Other court rulings revealed that GPU investigated

use of weapons, which were seized by the Right Sector during an attack of SBU regional headquarters in Ivano-Frankivsk, in shooting the police on the Maidan.

A member of the “Vikings” neo-Nazi unit of the Right Sector during the “Euromaidan” publicly stated that he killed two policemen on February 18 and that his associate, a deputy commander of the “Vikings,” also killed two policemen on the same day. They both served in the Ukrainian Voluntary Corps of the Right Sector during the war in Donbas.<sup>32</sup> Another Maidan activist said that the Right Sector had its own armed group among several covert Maidan groups of shooters, who were armed primarily with hunting rifles, and that on February 18-20, 2014, two such covert armed groups shot, in particular, from the Trade Union building and from the Music Conservatory, 20 Berkut and Internal Troops servicemen.<sup>33</sup>

Various evidence cited in a comprehensive study of the Maidan massacre and admissions by some of far-right-linked Maidan snipers and activists” also demonstrate the involvement of the far right in breaking a truce agreement between the Maidan opposition and the Yanukovich government and in the killings and wounding of policemen on February 20, 2014 (see Katchanovski, 2016c). This evidence includes a Dmytro Yarosh statement shortly after the midnight on February 20 announcing that the Right Sector did not accept the truce agreement and would undertake decisive actions against the government forces.<sup>34</sup>

The analysis of numerous videos, recordings of live streams, intercepts of radio communications of the Internal Troops and SBU Alfa unit commanders, and testimonies of the Maidan protesters and the policemen show that four Berkut members were killed and nearly 40 e Berkut and Internal Troops wounded when they were besieging the Maidan by concealed shooters, specifically from the Music Conservatory building in the early morning of February 20 (see Katchanovski, 2016c). Berkut officers said that they noticed protesters with the Right Sector

insignia in this building on February 19 and that armed protesters took positions there.<sup>35</sup> The presence of such an armed unit at the Maidan square building could not have been possible without the knowledge of the Maidan Self-Defense commanders and the Maidan leadership.

Volodymyr Parasiuk stated that he organized his special Maidan company, which included armed protesters with experience fighting in armed conflicts, following negotiations with the Right Sector and that this company was based in the conservatory building at the time of the massacre.<sup>36</sup> Parasiuk admitted that he was a member of the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists in the past and trained in its camps to shoot. He also de facto admitted in his various interviews that his unit shot at the police.<sup>37</sup>

Parasiuk announced from the Maidan stage on February 21, 2014 an ultimatum for Yanukovich to resign by next morning and threatened use of force if he would not resign. Parubiy said that this announced ultimatum was a decision made by “institutional bodies of the Maidan” and that it was adopted by a military council set up by the Maidan Self-Defense and the Right Sector on February 21.<sup>38</sup> After playing a key role in the violent overthrow of the Yanukovich government, Parasiuk served as a company commander in the Dnipro battalion, which was organized with the direct involvement of the Right Sector. Dmytro Yarosh issued from the Maidan stage a similar ultimatum and a threat of use arms by the Right Sector.

Ivan Bubenchyk also admitted in his Lviv TV interview in 2014 and then in other Ukrainian media interviews in 2016 that he shot from the Music Conservatory building, and he said that he killed two policemen from his AK assault rifle<sup>39</sup> (Katchanovski, 2015c, p. 14, 20). His shooting from this building and his joint photos and interviews with Parasiuk in the Conservatory building suggest that Bubenchyk was a member of the-Parasiuk led special company based there. Another link of this company to the far right is Bubenchyk’s statement that



the Right Sector promised him more ammunition during the Maidan massacre of the protesters after he spent his ammunition shooting into the police from the Conservatory building. He also said that Yanukovych was supposed to be killed on February 20.<sup>40</sup>

This Maidan “sniper” also joined the Dnipro battalion and became the commander of Zakhid-2 battalion, which was formed by a part of Right Sector activists and Voluntary Ukrainian Corps (DUK) commanders during a split in these far right organization and its paramilitary wing in fall 2016. Bubenchyk became one of the leaders of Radical Right Forces – the UPA, which was formed in February 2016 by a part of the Right Sector activists and DUK commanders and attempted to launch new Maidan protest.<sup>41</sup>

Another Maidan protester said first in his Vesti newspaper interview and then in his BBC interview that he also shot at the police from the Conservatory. He noted that their guns came from the main post office building. This building was then used as the Right Sector headquarters. His reported service in summer of 2014 in a volunteer battalion in a town near a sea most likely refers to the SNA/Patriot of Ukraine-led Azov special police battalion, which was then based in Mariupol.

A SBU Alfa officer, who led one of the SBU groups during storming of the Trade Union Building on the Maidan on February 18, stated that their task was to seize the 5th floor, which contained a lot of weapons.<sup>42</sup> The Right Sector then occupied this entire floor which served as both its headquarters and a base of the Right Sector company of the Maidan Self-Defense before the burning of this building by the Maidan protesters later on February 18 to stop its seizure by SBU Alfa. Various videos and photos also show that the Maidan protesters controlled the Kozatsky Hotel area on February 20 when protesters pointed out that there were snipers there

(See Katchanovski, 2015c). An undated police report noted that this hotel was used by the Right Sector, specifically by the White Hammer and the Patriot of Ukraine, as one of its bases.<sup>43</sup>

There is various evidence that far right organizations, specifically Svoboda and the Right Sector, were also involved in the massacre of the Maidan protesters on February 18-20, 2014. The comprehensive analysis of the massacre, some 100 testimonies, primarily by Maidan protesters, forensic ballistic and medical examinations made public during the Maidan massacre trial, and synchronized videos of the massacre show that at least the absolute majority of the protesters were killed on February 20, 2014 from the Maidan-controlled buildings and areas, in particular, the Hotel Ukraina.

