

NATO Coup in Ukraine. “Wag the Dog” Military Deployment in a Crucial Geopolitical Pivot?

By [Chris Macavel](#)

Global Research, March 07, 2014

Region: [Europe, Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Global headlines are now dominated with news emanating from the recent Western-backed coup d'état in Ukraine. Western leaders and mainstream media have predictably attempted to lend credibility to this recent seizure of power by Orange Revolution' retreads and their extremist right-wing allies, framing it as a popular desire to shift away from an overbearing Russia. It has been celebrated as yet another auspicious development towards 'democracy' and integration with the EU. But as this new leadership begins to reshape Ukraine from Kiev, the geopolitical landscape does as well with potentially dangerous ramifications. This new regime, coming into being through unconstitutional methods — by fiat of the new rump parliament alone backed by legions of violent right-wing rioters — most notably bears an animus towards Russia, and herein lies the chief danger for the world.

At the heart of the crisis lie an omnipresent Western ambition for the expansion of their strategic 'bridgehead' into the Eurasian supercontinent — this time in the very “soft underbelly” of Russia. Their desired outcome in Ukraine is the replacement of the Yanukovich regime — notwithstanding its inherent problems with rampant oligarchism, still one that was democratically elected — with a regime subservient to the EU, NATO, and that will enact the brutal austerity dictates of the International Monetary Fund. Towards this end, they exploited legitimate grievances of the people through the use of their patent 'Color Revolution' methods (recently updated during the so-called 'Arab Spring') to subvert the existing government. To supplement these efforts, the most violent right-wing elements in Ukraine were employed as shock troops to impose the new regime. This tendency to incorporate extremist elements in their efforts, strongly redolent of recent Western backed efforts in the MENA region, represents the devolution of the 'Color Revolution' template into a more violent and radical model.

The Danger of the New Regime

In the present Obama foreign policy epoch the chief geopolitical gambit is buck-passing or 'leading from behind.' This entails outsourcing geopolitical initiatives to allies — with them trumpeting at the forefront — while Washington discreetly provides military or logistical assistance.

To smash the Libyan state the US allowed France and Britain to appear to be leading the initiative, while the bulk of logistical work on the ground as well as NATO bombing was performed by the US; in Syria the US encouraged Turkey to be at the forefront of operations to smash the Syrian state; Poland assisted the subversion of the Ukrainian state in question. In the present context — where a new right wing regime bearing anti-Russian animus has come to power — the temptation to direct their criminal mob energy towards foreign policy

adventurism against neighboring Russia or Belarus is great. The danger here twofold: the aforementioned US tendency for buck-passing as well as the temptation for a “Wag the Dog” type military adventure to overshadow the downward economic stresses the new regime will inevitably face.

This is particularly exacerbated by the economic situation of Ukraine, which is dire, and will continue to deteriorate after the new regime begins to implement ineluctable Western demands for austerity. In other words, the combined hatred for Russia, US ‘lead-from-behind’ strategy, and a ‘Wag the Dog’ temptation sets the world on a course towards perilous confrontation.

Ukraine: Crucial ‘Geopolitical Pivot’

In the geopolitical calculus of both Russia and the NATO bloc, Ukraine is of crucial importance. Its interest to the West and to Russia entails a willingness to engage on the ‘Grand Chessboard’ of Eurasian geopolitics for influence or control over it.

For the West led by the US, influence over Ukraine is an opportunity to cut Russia out of European affairs and to bolster its continual push East through the expansion of NATO. This is seen, with good reason, by Moscow as an unabated drive towards encirclement. For Russia, Ukraine represents, inter alia, a potentially sensitive position from which it is vulnerable militarily; it is a cornerstone of viable Russian security in Europe.

According to Zbigniew Brzezinski — US foreign policy guru who founded the elite Trilateral Commission along with David Rockefeller, as well as reputed teacher of Obama at Columbia University — Ukraine can be classified as a ‘geopolitical pivot.’ That is a state “whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behavior of geopolitical players.” For Brzezinski, a Ukraine severed from Russia consequently severs Russia from Europe, albeit in his terms in its “imperial status” as a Eurasian power. Severed from Ukraine, Russia would be reoriented towards Asia, which sets it on a collision course with an emerging China (an ideal scenario for Washington with its wont for buck-passing):

Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian Chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to to be a Eurasian empire. Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state, more likely to be drawn into debilitating conflicts with aroused Central Asians ... China would also be likely to oppose any restoration of Russian domination over Central Asia...

For Russia, militarily, control of its eastern frontier has perennially poised a potential quagmire: it has been the point from which armies have invaded to push into the Russian heartland particularly for topographic reasons. Thus, for Stalin negotiating with the Allies at Yalta, the question of Poland was “one of life and death.” “Throughout history,” he cautioned, “Poland has been the corridor for attack on Russia.” With Poland today already an integral part of NATO, Ukraine, with even greater proximity to the Russian heartland doubtless presents an even greater worry. Indeed, the geopolitical analysis group Stratfor aptly characterizes Ukraine as the “soft underbelly of Russia.” “Ukraine is as important to Russian national security as Scotland is to England or Texas is to the United States. In the hands of an enemy, these places would pose an existential threat to all three countries.

Therefore, rumors to the contrary, neither Scotland nor Texas is going anywhere. Nor is Ukraine, if Russia has anything to do with it.”

