The Russia-Ukraine War and the Maidan in Ukraine

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Abstract

This study examines the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 and the origins of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the political transition during the Maidan in Ukraine in February 2014. This transition of power contributed to a start of the civil war in Donbas, Russian military interventions in Crimea and Donbas, the Russian annexation of Crimea and an international conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the West and Russia. This conflict escalated when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. The research question is as follow: What is the nature of the Russia-Ukraine war and the political transition in Ukraine during the Maidan? This issue produced divergent narratives of this war and the Maidan in scholarly studies, the media, and governments in different countries. This paper uses political science theories of wars, mass protests, coups, revolutions, and regime changes and empirical analysis to examine the nature of the Russia-Ukraine war and the political transition in Ukraine during the Maidan. It analyzes videos and interviews and statements of key political actors involved in this war and the power transition, witness testimonies of various participants of the Russia-Ukraine war and the Maidan at the Yanukovych state treason trial and the Maidan massacre trial in Ukraine, and media publications in Ukrainian, Russian, and English. The study concludes with the analysis of the implications of its findings for understanding the conflicts in Ukraine and over Ukraine and their resolution.

Research Question

Truth is the first casualty of the war. Governments and media often disseminate propaganda during such armed conflicts. But the task of scholarly studies is not to rely on propaganda disseminated by the governments and often repeated by the media but on evidence, academic concepts and theories to research wars in non-partisan ways.

This study examines the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 and the origins of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the political transition during the Maidan in Ukraine in February 2014. This transition of power contributed to a start of the civil war in Donbas, Russian military interventions in Crimea and Donbas, the Russian annexation of Crimea and an international conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the West and Russia. (See Katchanovski, 2015a, 2016a; Kudelia, 2016; Hahn, 2018; Sakwa, 2015).

This conflict drastically escalated when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and launched the ongoing war. This is one of the first academic studies of the Russia-Ukraine war. The research question is as follow: What is the nature of the Russia-Ukraine war and the political transition in Ukraine during the Maidan?

Methodology and Data

This study uses political science theories of war, genocide, mass protest, coups, revolution, and regime change and empirical analysis to examine the nature of the Russia-Ukraine war and the political transition in Ukraine during the Maidan. It is based on the analysis of large volume of the original/primary data in Ukrainian, Russian, and English.

It analyzes thousands of videos, interviews, and statements by key political actors involved in this war and the Maidan, testimonies and reports by hundreds of participants,

journalists, and witnesses of the Russia-Ukraine war and the Maidan in the media, the social

media, and at the Yanukovych state treason trial and the Maidan massacre trial in Ukraine. For

space reasons, absolute majority of such primary sources cannot be cited in this study.

The empirical evidence-based and theory-based academic analysis of the Russia-Ukraine

war and the Maidan transition is needed to determine the nature of these highly

politicized political conflicts which affected not only Ukraine and Russia but the entire world.

This would also be helpful in conflict resolution.

Divergent Narratives and Previous Studies

The Russian-Ukraine war and the Maidan transition produced divergent narratives by the

governments and the media in Ukraine, Russia, and the West. The Ukrainian government and

media presented the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 as a full-scale Russian invasion and aggressive

illegal war that started by Russia in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas.

They classified the war in 2022 as aimed in occupying entire Ukraine and stated that Russia

conducts genocide of Ukrainians. The Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian and

many Western media attributed civilian casualties in separatist-controlled Donbas and occupied

regions of Ukraine to false-flag shelling by the Russian forces.

The Western governments and most of the media presented the Russia-Ukraine war as an

unprovoked illegal Russian invasion and aggression against democratic and sovereign state by

the authoritarian Russian government aiming to occupy entire Ukraine.US president Biden

and many other top Western government officials and politicians and media outlets

classified the war as Russian genocide of Ukrainians and war crimes. The Ukrainian and

Western governments and the media presented Ukraine and the West as allies after the Maidan,

and the Western military and economic support of Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine war as support for a fellow democracy and sovereign country.

The Russian government and the media called the war "special military operation" in Ukraine and not a "war." They justified the Russian invasion by security threats from Ukraine, such as possibility of joining NATO and possibility of deployment of US/NATO missiles and or the weapons or military in Ukraine which borders Russia. The Russian government and the media presented the invasion as a humanitarian intervention aimed at stopping a genocide of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Donbas during the civil war there. They also justified the invasion by claiming that the Ukrainian government is Nazi or partially-Nazi, that there was a Western-backed fascist coup in 2014, and that one of main goals of the invasion was to "denazify" Ukraine. They denied Russian war crimes or claimed that they were staged. The Russian government and the media presented Ukraine as a US colony after the Maidan. The Russian media presented the Russia-Ukraine war as a war with the US and NATO.

There is a lack of academic studies of this war because it started several months ago and is still ongoing. Media is often unreliable source since the Ukrainian and Russian media are largely not independent. Studies show that the Western media coverage, in particular of conflicts in foreign countries, such as Ukraine, often indexes the narratives of their own governments and the political elite. (Boyd-Barrett, 2016; Katchanovski and Morley, 2012).