In its official statement, Svoboda stated that its activists took the Hotel Ukraina under their control and guard on January 25, 2014.<sup>44</sup> Similar statement was made by the Svoboda leader from the Maidan stage. Numerous videos show that the inside hotel remained under control of protesters when the government forces seized the territory around it in the late afternoon on February 18 and that the outside perimeter of the hotel was unblocked by protesters around the time when the Maidan massacre started on February 20. This is consistent with videos from the hotel and statements by the commander of the Self-Defense unit and hotel staff who said that police never entered the hotel and that this unit guarded the hotel entrance all this time since the end of January, specifically during the Maidan massacre.<sup>45</sup> Videos also show that a Svoboda deputy and the Maidan protesters guarded the Hotel Ukraina before, during, and after groups of concealed shooters killed protesters from this hotel. (See Katchanovski, 2015c).

Moreover, there is evidence that the Maidan “snipers” were shooting, specifically at the protesters and a BBC crew or taking cover in at least three or four Hotel Ukraina rooms, which

were occupied by the deputies of the national parliament from Svoboda or their aids on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor.

The evidence also indicates that snipers positioned on this floor were killing the protesters, taking cover from the Maidan protesters searching for snipers, or shooting in the direction of the protesters from these and two or three other hotel rooms in which or near which Svoboda deputies lived. Most of more than 30 deputies of the parliament from Svoboda lived on this floor at the time of the Maidan massacre. Videos show many of them in the Hotel Ukraina soon after the start of the massacre of the protesters.<sup>46</sup>

For instance, a testimony of brother of Andrii Saienko during the Maidan massacre trial, the moment of the killing in a video, and the location and steep angle of the wound show that this protester was shot from a top part of the Hotel Ukraina.<sup>47</sup> The forensic ballistic expert reports found that at least 10 protesters, including Saienko, were killed from the same exact 7.62mm caliber Kalashnikov weapon or Kalashnikov-based hunting carbine. Since bullets and pellets were extracted from bodies of less than half of 49 protesters killed on February 20, this suggests that about half of the protesters were shot from a single weapon from this Maidan-controlled hotel. The victims shot from this weapon included Mykola Shymko, who was killed along with another protester (Bohdan Solchanyk) one minute before Saienko. Videos and Google map street view indicate that the area and directions of the Shymko and Saienko killings could be matched with an announcement on the Maidan stage about two to three snipers on the pendulum floor of the Hotel Ukraina a few minutes after the killing of these three protesters. Such evidence suggests that the pendulum floor refers to the 11<sup>th</sup> floor in the 12 story hotel wing, i.e., either in or near Svoboda-occupied hotel rooms since it was physically impossible to shoot Shymko from the 13<sup>th</sup> floor in the 14<sup>th</sup> story central part of the hotel.<sup>48</sup>

The Prosecutor General Office investigation disclosed that at least two deputies of Svoboda lived on this floor in this hotel wing and that one of them occupied the same hotel room from which the BBC and ICTV filmed “snipers” firing at the BBC television crew and at the protesters.<sup>49</sup> The BBC correspondent in his news report and in his tweet identified the shooter in this room window as having a green helmet worn by the Maidan protesters.<sup>50</sup> A protester stated that he saw a few other protesters shot by “a sniper” from the same hotel window.<sup>51</sup> The official investigation only reported that they found no signs of anyone breaking into that room or tampering with a lock. However, in a time-stamped recording of live Spilne TV broadcast from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the Hotel Ukraine, a chat between Ukrainian reporters and an unidentified person refers to man from two groups of Maidan “snipers,” who were recorded as looking for suitable shooting positions in the same broadcast and in a CNN video a few minutes before that sniper was filmed by the BBC and ICTV, went to that side of the hotel and that there was a sniper position on that side of the floor.<sup>52</sup>

A Ukrainian publication based on its own investigation and a reported BBC correspondent statement suggests that there was a sniper in a different Hotel Ukraina suite, in which another Svoboda deputy lived at that time. The BBC corresponded reportedly said that after his crew was shot from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of this hotel he went to this floor and saw a note with a warning not to enter the suite number 1109 because of a request from the Security Service of Ukraine. This was the same suite which was searched by Maidan activists. One of Svoboda leaders admitted that a member of the Ukrainian parliament from this far right party lived at the time of the Maidan massacre in this suite.<sup>53</sup>

An English-speaking foreign reporter said in the same Spilne TV broadcast at 10:35am (15m) that he saw a shooter hiding in a Hotel Ukraina and firing shots from an open and moving

window. The open and moving window visible in that video matches a room on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor which was used to record a widely publicized video of the Maidan massacre. This video was recorded by a former press-secretary of the Lviv Regional Council, which was then headed by a Svoboda deputy who occupied one of the rooms on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor at the time of the massacre. A break in this video (53m), which was used as evidence of the massacre of the protesters by the Berkut, matches the time when the sniper was spotted there.<sup>54</sup>

A leader of the Patriot of Ukraine branch in Kyiv stated that he personally witnessed that “a sniper” was located in one of the hotel rooms booked by Svoboda deputies and that this room was on a top floor of the hotel (Katchanovski, 2015c, p. 57). Recordings of Spilne TV livestream referred to two other rooms on the same 11<sup>th</sup> floor from which snipers were shooting during the massacre of the protesters.

Time-stamped recordings of radio communications of SBU Alfa commanders, an investigation by a journalist from the Fatherland party, and statements by the former SBU head all refer to snipers from the Music Conservatory moving to the Hotel Ukraina before or in the beginning of the massacre of the protesters on February 20. The analysis and synchronization of videos filmed by French, German, Russian, and Ukrainian television journalists show an armed group of the Maidan protesters under command of Parasiuk arriving to the hotel, shooting from a 14<sup>th</sup> floor room, and then moving to other floors during the massacre of the protesters. Videos also show Svoboda deputies, in particular the deputy speaker of the Ukrainian parliament armed with handgun, accompanying armed members of this special Maidan company in the Hotel Ukraina or guarding entrances to the hotel elevators. Svoboda deputies also went to negotiate with snipers, whom the Maidan protesters spotted shooting at them from the roof of this hotel. Bubenchyk stated that he was in Hotel Ukraina and Zhovtnevyi Palace during the massacre but

denied that there were any snipers there in spite of testimonies of Maidan protesters, public announcements from the Maidan stage, videos and photos pointing to snipers in both these locations at the time when they were under the Maidan control.<sup>55</sup> (See Katchanovski, 2015c). For example, a photo identifies one of “sniper” positions used to shoot from Zhovtnevyi Palace at the Maidan protesters, and another such position was identified by Maidan protesters on the roof of this building.<sup>56</sup> A synchronization of other photos of the same position and videos of the massacre show that the photos were made at the same time and shortly afterwards as “snipers” were reported to be there, for example, in the Maidan stage announcements.<sup>57</sup> These photos were made in Zhovtnevyi Palace by a pro-Maidan journalist, who also made a large number of photos from the Music Conservatory building at the time when the special Maidan Self-Defense company “snipers” were shooting at the police there from the same floor and the same Maidan-facing part of the building, but these photos omitted these shooters. A video by a Polish journalist showed that the Maidan protesters were in both these areas of Zhovtnevyi around the same time.<sup>58</sup>

The presence of armed Maidan shooters and their shooting from the Hotel Ukraina cannot be explained by shooting the police, since both the official investigation and the study of the massacre found that not a single Berkut or any other policeman was killed or wounded from the Hotel Ukraina after the killings of the protesters started on February 20, in contrast to numerous police casualties of the Maidan shooters when they were based in the Music conservatory earlier in the day.

Svoboda deputies ignored warnings about snipers in this hotel killing and wounding the protesters, including members of the Svoboda Maidan Self-Defense company. Such seemingly irrational behavior become rational from a rational choice or an instrumental rationality

perspectives, if Svoboda deputies were at least aware that these snipers in the Hotel Ukraina were from the Maidan side. (Katchanovski, 2015c). For example, a French TV video shows a Maidan protester shouting to the head of Svoboda in Khmelnytsky Oblast and journalists near the main entrance to the Hotel Ukraina about snipers at the top of the hotel soon after the massacre of the protesters, including protesters from Svoboda company from Khmelnytsky Region, started near the hotel. But this Svoboda deputy then was filmed guarding the hotel entrance and carrying wounded Maidan protesters to and from a makeshift hospital organized by Svoboda in this hotel.<sup>59</sup>

The forensic ballistic examinations which were conducted before December 2015 found that at least two out of 48 protesters were killed on February 20 by expanding hunting bullets whose caliber did not match calibers of weapons used by the special police company, whose members were charged with killings all these protesters. At least four protesters were shot with pellets used for hunting, and another protester killed from Vepr hunting carbine. A forensic ballistic examination conducted on the prosecution request with help of an automatic computer based system in January 2015 concluded that bullets extracted from killed protesters did not match bullet samples from any Kalashnikov assault rifles with which members of the Berkut special company were then armed.<sup>60</sup>

Forensic medical reports made public during the trial indicated that in cases of 15 killed protesters and in the case of one wounded medic with such information all but one were shot at significant vertical angles, while the Berkut police were located at nearly even level with the protesters. This suggests snipers in Maidan-controlled buildings because the investigation and the Maidan massacre study did not find evidence that any protester was killed by government snipers from the government-controlled buildings. A forensic report about entry and exit wounds

locations at nearly horizontal level in the case of Ihor Kostenko killing and his position in a video seconds before his killing also suggest that he was shot from a Maidan location.<sup>61</sup>

Overall, in at least 13 cases of the killed protesters, forensic medical reports about locations of wounds combined with videos of positions of these protesters at the moments of their shooting or shortly before and after also indicate that they were killed from directions of the Hotel Ukraina and other Maidan-controlled areas. In some cases, the forensic medical reports presented during the trial are not sufficient to make conclusions about directions from which protesters were killed because exact wounds locations are not specified or because positions of the protesters in the moments of their killings, shortly before or after were not captured in videos or photos. Because forensic medical reports are not yet made public in the cases of other killed and wounded protesters, the killing and wounding of some of the protesters by the special Berkut company cannot be excluded. But such information based on media and social media reports indicates that at least the absolute majority of the protesters were killed from the Maidan-controlled buildings and not by the Berkut (See Katchanovski, 2015c).

The GPU admitted that testimonies of 77 of the wounded protesters about their positions and directions of gunshots, along with videos, photos, forensic reports, and conclusions of expert reports, showed that they were shot from other sectors than the Berkut sector. The prosecution charges omitted the wounding of these protesters, or almost half of the 157 protesters wounded on February 20, 2014. These undisclosed sectors imply Maidan-controlled locations, such as the Hotel Ukraina, since the GPU investigation did not find evidence that SBU Alfa snipers or snipers from other government units killed protesters. Similarly, the GPU head reported that its investigation did not find evidence of Russian government snipers or other evidence of Russian government involvement in the Maidan massacre.



It is noteworthy that the prosecution charges omitted wounding of a female medic (Olesia Zhukovska). Her shooting was attributed by politicians and the media in Ukraine and the West to the government forces. However, eyewitnesses among protesters, and her own depiction of her position at the moment of the shooting and a location of an entry wound in her NTV interview combined with her location pointed to shooting from the Main Post-Office, which was then used as the Right Sector headquarters.<sup>62</sup> (See Katchanovski, 2015c, p. 56).

At least 10 protesters, including a Maidan medic, out of 80 protesters with whose wounding the Berkut company was charged, publicly stated in investigation documents made public during the Maidan massacre trial, in their Ukrainian media interviews, or on social media that they and/or their groups were shot by “snipers” from such Maidan-controlled locations as the Hotel Ukraina, the Bank Arkada, Horodetskoho Street buildings, and Zhovtnevyi Palace.<sup>63</sup> They included at least four protesters whose wounding was filmed in the most publicized massacre video filmed by the Belgian VRT TV (Roman Tityk, Serhii Trapezun, Yurii Kravchuk, Volodymyr Venchak). They were mostly from the Khmelnytsky Svoboda company. This video filmed from the Hotel Ukraina was broadcast by many TV channels in Ukraine and numerous Western countries as evidence of the massacre of the protesters by the government forces.<sup>64</sup> (See Katchanovski, 2015c). However, a more complete version of this video also showed a bullet hitting a tree and narrowly missing a group of the Maidan protesters. The video, testimony of the Belgian journalist who filmed it, photos of this bullet hole, its laser projected trajectory, and the government investigation finding made public during the trial all indicate that this bullet was shot from the back, e.g. from the Hotel Ukraina.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, a French photographer’s photos show that a wooden shield of one of the protesters (Volodymyr Zhrebnyi), who was filmed in the Belgian video, contains bullet holes

with wooden chips in its front side, e.g. facing the Berkut police positions. They indicate exit holes on the front side of the shield and are consistent with various other evidence of protesters in this group massacred from the back, in particular, from the Hotel Ukraina,<sup>66</sup>

There were also other groups of snipers filmed in the Svoboda-controlled Hotel Ukraina. A former Berkut officer said that a sniper that accompanied the Berkut special company had a task to look for a Right Sector sniper in the Hotel Ukraina.<sup>67</sup> Some snipers were caught by protesters in this hotel. A Maidan protester recorded a brief radio communication of another group of shooters when they were shooting from the Maidan-controlled areas. (See Katchanovski, 2015c).