The Ukrainian governments and most of the media presented the political transition during the Maidan as the "Revolution of Dignity" which overthrew the Yanukovych undemocratic government by popular peaceful protests. Yanukovych was removed from power legally by the vote of the Ukrainian parliament because he was deemed abdicated from power after he fled from Kyiv and then from Ukraine to Russia because he ordered the massacre

of the Maidan protesters. The Western governments and the media, with some

exceptions, presented similar narratives concerning the Maidan as the Ukrainian governments

and the media did after the Maidan.

In contrast, the Russian government and the former Yanukovych government members

presented the Maidan as a "fascist coup" organized and conducted with the US and other

Western governments involvement. They denied that Yanukovych or his government and

security forces or police ordered and perpetrated the Maidan massacre of the Maidan

protesters.

There are large differences concerning the classification of the Maidan transition

in academic studies of the Maidan. Many studies characterize the Maidan similarly to

the Ukrainian and Western governments and the media, in part uncritically relying on these

sources. (See, for example, Marples and Mills, 2014).

Other scholarly studies classify the Maidan transition as a violent overthrow of the

government by means of the false-flag massacre of the police and the protesters. (See, for

example, Bandeira (2019, 206–207); Black & Jones (2015); Cohen (2018); Hahn (2018);

Katchanovski, 2015b, 2016b; 2020, 2021); Lane (2016); Mandel (2016); Sakwa (2015, 90-

92)). Other studies argued that the organizers and perpetrators of the massacre are

unknown. Some previous studies classify the Maidan specifically as a coup. (See, for

example, Mearsheimer, 2014).

Analysis of the Russia-Ukraine War

Contrary to the Russian government and media, the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict is

clearly classified as a war since the number of combat casualties far exceeds the 1,000 casualties

threshold, which is typically used by scholars to define a war. Estimates of casualties during first 6 months of the war by the author are based on officially admitted own casualties by Ukraine and separatists and individual count of casualties in Russia.

Ukrainian combat casualties are estimated at circa 15-20 thousand killed, based on the Arestovich (Zelenskyy presidential office adviser) admission on June 11 of circa 10 thousand military members killed (Focus, 2022). Plus likely excluded estimated 1-2 thousand police, border guards, National Guard, foreign volunteers, etc. casualties, estimated 4 to 7 thousand killed since, based on official admissions of daily casualty rates, and rough estimate of MIA, who were killed.

Russian combat casualties range between 6 and 12 thousand killed, based on BBC Russian (2022) count of 5,701 individual Russian military, National Guard, FSB, etc. members identified as killed during the Russia-Ukraine war, plus estimates of killed Wagner group mercenaries and killed MIA & adjusted based on the BBC estimate that these casualties might be half of all casualties.[1] Total combat casualties of Donbas separatists are circa 5 thousand. The ombudsperson of the separatist DNR reports 2,780 killed DNR military, police, etc. members.[2] Based on their population, such number corresponds to 1,700 killed in the separatist LNR. Plus killed MIA.

The officially admitted own casualties provide the minimal confirmed casualties. The Russian, Ukrainian, and Western governments inflated the military casualties of their adversary. Various supposedly leaked military casualties have all features of fakes because they were inflated and lacked validity and reliability.

The war combines elements of interstate war between Russia and Ukraine, a proxy war between the West and Russia, and a civil war in Ukraine. Interstate war between Russia and

Ukraine and the proxy war between the West/NATO and Russia since the Russian invasion in 2022 are more dominant than a civil war, which continues since 2014. Russian forces strengths and casualties in Ukraine exceed separatist force strengths and casualties and the war territory far exceeds Donbas.

Russian invasion of Ukraine is illegal under international law. Contrary to the Russian government claim, this war cannot be classified as a preventive war under the international law because there were no imminent security threats. While the Ukrainian government proclaimed plans to join NATO and NATO publicly stated during the Bucharest summit and before the war that Ukraine would become NATO member in the future, there was no immediate likelihood of NATO membership of Ukraine or deployment of long-range missiles or nuclear weapons by NATO there.

While Zelenskyy reversed his election promises of peaceful resolution of the Donbas conflict, did not fulfill the Minsk agreements, and proclaimed intention to return separatist-controlled Donbas under the control of the central government, there was no confirmed evidence of imminent attack of Ukrainian forces to take back separatist-controlled Donbas. While Zelenskyy suggested during the Munich conference shortly before the Russian invasion that Ukraine might seek to become a nuclear power, there was no immediate prospect of Ukraine building nuclear or biological weapons. Russia inflated the imminent nature of such security threats to justify the illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The apparent initial goal of the Russian invasion was the regime change in Ukraine or to force the Ukrainian government to accept a peace deal with Russian demands of neutrality, demilitarization, "denazification" and recognition of separatist republics in Donbas in borders of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions. The Russian initial advance close to Kyiv without sufficient

military force to capture it Negotiations with the Zelenskyy government that started within days after the invasion are consistent with such goal.