A Hotel Ukraina employee in 1+1 TV program said that he witnessed that a group of snipers in Maidan style uniforms and with weapons carried in cases entered this hotel shortly before the mass killings started on February 18.<sup>68</sup> A Fatherland deputy stated that he witnessed protesters killed near him by shooters from the Hotel Ukraina and Kozatsky Hotel on the same day.<sup>69</sup> Videos showed the Right Sector members evacuating the nearby Hotel Dnipro several weeks after the massacre with weapons in such cases, and Yarosh later admitted this.<sup>70</sup> Their evacuation was supervised by Parubiy, and their weapons not examined by the police to check if they were used during the massacre of the protesters and the police. A Berkut officer reported during the Maidan trial that a Mosin rifle was found by his group in the Hotel Dnipro around that time and that the investigation did not display interest in checking if this rifle was used during the massacre even though forensic ballistic examinations determined that at least two protesters were shot by a 1908 year model of 7.62x51 caliber bullet designed for this rifle. Government units were not equipped with the Mosin rifles. In contrast, Spilne TV recording, which is now removed from web, referred to protesters, who were in the Hotel Ukraina at the time of the

massacre and were armed not only with hunting rifles and AKMS but also with Mosin rifles. (Katchanovski, 2015c, p. 51).

Various evidence indicates a cover-up of the far-right-linked Maidan “snipers” and falsification of the official investigation of the Maidan massacre. For example, the government investigation concluded that unknown shooters of unknown affiliation shot the police during the Maidan massacre. A report of the International Advisory Panel, set up by the Council of Europe, revealed that contrary to the public statements, the official investigation had evidence of “shooters” killing at least three protesters from the Hotel Ukraina or the Music Conservatory and that at least other 10 protesters were killed by unidentified “snipers” from rooftops.<sup>71</sup> The prosecution in 2015 charged the Berkut policemen with killing 39 protesters and omitted the killings of the other 10 protesters, but in 2016 it charged the Berkut with killings of 48 out of 49 protesters.

The GPU denied or ignored various evidence of far-right-linked “snipers” in the Hotel Ukraina and other Maidan-controlled locations, with a partial exception of the delayed and failed investigation of the ones filmed by BBC and ICTV in the Svoboda deputy hotel room. This investigation failure and an amnesty law releasing Maidan participants from responsibility for killing of the police suggest unwillingness of the Maidan-led government to investigate and prosecute the far right organizations for their role in the mass killings of the police during the Maidan massacre. Such unwillingness along with various other evidence suggests involvement of elements of other Maidan organizations in the Maidan massacre. Specifically this concerns elements of the oligarchic Fatherland Party, which formed the Peoples Front party and which became a part of the ruling coalition after the “Euromaidan.”

Other evidence of the cover-up includes a failure by the investigation to determine specific circumstances of killings of the absolute majority of protesters and the police on February 18-19, 2014. The Prosecutor General Office investigation found that 26 protesters were killed on February 18 and 19, and attributed their killings to the Berkut police, the SBU Alfa during its storming of the Trade Union building, and titushki. But specific circumstances and other evidence of most of these killings are still not made public by the Ukrainian government and the media, like in cases of some killed protesters and almost 70 wounded protesters, who were shot on February 20. The only one solved case by the GPU investigation with a court verdict confirming the responsibility but granting an amnesty and a long withheld video revealed that a Svoboda company commander was driven over by a protestor after this protestor seized a track and driven it into the police.

An unreported court decision revealed that another protester was killed by slushing his throat with a knife on February 18 soon after he took a knife from an UNA-UNSO tent on the Maidan. The decision cited witnesses who provided evidence that the knife owner was involved in this killing, and that he used a pseudo, like UNA-UNSO members, and that the body of this killed protester was found in the same tent soon afterwards.<sup>72</sup> The description of the killed protester as a former policeman and the mode and the date of his killing match Viktor Prokhorchuk. But his killing was attributed by the Ukrainian media to the police, and President Poroshenko posthumously awarded him Hero of Ukraine title along with other killed Ukrainian protesters included in the “Heavenly Hundred.”

The investigation ignored similarities of killings of protesters with killings of 13 policemen on the Maidan on February 18-20, in particular, by pellets and other hunting ammunition and same caliber 7.62x39 bullets. The government investigation did not even

consider a version of the killing of both police and protesters by Maidan shooters, specifically far-right-linked shooters. For instance, no forensic ballistic comparisons of bullets, which killed both police and protesters, were made, in spite of similarity of the types and calibers of ammunition and similarities of the police and the protesters wounds reported by Maidan medics.

There is also “dog that did not bark” evidence indicating either involvement of the Right Sector and C14 in this mass killing of the Maidan protesters or their prior knowledge about this massacre. In contrast to its leading role in previous violent attacks during the “Euromaidan,” the Right Sector was not visible during the massacre on February 20, and none of members of this far right organization was reported among killed or wounded protesters on that day. A Maidan protester said that he learned that the Right Sector members were absent during the massacre, because they received advance warning from their leadership.<sup>73</sup> The former leader of the Right Sector in the Sviatoshyn District in Kyiv also suggested that there was such a Right Sector order. The leader of Svoboda-affiliated C14 admitted that his C14-based company of the Maidan Self-Defense took refuge in the Canadian embassy in Kyiv on February 18 and stayed there during the Maidan massacre.<sup>74</sup> Similarly to the Right Sector, not a single member of C14 and its company was reported as killed or wounded by “snipers” during the massacre on February 20th.

The former leader of the Right Sector in Sviatoshyn District in Kyiv publicly stated that Yarosh along with Petro Poroshenko evacuated captured snipers following the Maidan massacre.<sup>75</sup> He said that his Zahrava unit of the Right Sector was given an order to protect the evacuated snipers from the protesters.<sup>76</sup> The head of the Kyiv branch of Patriot of Ukraine stated that snipers captured by protesters, in particular the one captured with his involvement in a Svoboda-booked room in the Hotel Ukraina, were evacuated by Poroshenko along with captured Internal Troops (see Katchanovski, 2015c, p. 57). A Maidan Self-Defense activists stated

separately that he along with other protesters tried to stop this evacuation of snipers who were captured in the Hotel Ukraina and other locations.<sup>77</sup> Videos show a confrontation between the protesters and the Maidan leaders, such as Yarosh, Parubiy, Svoboda deputies, Poroshenko, Pashynsky, who protected and tried to evacuate around 2:00 am on February 21, 2014 a few dozen of men. All of them, including captured Internal Troops soldiers and officers, were dressed in civilian clothes, and some of them had haircuts that were different from military-style short haircuts of captured Internal Troops soldiers and officers.<sup>78</sup> While specific Maidan leaders might have been unaware that there were purported snipers in this group, the lack of any investigations of these claims independently made by three Maidan activists fits the pattern of the cover-up and falsification of the Maidan massacre investigation from the top of the Ukrainian government.

The Maidan massacre played a key role in the violent overthrow of the Yanukovych government. Because it was immediately attributed to the government snipers and the police by the Maidan opposition, the Western leaders, and the media in Ukraine in the West, it undermined his and his government legitimacy. In particular, the massacre prompted a part of the Party of Regions deputies to leave their faction and support the Maidan opposition and the parliament vote on February 20 to withdraw the government forces from downtown Kyiv and subsequent votes to dismiss then President Yanukovych and his government. The use of force and threat of force by the far-right leaders in alliance with elements of the oligarchic Maidan parties, and their refusal to accept the Western-mediated deal also forced Yanukovych and most senior members of his government to flee Kyiv and then Ukraine on February 21, 2014 or soon afterwards. The far right force factor also prompted a part of members of the Party of Regions faction in the

parliament to support his dismissal and approval of the new Maidan-led government, which included far right Svoboda members.

### **The Odesa Massacre**

A special parliamentary commission report suggests that the Ukrainian and regional government officials planned to use far right activists to suppress the separatist movement in the Odesa Region and to disperse a separatist camp near the Trade Union building before the May 9 day in 2014. A march, led by the Right Sector and football ultras on May 2, 2014, was used to implement this plan, but it is not certain if the mass killing was planned in advance. The analysis of various videos and recordings of live broadcasts, May 2 group reports, media and social media reports, and interviews by participants and eyewitnesses from both sides and by the police commanders shows that Odeska druzhyna, a small separatist organization led by an ex-policeman, tried to counter and attack this march. They used red tape labels, and were not Right Sector agent provocateurs, as the Russian media or separatists often claimed. Use of the same red tape by some of policemen in a police cordon took place later during the clashes, and it was not an organized collusion with the separatists, as the Ukrainian government and the media claimed.

The groups of numerically superior activists of the Right Sector from Odesa and Kharkiv, where this far right organization was led by the neo-Nazi Social National Assembly/Patriot of Ukraine, far right football ultras, and Maidan Self-Defense units from Odessa and other regions attacked Odeska druzhyna activists. The pro-separatist activists took cover behind the police cordon, and some of them started to shoot at the direction of attackers.

A small mobile group of separatists arrived at that time in the area of the clashes to provide reinforcement. One of its members was filmed shooting at the direction of the far-right

led protesters with an AK-74 type assault rifle or its hunting version. The first victim was a Right Sector activist killed about the same time and place in his chest. The official investigation reported that he was killed by a 5.45mm caliber bullet. This evidence suggests a strong possibility that he was killed by this separatist mobile group member.

But other possibilities cannot be excluded, because of other evidence. Leaked forensic medical expert reports referred to 5.65mm caliber bullet extracted from the body of this Right Sector activist. This bullet reportedly disappeared during the investigation. The second victim who was on the Maidan side was killed shortly afterwards in the same area during the clashes by a bullet from a pneumatic weapon.<sup>79</sup> The investigation and videos have not revealed exact times, places, and directions of gunshots of these killings, and no results of ballistic expertise have been made public.

In the clashes that followed nearby, four separatist protesters were killed and many other separatist protesters and policemen and at least one local journalist were wounded, primarily with hunting ammunition. A pro-Maidan protester, who was filmed shooting with a hunting rifle at their direction around the same time, was later identified by May 2 Group as a Right Sector activist. The investigation charged him with killing of at least one of the separatists, but he was released from the arrest and his trial delayed because of threats by Right Sector and other far right activists against judges during his trial.

After the Odesa regional administration official in charge of law enforcement agencies communicated such a directive to a Maidan Self-Defense commander and after public calls from local Maidan leaders, Right Sector activists, football ultras, and the Maidan Self-Defense units moved to the Trade Union area.<sup>80</sup> They attacked and burned a tent camp of various separatist



organizations, whose activists and supporters then escaped to the Trade Union building and tried to barricade the main entrance doors.

Videos, internet streams, and testimonies of eyewitnesses show that some groups of the attackers threw Molotov cocktails and burning tires into the main entrance and set the entrance doors and the make-shift barricade there on fire, while other groups blocked other exits. Videos, recorded calls to the firefighters, and eyewitness reports show that the fire and thick smoke started and rapidly spread after Molotov cocktails and car tires were thrown by attackers at the main entrance doors.<sup>81</sup> After previous denials, the official investigation and May 2 Group created by the Odesa governor admitted that the deadly fire started at the main entrance but still claimed that it was impossible to determine who started the fire because both sides were throwing Molotov cocktails. However, no evidence of the Molotov cocktails been thrown there by separatists at the time of the start of the fire has been made public, in contrast to such evidence concerning the far-right dominated protesters.

The analysis of various sources show that 42 people perished as a result of fire, smoke and trying to jump from the upper floors. Trade Union victims were unarmed and included mainly pro-separatist supporters and several employees who were at the building at the time. Six women and one minor were killed during the massacre.