Putin's Victory Day speech and various subsequent statements by other Russian and separatist officials and Russian-appointed officials in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, in particular, about plans to organize in the occupied regions and separatist republics referendums on joining Russia suggest Russian plans to annex these regions in Southern and Eastern Ukraine. A KMIS survey that was commissioned by the author in Spring 2014 shows marginal support for joining Russia in Kherson & Zaporizhzhia regions and other regions of Southern & Eastern Ukraine, with the exceptions of Crimea and Donbas. (Katchanovski, 2014, 2016a).

The analysis of various evidence and the size and deployment of the Russian forces in Ukraine suggest that Russian plans did not envision the invasion and occupation or annexation of entire Ukraine, in particular Western Ukraine. The war could had been avoided by Russia by not launching the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The war could had been prevented by the Ukrainian government and the US, NATO & EU, for instance, by providing implementation of the Minsk agreements and neutrality and EU membership of Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine is also a proxy war between the US/NATO and Russia. Ukraine fits definitions of a US client state. The US and NATO use Ukraine, in particular, the Ukrainian government and the forces, as a proxy. Various senior US officials and politicians admitted the proxy war. For example, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated that "we want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine."[3] The proxy war in Ukraine, like other proxy wars, such as the wars in Vietnam and Angola, prolong the war.

Various evidence of US and UK direct involvement in planning, training, intelligence gathering, arming, and financing of the Ukrainian forces, in particular, for the Kherson and Kharkiv counter-offensives, is consistent with the proxy war.[4] The Ukrainian forces and the government became largely depended during the war on supplies of weapons and financial aid by the US and other NATO members and the EU. There are reports of presence of US and British special forces in Ukraine during the war, but no evidence of the direct involvement in the combat.

Ukrainian officials close to Zelenskyy revealed that the British prime minister visited Kyiv in April 2022 to block a peace deal with Russia after the Ukrainian government delegation in peace talks with Russia in its written peace plan proposal reportedly agreed to neutrality of Ukraine, no bases and troops from foreign countries, and no nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. (Ukrainska, 2022). Fiona Hill and Angela Stent confirmed citing "multiple former senior U.S. officials" that Russia & Ukraine agreed in April on a peace deal outline. (Hill and Stent, 2022).

Zelenskyy abandoned the negotiations right after this visit by the British prime-minister and not after the revelations of the Russian war crimes in Bucha. He stated after visiting Bucha his willingness to continue the negotiations (Strana, 2022). But after the Johnson's visit, Zelenskyy and other senior government officials of Ukraine rejected peace talks. Zelenskyy and the Defense Minister of Ukraine stated that the war would only end with taking back all lost territory of Ukraine, i.e., not only territories occupied during the Russian invasion but also separatist-controlled Donbas and Russian annexed Crimea, and that such outcome would constitute the Ukrainian victory. Such radical policy shift happened even though the odds of such outcome remained extremely small because of the Russian military advantage over Ukraine.

The analysis shows no evidence of Ukrainian genocide in separatist-controlled Donbas and Russian genocide in Ukraine, but evidence of war crimes, in particular killings of Ukrainian civilians in Bucha by the Russian forces. The UN and the US intelligence also did not find evidence of the genocide in Ukraine corroborating the analysis of this study (NBC, 2022, Reuters, 2022). Genocide is commonly defined in political science and conflict studies as mass murder and other similar acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part an ethnic, racial, religious, or social group (Katchanovski, 2010). A similar definition was adopted by the UN Genocide Convention.[5]

However, there is various evidence of war crimes by individual soldiers, commanders, or units. False genocide claims were used by Putin to justify the invasion of Ukraine, which resulted in many more civilian casualties than the war in Donbas prior to the invasion. False claims of genocide and inflated Russian war crimes in Bucha were also used by the Zelenskyy government and the US and some other Western governments to justify ending the peace talks to stop the war. There have been many more additional civilian casualties as a result of the ongoing war versus a possible peace deal that was close to agreement by the beginning of April. 2022.

Estimated 4-5 thousand civilians were killed in separatist-controlled Donbas during the civil war since 2014 and for the first 6 months of the Ukraine-Russia war. These estimates are based on the UN confirmed civilian casualties of the Donbas war in 2014-21 of at least 3.404 and at least 302 in separatist-controlled Donbas for the first 6 months of the Ukraine-Russia war plus estimated casualties in Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine and unaccounted casualties. (UN, 2022a, OHCHR. 2022a).

Estimated 8-10 thousand civilians were killed in Ukraine during first 6 months of the Ukraine-Russia war. This estimate is based on the UN confirmed 5,285 casualties on the

Ukrainian government-controlled territory plus unaccounted casualties in Mariupol and other cities in Donbas and other regions. (UN, 2022a, 2022b). About 3 thousand numbered graves filmed in Mariupol are primarily civilian residents killed during the Russia-Ukraine war.[6]

Civilian casualties were often inflated or misrepresented. For instance, the claim that more than 100,000 Mariupol residents were killed is implausible since it implies that all city residents were killed or wounded, based on typical ratio of 1 killed to 3-4 wounded during the modern wars.