There is various evidence that the police and firefighters were ordered by their superiors to stand by and not interfere during this fire attack and earlier deadly clashes. For instance, a special plan to deal with mass disturbances launched by the Odesa regional police was not authorized, most likely because of decisions at the Ministry of Internal Affairs level. Similarly, top regional officials of the police and other law enforcement agencies were ordered to attend a meeting with their national counterpart before and during the start of the clashes.

Statements posted by the Right Sector, the SNA, and Misanthropic Division, another neo-Nazi organization, on their websites and social media sites admitted in various forms involvement of their organizations or the far right-led attackers generally in the massacre of the separatists.<sup>82</sup> However, with the exception of the arrested but released Right Sector shooter, only separatists were among those arrested and tried for the Odesa massacre. An adviser to the head of the police in the Odesa Region stated that the investigation of the Trade Union “fire” did not make any progress for two years after the massacre.<sup>83</sup> The Council of Europe and the UN special commission reports also noted the failures of the investigation and destruction of evidence.<sup>84</sup>

This suggests that the official investigation of the massacre of the separatists in the Trade Union building in Odesa has been falsified and stonewalled. Such falsification and stonewalling would be consistent with other evidence indicating a certain kind of involvement in this violence of not only the far right organizations and ultras but also the Maidan Self-Defense and the government officials.

### **The War in Donbas**

Like in the case of mass protests during the “Euromaidan,” paramilitary formations, special police and National Guard units, organized and led by far-right organizations, such as the Right Sector, the SNA and Svoboda, constituted a minority of the Ukrainian forces during the armed conflict in Donbas. The Right Sector played a key role along with Ihor Kolomoisky, an oligarch who became the head of the Dnipropetrovsk regional administration after the “Euromaidan,” in the formation of Dnipro battalion in spring of 2014. The Azov battalion was organized and led by the SNA and the Patriot of Ukraine with involvement of the Radical Party. Arsen Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, also was involved in the Azov battalion

formation and its later expansion to a regiment. Azov initially used neo-Nazi symbols as its insignia. Andrii Biletsky, a Patriot of Ukraine leader, who was called the “White Leader,” was the first commander of Azov.

Svoboda and C14, a neo-Nazi group affiliated with Svoboda, organized and led the battalion Sich. The St. Mary’s battalion was organized and led by the far right Bratsvo party headed by Dmytro Korchynsky. The UNA-UNSO formed a special intelligence company. There were far right members or sympathizers in other special police units and other such formations created during the conflict in Donbas. For instance, the Aidar battalion, nominally subordinated to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, was formed by the Maidan Self-Defense. But one of its platoons was led by the White Hammer, which belonged to the Right Sector during the “Euromaidan.” Ilia Kiva, a Right Sector member, was a commander of another volunteer police battalion. A previously convicted criminal with a swastika tattoo became the commander of the Tornado company, a special police unit.

All these units were under formal jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Guard, or the Ministry of Defense. But from the start of their formation they remained under de facto command of radical nationalist or neo-Nazi organizations. All these armed formations were organized after the start of the conflict in Donbas and stationed there in an attempt to suppress pro-Russian separatism in this region by force.

The Right Sector and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists organized militia or paramilitary units but without such formal subordination to the central government of Ukraine. The Volunteer Ukrainian Corps, the largest paramilitary formation, was formed and led by the Right Sector specifically for the war in Donbas, but it also included battalions in other regions of Ukraine, in particular, in Western Ukraine.

The far-right led armed formations were composed from volunteers, and large proportions of their commanders and members were members and sympathizers of radical nationalist and, to a much lesser extent, neo-Nazi organizations and ultras groups. Small numbers of citizens of Belarus, Canada, France, Italy, Russia, Sweden and the US, primarily far right members or sympathizers, in particular neo-Nazis, served in different far-right led units, such as Azov.

The analysis shows that these far-right formations played a key role in the start of the war in Donbas after the “Euromaidan.” The violent overthrow of the Yanukovych government by means of the Maidan massacre with the involvement of the far right was a trigger for the resurgence of separatism in Donbas and for a significant rise of support for various forms of separatism in this region. These far right-led armed units were disproportionately involved in the violence, specifically violence against civilians and prisoners of war. The radical nationalist and neo-Nazi led armed formations were much more ideologically motivated and willing to fight and to use force, compared to the regular Ukrainian forces, which suffered from low morale and significant desertion rates, especially in the beginning of the conflict.

Various evidence shows that the far right organizations and the far right-linked battalions had a crucial role in the escalation of the conflict into a war. In particular, it shows that the Right Sector carried out a deadly attack on a separatist checkpoint in Sloviansk on 20 April 2014. (See Katchanovski, 2016a). Such evidence as the Yarosh business card found after the attack was corroborated by Ukrainian court decisions, which authorized investigations of unidentified Right Sector members and leaders because the same weapons were found to be used by the checkpoint attackers and the snipers who killed and wounded the police during the Maidan massacre. Two years after this attack of the separatist checkpoint, Dmytro Yarosh admitted the Right Sector and his personal involvement in this attack. Turchynov, then acting president of Ukraine, and a

Kolomoisky's deputy in the Dnipropetrovsk regional administration, authorized this Right Sector operation, which was aimed at seizing and destroying a TV transmitter near Sloviansk several days after this area was seized by the Strelkov-led Russian nationalist armed group and local separatists.<sup>85</sup> This attack by the Right Sector constituted a major escalation of the conflict in Donbas because it broke the Geneva agreement, signed on 17 April 2014 by Ukraine, Russia, the EU, and the US concerning a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and the Orthodox Easter truce between the Ukrainian government and separatists in Donbas.