The UN reported in the beginning of June 2002 that 86% of 4,183 confirmed killed civilians in Ukraine were killed by shells, bombs, missiles, mines, and explosives, while 11.2% (468) were killed by other weapons, i.e., generally by bullets. (UN, 2022b). The UN reports documented no civilians killed by bullets in June-August.

The analysis of various videos, photos, media and social media reports, and the UN reports shows that the absolute majority of civilians casualties were in the Ukrainian government-controlled territory and inflicted by the Russian and separatist forces. For instance, the UN documented during the first six months of the war 3,015 civilians killed in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the Ukrainian government-controlled territory and 2,270 civilians killed in other regions of Ukraine which were under the Ukrainian government control when casualties occurred. The UN report documented 302 killed civilians in separatist and Russian-controlled Donbas. (See OHCHR, 2022a).

Various evidence, such as thousands of videos, media and social media reports, along with findings of UN and Amnesty International reports and US intelligence and military experts, shows that the overwhelming majority of civilians in the Ukrainian-controlled territories and in separatist-controlled Donbas were killed by explosive weapons with wide area effect or not-

precise weapons during, respectively, Russian and too a much lesser extent Ukrainian military strikes. Civilians were killed during apparent indiscriminate shelling/bombing, overwhelmingly by the Russian forces, in populated urban and rural settlements. Videos, photos, and Amnesty International report show that populated civilian areas and facilities, such as cities, towns, villages, apartment buildings, schools, universities, hospitals, hotels, etc. were often used for military purposes, primarily by the Ukrainian forces for defense.

For example, such Russian shelling/bombing and missile strikes resulted in large numbers of Ukrainian civilian casualties in Mariupol, Vinnytsia, Kremenchuk, Chernihiv, Chasiv Yar, Izium, Chaplino, Bilohorivka, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, and other locations in Ukraine. Both civilian and military casualties of the Russian missile strikesin Vinnytsia, Chasiv Yar, Chaplino, and Bilohorivka were identified by various Ukrainian media.

These findings are corroborated by assessments made by US military and intelligence experts, a Newsweek investigation, which was partly based on the US intelligence, of Russian missile strikes with the largest number of reported civilian casualties, and by the Amnesty International report. (Amnesty, 2022a, Newsweek, 2022a, 2022b).

For example, the analysis of various videos, eyewitness testimonies, and experts used in Amnesty International reports suggest that explosions in Mariupol maternity hospital and the Mariupol theater were likely from large Russian unguided avia bombs, which lack precision and can strike far from targets.[7] There is similar evidence of large Russian unguided avia bombs killing several dozens residents in an apartment building in Izium and in a street queue in Chernihiv.[8] Such bombings by inaccurate aviation bombs with wide impact area in populated areas during combat fit definitions of indiscriminate attacks in the international humanitarian law.[9]

Contrary to claims by the Russian Defense Ministry and Donbas separatists, there is no confirmed evidence of false flag bombings of the Mariupol maternity hospital and the Mariupol theater by the Azov Regiment or other Ukrainian forces. Contrary to the claims by the Ukrainian government officials and the Ukrainian and Western media, there is no corroborating evidence of several hundred casualties of the Mariupol theater bombing. Similarly, the analysis of videos and testimonies suggests that a shot-down Ukrainian Tochka-U missile, which killed about two dozen civilians in Donetsk, apparently aimed at the nearby separatist DNR government headquarters. The evidence concerning the Tochka-U missile strike that killed 60 civilians in the Kramatorsk train station is contradictory.

There is no corroborated evidence of systematic false-flag shelling/bombing of civilians by the Russian, separatist, and Ukrainian forces. This concerns, for example, claims by the Russian and separatist governments that the bombing of the maternity hospital and a theater in Mariupol were false flag attacks and claims by the Ukrainian government that the shelling of Donetsk and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant were false flags. But there is clear evidence of Russian missile strikes of power plants in Ukrainian government-controlled regions in September 2022.

Contrary to the Russian government claims of staged killings in Bucha, analysis of UN and Amnesty International reports, forensic expert reports, videos, satellite images, eyewitness reports, media investigative reports, and other sources confirms that the total of about several dozen civilians and territorial defense members were shot or summarily executed by individual Russian soldiers or Russian units during the Russian occupation of Bucha. Such summary executions are classified as war crimes.

The UN human rights mission report documented in Bucha "unlawful killing, including by summary execution, of some 50 civilians." (OHCHR, 2022b). The Amnesty International report identified 22 Bucha residents killed by Russian forces. (Amnesty, 2022b). Videos, satellite images, and eyewitness testimonies confirm shooting or summary executions of different civilian residents and at least 8 unarmed territorial defense members in Bucha by the Russian forces (BBC, 2022, NYT, 2022).

Contrary to the claims by the Ukrainian and Western governments and the media, there is no documented evidence of Srebrenica-like mass execution (massacre) of a large proportion of the Bucha town residents by the Russian forces. The total 458 victims identified in Bucha after the Russian forces withdrawal included some non-civilians, and 39 who "appeared to have died of natural causes." (Washington Post, 2022). Forensic experts confirmed that many victims were shot in the head or by automatic gunfire but did not reveal their specific number. (Guardian, 2022). The other victims or the absolute majority of them were likely killed by shelling since videos, photos and eyewitnesses showed shelling in Bucha by Russian and Ukrainian forces during fighting for control of this town. For example, forensic experts revealed that dozens of Bucha residents were "killed by tiny metal arrows from shells" (flechettes) (Guardian, 2022).

The war in Ukraine also has elements of the civil war which began in Donbas in 2014. But in contrast to the brief Russian military interventions in Donbas in support of pro-Russian separatist in August 2014 and January-February 2015, the Russian forces and casualties in 2022 far outnumbered those of the Donbas separatist forces, and the Russian invasion involved not only Donbas but also other regions in the Eastern, Southern, and Central Ukraine. The Russian government recognized separatist republics as independent states a few days before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. But they de facto remained client states of Russia. For instance, Russian

officials were appointed to the top positions in the DNR and LNR governments, and the separatist forces under de facto Russian command were deployed beyond Donbas to the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv Regions.

Contrary to the Russian government and media claims used to justify the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian government and the military are not Nazi or neo-Nazi. There is not a single neo-Nazi in the Ukrainian government or the Ukrainian parliament. Neo-Nazis constituted about 1% of the Ukrainian forces during the war. However, contrary to the Ukrainian and Western governments and media claims, the far-right, including neo-Nazis, in particular in the neo-Nazi-led Azov regiment and other neo-Nazi-led formations and members of neo-Nazi organizations, are integrated in the National Guard, the police, and the Security Service of Ukraine. They have outsize power relative to their numbers. (See Katchanovski, 2017). In particular, the neo-Nazi founder and the first commander of the Azov battalion threated Zelenskyy against making a peace deal at the beginning of the war. The neo-Nazi-led Azov regiment played a leading role in the Mariupol battle in Spring 2022, but its members surrendered to the Russian and separatist forces after the siege of Azovstal steel plant.

There are videos and eyewitness testimonies suggesting that Azov regiment members killed a certain number of Mariupol residents during the battle for Mariupol and used apartment buildings, schools, and other civilian facilities during the fighting with the Russian and separatist forces.[10] Videos and eyewitness testimonies reveal executions of Russian POWs by the Georgian Legion and by the neo-Nazi-led Kraken unit, which was formed by the civilian wing of the neo-Nazi-led Azov regiment. Such killings are classified as war crimes. (See, for example, BBC, 2022).

Contrary to the Western and Ukrainian governments and media narratives, Ukraine is not a democracy but is largely undemocratic (See Katchanovski, 2017). After a brief period of relative democratization and semi-democracy following a victory of Zelenskyy in the presidential elections, he moved to institute a largely authoritarian rule, for instance by blocking the Constitutional Court of Ukraine and by imposing sanctions against some opposition leaders on treason charges that appeared trumped-up.

Zelenskyy used the Russian invasion and the war as a pretext to eliminate most of the political opposition and potential rivals for power and to consolidate his largely undemocratic rule in Ukraine. Sixteen opposition parties that were banned by a court in Lviv in Western Ukraine after hasty proceedings and without any lawyers present include several left parties. They were banned even though these parties condemned the Russian invasion or did not endorse it. Six leaders of major Ukrainian political parties are charged with state treason or are reportedly investigated on state treason charges that appear to be trumped up. Opinion polls show that half of voters in Ukraine before the Ukraine-Russia war expressed intention to vote for the political parties, whose leaders are charged with or are reportedly investigated for state treason. This was three times more than for the Zelenskyy's ruling party. (KIIS, 2022). The Zelenskyy government also closed four opposition TV news channels and after the start of the Russian invasion required all remaining TV news channels to broadcast the single television news marathon program.

Maidan: Mass Protest, Revolution, Coup, or Regime Change?

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

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

Videos, testimonies, admissions by some Maidan leaders, and other evidence show that the Maidan opposition leaders mobilized mass protests with help of staged violence. For instance, the violent dispersal of protesters on the Maidan on November 30 by the Berkut was known to the Maidan opposition leaders in advance, and the far-right Right Sector attacked the police during this dispersal. Similarly, the forensic examinations and videos revealed that the shooting of the first three protesters in the end of January 2014 was deliberately attributed by the Maidan opposition and the media to the police. Similarly, the Ukrainian government investigation found that kidnapping of Dmytro Bulatov was staged with his involvement. (Katchanovski, 2015b, 2020, 2021).

Polls show that Ukrainians were almost evenly split on the issue of support of the Maidan, in particular, there was strong regional divide between majority support in Western and Central Ukraine and opposition in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. The analysis of polls, videos, and photos show that protesters were primarily from Western Ukraine, and Kyiv City and other parts of Central Ukraine. (KIIS, 2013).