Similarly, the far right-led armed formations were involved in two other violent attacks which escalated the conflict and helped to turn it into a civil war. Videos, media reports, and their commanders and members admissions indicate that the Azov and Dnipro battalions along with other units took part in storming of the district police headquarters in Mariupol on May 9, 2014. About 10 persons, including at least one protester, were killed and many wounded when local pro-separatist protesters tried to prevent these units deployment and during their storming of the police building.<sup>86</sup> The Dnipro battalion along with other units seized control of Krasnoarmiisk in the Donetsk Region to prevent the separatist referendum there on May 11, 2014. Videos show them shooting unarmed pro-separatist protesters with Kalashnikovs, and two local people were killed during this confrontation. The Dnipro battalion presence there was denied by the Ukrainian government, but it was confirmed by other sources including admissions by battalion members in videos and Parasiuk's statement on social media.<sup>87</sup>

The various far-right armed units also participated in numerous combat operations against separatists during the war, for instance, during the Donetsk airport battle. The Ukrainian government justified their creation and use during the conflict in Donbas by claiming that Ukraine has been fighting from the start of this conflict a defensive war against Russia and that

there was no civil war. However, the government did not officially declare a war with Russia but justified the use of force by declaring the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO).

However, various evidence shows that the far-right organized and led armed formations were fighting primarily with local separatists and Russian volunteers in an intrastate conflict that became a civil war and later involved a direct Russian military intervention. The list of separatists sanctioned by the Ukrainian government in September 2015 shows that the absolute majority of them were citizens of Ukraine. Out of 188 separatist leaders, commanders, officials, and fighters on this list, which also includes some separatists from Crimea, 64% were identified as Ukrainian citizens, 8% as Russian citizens, 4% as citizens of other countries (Spain, Serbia, and Azerbaijan), and 24% had no citizenship information.<sup>88</sup> A list of 1,572 people, who joined armed formations of the self-proclaimed Donetsk Peoples Republic (DNR) in summer of 2014, shows that 78% of them were Ukrainian citizens, primarily from Donbas, 19% Russian citizens, 2% citizens of other countries, primarily, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Israel, and 1% had unknown citizenship.<sup>89</sup>

Various evidence also suggests that after the Yanukovych overthrow some Russian nationalist and communist organizations and networks directly and the Russian government at least indirectly initially and then directly started to back separatists in in Donbas and other Southern and Eastern regions, called by separatists, Vladimir Putin, and Russian nationalists as “Novorossiya” and that there was a real possibility of a direct Russian military intervention in spring 2014 in Donbas and these regions besides Crimea (see Katchanovski, 2016a). For example, intercepted telephone calls segments made public by the Prosecutor General Office of Ukraine in 2016 indicate that Sergey Glaziev told some leaders of pro-Russian separatist organizations and activists to seize regional councils in such regions beyond Donbas and Crimea

as Kharkiv, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia and to request Russian military intervention.<sup>90</sup> Glaziev was an adviser to Russia's President Putin concerning the Customs Union since 2012. But he was also linked via the Katehon Think Tank to Konstantin Malofeev, a Russian oligarch who backed separatism in Crimea and Donbas after the "Euromaidan." Igor Girkin (Strelkov), who led an armed Russian nationalist group to seize Sloviansk in Donbas, worked in the Malofeev's security.

The far right-formations were also involved in fighting with regular Russian military forces in Donbas in August 2014 and February 2016 during direct Russian military interventions in support of separatists. However, the far-right led formations along with regular Ukrainian forces suffered encirclements and defeats from regular Russian units in the Illovaik area in August of 2014 and in the Debaltsevo area in February 2015.

There was also involvement of the far right on the separatist side of the conflict, but their numbers and the role were much less significant. Pavlo Gubarev, who became the "People's Governor" of the Donetsk Region soon after the start of the conflict, admitted that he was a member of the neo-Nazi Russian National Unity organization in Russia 12 years earlier and obtained a military training from them.<sup>91</sup> Some relatively small units of separatist armed formations were comprised from radical nationalist and neo-Nazi volunteers from Russia. For instance, they included neo-Nazi Rusichi armed group, but this unit was forced to leave Donbas in summer 2015 because of the decision by the new separatist leadership. This decision was made during a campaign by the separatist leadership and their Russian military, security and political "curators" to integrate and purge separatist formations under the central command.

## **Elections and Government**

Far right organizations activists did not have significant positions in the national governments and the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine prior to the “Euromaidan.” Several of them became integrated into various senior positions the government as a result of the “Euromaidan.” However, they did not have a majority of positions or the top government positions. This is another indirect evidence of the involvement of the far right organizations but in alliance with elements of oligarchic parties in the violent overthrow of the Yanukovich government. Svoboda had four ministers from in the first post-Yanukovich government and its member became the Head of the Prosecutor General Office that investigated the Maidan massacre. These ministers included the Minister of Defense, who was not the party member and resigned because of criticism of his and the Ukrainian military performance during the Russian annexation of Crimea. The other ministers lost their positions after the October 2014 parliamentary elections, and the GPU head was replaced by Poroshenko with his own candidate after he was elected as president in May 2014.

Parubiy offered Yarosh and Parasiuk positions of, respectively, the first deputy head and the deputy head of the National Security and Defense Council immediately after the “Euromaidan.”<sup>92</sup> Yarosh later was appointed an advisor to the chief of General Staff of Ukraine. Vadym Troian, who was a member of the neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine and one of the commanders of the Azov battalion, became the first deputy head of the National Police. Yuri Mykhalchyshyn, a Svoboda deputy who expressed neo-Nazi views, stated that he got a senior position in a SBU department in charge of information. As noted, far-right organized and led battalions and other units were formally integrated into the police and the National Guard. In addition, Right Sector members were included in the special Alfa unit of SBU.



Parubiy, a former neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine/SNA leader, became the head of the National Security and Defense Council after the “Euromaidan.” He was elected the speaker of the parliament of Ukraine in 2016. Members of the far right parties also got some senior positions in the parliamentary committees after the parliamentary elections in October 2014.

The far right parties received significant but a minority support in the elections held since the “Euromaidan.” Svoboda and Right Sector leaders got each 1 percent of the vote in the presidential elections in May 2014. But the leader of the Radical Party, which combined far right populist elements and was involved in the formation of the Azov battalion along with neo-Nazi SNA, obtained 8% of the vote. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Svoboda narrowly failed to clear the 5% threshold and failed to enter the parliament on the party list. Svoboda vote dropped to 4.7%, compared to 10.5% in 2012. The exclusion of the annexed Crimea and separatist Donbas, which were traditionally two most pro-Russian and pro-Communist regions with minor support for far right parties, from the elections in 2014 means that the decline of Svoboda electoral support was more significant. The Right Sector received 2% of the vote in 2014. The Radical Party, whose list included a number of far right candidates, such as a son of an UPA supreme commander, got 7%.<sup>93</sup> In addition, six Svoboda members, the Right Sector leader, its former spokesman, the Azov commander and Patriot of Ukraine leader, and Parasiuk were elected to the Ukrainian parliament in majoritarian districts. Svoboda and the Radical Party received each 7% of the vote in the 2015 local elections, which the Right Sector did not participate in. But large proportions of voters voted for the far right organizations not because of their ideology but for other reasons, such as populist economic promises (see Bustikova, 2015).