Similar evidence reveals that the far-right protesters were a minority among the Maidan protesters. Svoboda, the Right Sector, C14, Bratstvo and other far right organizations formed the alliance with the oligarchic Maidan parties. The term 'Revolution of Dignity' was invented by a deputy of the far-right Svoboda party. The "Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the Heroes" greeting, which was originally invented and used by the far right OUN along with a fascist hand salute, was used by the far right during the Maidan and adopted by the entire Maidan opposition. But the far-right organizations and activists had crucial role in violent attacks and clashes with the police and attempts to seize the presidential administration and the parliament. (Ishchenko, 2016, Katchanovski, 2020).

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

Analyses of synchronized videos and audio recording of the massacre, witness testimonies, admissions by Maidan snipers and activists in the media and social media, and Maidan massacre trials and investigations revealed various evidence that four killed and several dozen wounded policemen and at least the absolute majority of 49 killed and 157 wounded Maidan protesters were massacred on February 20, 2014 by snipers in Maidan-controlled buildings and areas in a false-flag operation organized and perpetrated with involvement of the elements of the Maidan oligarchic and far right opposition alliance.

Such evidence includes testimonies of the absolute majority of wounded protesters, several dozens of prosecution witnesses, dozens of defense witnesses, few hundred other witnesses, and 14 self-admitted members of Maidan snipers groups. Videos presented at the trial showed that times of shooting of the absolute majority of protesters did not coincide with times of shooting by the Berkut policemen, who were charged with their massacre. Forensic medical examinations determined that the overwhelming majority of the protesters were shot from steep directions from the sides or the back. Initial ballistic examinations did not match bullets extracted from the bodies of killed and wounded protesters to the Berkut Kalashnikovs. Forensic examinations of the bullet holes by the government experts for the Maidan massacre trial suggested that Berkut policemen were shooting in the Hotel Ukraina snipers above the Maidan protesters and in trees and poles. The analysis shows cover-up and stonewalling of the investigations and trials by the Maidan governments and the far right. The prosecution denied that there were any snipers in the Maidan-controlled buildings. Not a single person is convicted or under arrest for the massacre of the protesters and the police almost 9 years after one of the most documented mass killings in history. (See Katchanovski, 2015a, 2020, 2022).

Fourteen self-admitted members of Maidan sniper groups admitted in the media, social media, and the government investigation that the massacre of the protesters and/or police was perpetrated by Maidan snipers. For example, 7 Georgian self-admitted members of Maidan sniper groups in their testimonies for the Maidan massacre trial and investigation in Ukraine and their interviews in American, Italian and Israeli TV documentaries and Macedonian and Russian media stated that their and other groups of the Maidan snipers, including the far-right-linked group, received orders, weapons, and payments from specific members of the Maidan leadership and former Georgian government leaders and commanders to massacre both protesters and the

police in order to stop a peaceful agreement that was to be signed by Yanukovych and Maidan leaders. They testified that they saw snipers from Georgia, the Baltic States, and the far right-linked special armed Maidan company shooting from the Maidan-controlled buildings. The identities of the specific Georgians were confirmed by their Georgian passports, plane tickets, and Armenian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian official documents.[11]

At least 48 out of 72 wounded Maidan protesters, with whose shooting on February 20 Berkut policemen are charged and whose testimonies were revealed at the trial, testified at the trial, investigation, and the media that they were shot by snipers from Maidan-controlled buildings or areas, witnessed themselves snipers there, and/or were told by other Maidan protesters during the massacre about such snipers.[12] The prosecution did not charge anyone with wounding of 75 other Maidan protesters because it determined based on their testimonies and on-site investigative experiments that they were not shot from the Berkut police sectors. This suggests that they were shot from Maidan-controlled buildings and areas. (See Katchanovski, 2021).

A few hundred witnesses, primarily Maidan protesters, activists, and journalists, testified at the Maidan massacre trial, the investigation, the media, the social media, about snipers in Maidan-controlled buildings and areas, in particular, about their shooting Maidan protesters, their capture by Maidan protesters and subsequent release by the Maidan leaders. A member of the Maidan leadership and four top Maidan activists stated publicly that Maidan leaders and leaders of the Right Sector and C14 neo-Nazi affiliate of Svoboda knew in advance about the Maidan massacre. (Katchanovski, 2021).

The Maidan massacre trial and investigation revealed that government ballistic experts in dozens of onsite investigative experiments determined that Maidan protesters were killed and

wounded from the Maidan-controlled buildings. The prosecution did not conduct or did not

reveal such investigative experiments by ballistic experts in the absolute majority of cases. (See

Katchanovski, 2021). After a forensic expert during the first of such on-site investigative

experiments, which were ordered by the Maidan massacre trial to determine if the Maidan

protesters were shot from the Maidan-controlled buildings, pointed to the Maidan-controlled

Hotel Ukraina as the location of the shooter, the prosecution blocked such investigative

experiments by ballistic and medical forensic experts.

Synchronized videos and photos show Maidan groups of snipers in the Maidan-controlled

buildings and areas during the massacre, in particular, shooting at the police and the Maidan

protesters. Videos show more than 80 eyewitnesses, primarily Maidan protesters and journalists,

pointing during the massacre to snipers in the Maidan-controlled buildings.[13] Synchronized

videos show that specific times and directions of shooting by the Berkut police did not coincide

with specific times and directions of shooting of specific protesters.[14] (Katchanovski, 2021).

The commander of the far-right-linked group of the Maidan snipers right after the

massacre issued an ultimatum for Yanukovych from the Maidan stage to resign by the next

morning and threatened the use of force if he would not resign. The head of the Maidan Self-

Defense said that his ultimatum was a decision made by "the institutional bodies of the Maidan"

and it was adopted by a military council set up by the Maidan Self-Defense and the far-right

Right Sector.[15] (Katchanovski, 2020).

The Yanukovych treason trial revealed various witness testimonies and other evidence

that he fled from Kyiv and then Ukraine not because of his responsibility for the Maidan

massacre but because of a number of assassinations attempts by the Maidan forces, in particular

the far right, and after their attempts to capture him and his residence near Kyiv and likely execute him. (Katchanovski, 2020).

The parliament voted to remove Yanukovych from the position of the president of Ukraine. But the decision violated the Ukrainian constitution and the vote lacked constitutional majority and many deputies from the Yanukovych Party of Regions and the Communist Party voted under threat of violence, in particular, by the far right. For example, the commander of the far-right-linked group of the Maidan snipers admitted that his group forced certain members of the parliament to participate in the votes to dismiss Yanukovych and his government and to elect the Maidan leaders in their place.[16]

Witnesses testified at this trial that right after the Maidan massacre the presidential motorcade was shot at a checkpoint, which was manned by activists with Right Sector and Svoboda flags and that the bullets hit one of the cars and a gun of one of the Yanukovych bodyguards. Helicopter pilots, who flew Yanukovych in Ukraine after the massacre, testified that the air traffic controllers relayed them an order from Maidan leaders to land the helicopter with Yanukovych under threat of its shot-down by military planes. The witness testimonies also referred to information received by his security personnel about a plan involving Svoboda activists to assassinate him during a congress in Kharkiv where he flew after the Maidan massacre, and then on the road near Melitopol.[17] (See Katchanovski, 2020).

Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of Ukraine, revealed that he received information about a plot to assassinate Yanukovych around the time of the Maidan massacre. He stated that this plan was called "Ceausescu" after the last name of the last communist leader of Romania, who was assassinated by soldiers soon after snipers massacred the anti-government protesters in a false-flag operation.[18] The former Romanian president, prime-minister, and a number of other

leaders of the "Romanian revolution" were charged by the Romanian prosecutors in 2018 and 2019 with crimes against humanity for using deliberate disinformation and diversion right after they seized power in 1989 to provoke false flag mass killings. [19]

There is also various evidence of the US-led regime change during the Maidan in Ukraine. An intercepted telephone call between a US State Department official and the US ambassador in Ukraine prior to February 20, 2014 shows them discussing which specific Maidan opposition leaders, specifically Arseniy Yatseniuk, can be in the Ukrainian government after Yanukovych offered the positions in his government to the opposition leaders.[20]

US President Barack Obama stated that "we had brokered a deal to transition power in Ukraine" after the massacre and before Yanukovych fled, but the US president or other American government officials did not release any specific information about the nature of this involvement.[21] Yanukovych and Putin stated that right after the Maidan massacre there was an agreement with Obama but that the US president broken it. The Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov suggested that Obama pushed for signing a deal between Yanukovych and the Maidan leaders but that the Maidan opposition broke the deal and seized the power the next day.[22] The deal signed on February 21, 2014 stipulated that the Yanukovych government would not use force against the Maidan and that the Maidan forces would disarm,

Then US Vice-President Biden revealed in his memoirs that during the Maidan massacre he called Yanukovych and told him that "it was over; time for him to call off his gunmen and walk away" and "he shouldn't expect his Russian friends to rescue him from this disaster," that "Yanukovych had lost the confidence of the Ukrainian people, I said, and he was going to be judged harshly by history if he kept killing them." Biden wrote that "the disgraced president fled Ukraine the next day — owing to the courage and determination of the demonstrators — and

control of the government ended up temporarily in the hands of a young patriot named Arseniy Yatsenyuk." The US vice president also revealed that he "had been warning him for months to exercise restraint in dealing with his citizens."[23]

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

There is no publicly available evidence of the direct involvement of the US or other Western governments and forces in the Maidan massacre. But these governments de facto backed the overthrow of the Ukrainian government in spite of evidence that this overthrow was

perpetrated by the elements of the Maidan oligarchic and far-right opposition by means of the false flag mass killing of the Maidan protesters and assassination attempts against Yanukovych.