However, the role of the far right parties and activists in the decisions of the parliament and the government policies has been much more significant than their representation in the

parliament, the government, and the law enforcement agencies would suggest. For instance, Parasiuk stated that members of his special Maidan company, organized with the Right Sector involvement, forced certain members of the parliament to participate in the votes to dismiss Yanukovich and his government from power and to elect the former Maidan leaders in their place.<sup>94</sup> Svoboda proposal immediately after the “Euromaidan” to abolish a law giving Russian language a regional language status was approved by the parliament. Even though it did not become a law because then acting president Turchynov did not sign it, this parliament decision helped to spur resurgence of separatism in Crimea and Donbas after the “Euromaidan.”

Similarly, the parliament, which was dominated by the oligarchic parties, approved in 2015 a law proposed by a far right deputy from the Radical Party and son of Roman Shukhevych, the UPA supreme commander who served in 1941-1943 as an officer in an Abwehr and OUN-B organized battalion transformed into an auxiliary police battalion. This law recognized the far right OUN and the UPA as fighters for independence and made it illegal to publicly disrespect them. President Poroshenko officially approved in 2016 a new military uniform which was partly based on the nominal uniform of the UPA.<sup>95</sup> Poroshenko, Parubiy, and Ukrainian deputies applauded a neo-Nazi ex-soldier during his speech at a special meeting of the parliament in honor of the Ukrainian Constitution Day in 2016.<sup>96</sup>

The use of violence and threat of violence also give the far right organizations disproportional influence on the different branches of the government and the Ukrainian politics in general. For instance, the Right Sector, NSA/Patriot of Ukraine, and Svoboda were involved in several attacks of the parliament after the “Euromaidan.” For example, Svoboda with participation of other far right organizations led in August 2015 a violent protest directed against an adoption of a constitutional amendment giving a separatist-controlled part of Donbas a limited

special status. A grenade thrown during this protest by a neo Nazi member of Svoboda and its Sich battalion in front of the Ukrainian parliament killed four National Guard members and wounded some 100 policemen and National Guard troops.<sup>97</sup> The far right organizations threatened new violence if the proposed constitutional amendment was approved for the second time and became a law. Similar attacks by the far right organizations and threats of violence by them were directed at the Constitutional Court and various other courts. For example, as result of such attacks or threats, courts released C14 activists, who were charged with assassination of Oles Buzina, an opposition journalist and writer, and a Right Sector activist, who was charged with gunning down separatists during the Odesa massacre.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that the far right organizations had significant but minority representation among the Maidan leadership, protesters, in the post-Maidan governments, and in the presidential, parliamentary, and local elections. However, the analysis also shows that the far right organizations and football ultras played a key role during violent attacks, such as attempts to storm the presidential administration on December 1, 2013 and the parliament of Ukraine in January and on February 18, 2014 and were involved in a violent attack of the Berkut police during its dispersal of protesters on November 30, 2013. The Right Sector and Svoboda had a crucial role in the violent overthrow of the Viktor Yanukovich government, in particular, in the Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police on February 18-20, 2014. Such mass killings aimed at an overthrow the government are consistent with their illiberal ideology of a national revolution.

The study demonstrates that the Right Sector, the Social-National Assembly, Patriot of Ukraine, and groups of football ultras were involved in the Odesa massacre on May 2, 2014. This paper also shows that the far right organizations and volunteer battalions and paramilitary units organized and led by them had a significant role in the civil war in Donbas, in particular in the escalation of the conflict into a civil war. But they were defeated by regular Russian military units during direct military interventions by Russia in support of separatists in Donbas in August 2014 and February 2015. Additional research is needed to analyze policies of the Western, in particular, US government, concerning the far right in Ukraine and the far right involvement in the Maidan and the Odesa massacres, and the war in Donbas.

This paper implies that the far right achieved significant but not dominant role in the Ukrainian politics during and since the “Euromaidan.” However, far right organizations and their armed units had a key role in major cases of political violence during and after the “Euromaidan,” and they attained an ability to overthrow by force the government of the one of the largest European countries. These findings indicate that as a result of the far right involvement in the violent overthrow of the Yanukovich government by means of the Maidan massacre the far right organizations achieved their strongest influence in Ukraine since its independence in 1991. Their key role in the escalation of the conflict during and after the “Euromaidan” contributed to a de facto break-up of Ukraine. Because of their involvement in the government overthrow, the war in Donbas, integration in the government and the law enforcement, and ability to overthrow the government, the influence of the far right organizations in Ukraine became greater compared to other countries in Europe and at least large countries in the world since 2014. This also applies to European countries in which the far right

parties had higher electoral support than their counterparts in Ukraine, but remained in the opposition.

This study also suggests that the narratives of the “Euromaidan” and the war in Donbas by the governments and the media in Ukraine, the West, and Russia have been inaccurate to a various extent. The governments and the media in Ukraine and the West and even many researchers of the Ukrainian far right either ignored or denied the rise of the far right in Ukraine as a result of far right involvement in the violent overthrow of the government by means of the Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police and the involvement of the far right in the Odesa massacre and in other significant cases of violence during and after the “Euromaidan.” In contrast to the narrative by Russian and separatist politicians and the media and the Yanukovich government, the “Euromaidan” was not a “fascist coup” and the Maidan government was not a “fascist junta” because the neo-Nazi organizations did not have dominant roles among the Ukrainian far right, in the Yanukovich government overthrow, and in the Maidan governments. The findings of these study have major implications for understanding the “Euromaidan,” the war in Donbas, and the conflict between the West and Russia over Ukraine and for policies concerning these conflicts and their resolution.

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## Notes

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