Ukraine becoming a US client state right after the Maidan is indirect evidence of the US-led regime change. Pro-Maidan and pro-Western Ukrainian media reported that then US Vice President Joe Biden requested to put Arsenii Yatseniuk, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, and foreigners in the Ukrainian government. (Dzerkalo, 2015). Yatseniuk became the prime-minister, Nalyvaichenko the head of the Security Service of Ukraine, and the former president of Georgia and his former Georgian government officials occupied various positions in the Ukrainian state.Ukrainian media reports and tapes of phone calls between then US Vice President Joe Biden and President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko revealed that he had say in Poroshenko's decision to dismiss Yatseniuk as prime-minister and in appointing his successor. The tapes, Ukrainian media reports, and public admission by Biden showed that he was involved in dismissal of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and approval of his successor's appointment.[24]

The Ukrainian media, Ukrainian and US officials, and a declassified transcript of a meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine also revealed that the US and other Western governments told the Maidan government leaders not to use military force during the Russian annexation of Crimea in order to avoid a war with Russia.[25] The nearly perfect alignment of the Ukrainian and US government policies after the Maidan is also consistent with Ukraine becoming a US client state and remaining during the Russia-Ukraine war.

Then a member of the Ukrainian parliament from the Poroshenko's ruling party and the current adviser to President of Ukraine Zelenskyy stated in 2015 that "Pyatt and the U.S. administration have more influence than ever in the history of independent Ukraine."[26] A rare report in the US media noted that "Americans are highly visible in the Ukrainian political

process. The U.S. embassy in Kiev is a center of power, and Ukrainian politicians openly talk of appointments and dismissals being vetted by U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and even U.S. Vice President Joe Biden."[27] The declassified transcript of the Trump and Zelenskyy phone call shows the same client-patron relationship between Ukraine and the US.[28]

Conclusion

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is a war since the number of combat casualties far exceeds the 1,000 casualties threshold, which is typically used by scholars to define a war. The war combines elements of interstate war between Russia and Ukraine, a proxy war between the West and Russia, and a civil war in Ukraine. Interstate war between Russia and Ukraine and the proxy war between the West/NATO and Russia since the Russian invasion in 2022 are more dominant than a civil war, which continues since 2014.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is illegal under international law. It cannot be classified as a preventive war because security threats, such as NATO membership of Ukraine or Ukraine developing nuclear weapons, were not imminent and were inflated or misrepresented by the Russian government.

There is no evidence of the Ukrainian genocide of ethnic Russians in separatist-controlled Donbas and the Russian genocide of Ukrainians in Ukraine. But there is various evidence of war crimes by individual soldiers or units, primarily from the Russian forces. Similarly, various evidence suggests that the absolute majority of civilian casualties resulted from indiscriminate shelling or bombing, overwhelmingly by the Russian forces, typically, in populated areas that were often used for military purposes, primarily by the Ukrainian forces.

The analysis shows that the Maidan combined elements of mass protest, political revolution, coup, and US-led regime change. The last two were dominant in political transition. The Yanukovych government was overthrown not by peaceful mass protests but by means of the false-flag Maidan massacre of the Maidan protesters and the police and assassination attempts. There is overwhelming evidence that the massacre and assassination attempts were perpetrated with covert involvement of small number of the Maidan oligarchic leadership and the far-right members. Various evidence shows that the US government was involved in the political transition in Ukraine during the Maidan in order to replace the pro-Russian government with the pro-Western government and turn Ukraine into a client state in order to use it to contain Russia.

The violent overthrow of the Ukrainian government with de facto US involvement does not justify the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Conversely, the Russian invasion does not justify the Western-backed violent overthrow of the Ukrainian government during the Maidan in 2014. However, these two political events are closely related because the Western-backed illegal and undemocratic violent overthrow of the Ukrainian government during the Maidan led to the conflicts between Ukraine and Russia and the West and Russia and to civil war in Donbas. Russia drastically escalated these conflicts in February 2022 by launching the illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The Russia-Ukraine war already resulted in the second largest casualties of a war in Europe since World War Two. It exceeded casualties of the civil war and Russian military interventions in Donbas and other wars in Europe, with the exception of the civil war in Bosnia in the first half of the 1990s. Based on confirmed casualties, during the first 6 months of the war, there were at least 15-20 thousand Ukrainian forces members killed, between 6 and 12 thousand Russian forces members killed, and circa 5 thousand Donbas separatist forces members killed.

There numbers of wounded were 3 to 4 times higher. Based on civilian casualties documented by the UN, estimated 8-10 thousand civilians were killed in Ukraine during the first 6 months of the war.

Many claims promoted by the Russian, separatist, Ukrainian, and Western governments and the media are not supported by evidence. This includes claims that there have been Ukrainian genocide in Donbas, the Russian genocide in Ukraine, the neo-Nazi regime in Ukraine, and false-flag killings or attacks in Bucha, Mariupol, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear station, and separatist-controlled Donbas. The Maidan was also misrepresented to various extent by the governments and most of the media in Ukraine, the West, Russia, and separatist Donbas. This includes narratives by the Ukrainian and Western governments and, with some exceptions, the media that the Maidan massacre was perpetrated by the Yanukovych government and its forces and narratives by the Russian and Donbas separatist governments and the media. Truth became the important casualty of the Russia-Ukraine war and the violent Maidan conflict.

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