Topographically, a potential attack on Russia can be greatly reduced if Ukraine is in the Russian orbit; conversely, it can be augmented if controlled by a Western power:

Dominated by Russia, Ukraine anchors Russian power in the Carpathian [mountains]...If Ukraine is under the influence or control of a Western power, Russia’s (and Belarus’s) southern flank is wide open along an arc running from the Polish border east almost to Volgograd then south to the Sea of Azov, a distance of more than 1,000 miles, more than 700 of which lie along Russia proper. There are few natural barriers.

Thus, a Russia bereft of Ukraine loses the crucial security safeguard of the Carpathians. The road to Moscow is one step closer through subverting the government in Kiev.

The continuing systematic Western military buildup surrounding Russia has doubtless already increased Russian anxiety in the present context. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union — and the emergence of the unipolar world order — the US led West has steadily marched towards post-Soviet Russia, extending NATO menacingly all the way to its borders. In addition to official NATO membership the US has established a military outpost in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, leading to the Russo-Georgian war of 2008. This expansionist march of NATO is viewed by Russia as a betrayal of agreements it was given that such NATO growth would not occur.

Additionally, the ongoing provocative military ‘defensive’ shield installations in Poland and Romania — ostensibly to protect the West from Iran, which neither has nuclear weapons or missiles with which to deliver them with — has been a point of tremendous concern. (A more rational location to place such installations, if we are to accept NATO’s motives at face value, would have been near NATO member Turkey.) To Moscow, this represents an existential threat to the critical Russian nuclear deterrent, a centerpiece of its military defensive strategy for decades. This fundamental reality informs the Russian stance when Nikolai Makarov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, threatened Russia would preemptively destroy such NATO military installations in the event of a crisis.

The current reshaping of Ukraine represents — yet again — a potential extension (de facto or officially) of NATO, part of its continual march east. Not least among concerns, a Ukraine in the NATO orbit leaves its “soft underbelly” accessible to the bloc. Far from the partisan portrayals of Western media concerning the EU’s association agreement — which it largely terms as a benign “civilizational” proposal to usher prosperity and to shift away from the Kremlin’s overbearing embrace — there is, in fact, a military component. As Russian expert Stephen Cohen, professor emeritus of Russian studies at NYU and Princeton, points out the “proposal, for example, includes ‘security policy’ provisions, almost never reported, that would apparently subordinate Ukraine to NATO.” Ukraine would, in effect, have to abide by NATO military policies to the dismay of Moscow. Revealingly, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared the prospective agreement with Ukraine would have been “a major boost to Euro-Atlantic security.”

Ukraine in the NATO orbit would also potentially deprive Russia of its critical naval port and military presence in the Crimean peninsula. This would cut Russia off from access to the Black Sea and therefore the Mediterranean Sea. That Russia has a robust naval presence with access to the Mediterranean means the sea cannot become exclusively the province of

NATO. This fundamental reality also frustrates NATO's continuing efforts to unseat Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Energy exports are also a centerpiece of Russian foreign policy. Being excluded from the Mediterranean would also hamper this policy. Moreover, Moscow has watched as NATO has in recent times been very active on the world scene participating in ruthless military actions in Libya as well as aiding in the attempted smashing of the Syria state in the ongoing civil war. Western elites are seen increasingly as more unstable and willing to participate in wild military adventurism. These plethora of considerations weigh heavily on Moscow's calculations, as they rationally inveigh against persistent and intensifying Western encroachment. In this fraught and tense scene of European and Eurasian affairs Ukraine is the 'geopolitical pivot' par excellence.

NATO 'Color Revolution' Methodology

The recent unrest in Ukraine represents one more episode in an ongoing campaign of "Color Revolutions" by the NATO bloc to unseat recalcitrant leaders (those who do not conform to NATO bloc dictates) under the cloak of "democracy promotion." The unrest in Ukraine conforms to a very familiar script: pro-democracy protestors are being repressed by an autocratic state, in this case, refusing to accede to their demands for EU integration against Western interests. As observed by the Voltaire Network:

For over a decade now, the American public has been led to believe that successive waves of "people power" have risen up to overthrow oppressive rulers across Eurasia and the Middle East, all of whom just happened to contradict US interests. None of this was accidental; from Belgrade and Tbilisi to Minsk and Kishinev, the CIA and State Department have carried out plausible-deniability regime-change operations with varying degrees of success.

Ukraine is no stranger to the "Color Revolution." In 2004 it was part of a wave of such "Color Revolutions" supported by Washington and the NATO bloc. This was the discredited "Orange Revolution" which installed Victor Yushenko and oligarch Yulia Tymochenka. The method, now a template, functions through US created and sponsored political action groups — euphemistically termed NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) — chiefly, the NED (National Endowment for Democracy). These groups encourage and foster neoliberal self-described 'revolutionaries' who are ostensibly committed to 'democracy.' In reality, these groups typically offer a political program which centers on the deposition of an existing leader or the subversion of an existing regime.

The 'Color Revolution' as originally applied to Ukraine in 2004 was usefully described by Ian Traynor of the London Guardian:

With their websites and stickers, their pranks and slogans aimed at banishing widespread fear of a corrupt regime, the democracy guerrillas of the Ukrainian Pora youth movement have already notched up a famous victory - whatever the outcome of the dangerous stand-off in Kiev.

[T]he campaign is an American creation, a sophisticated and brilliantly conceived exercise in western branding and mass marketing that, in four countries in four years, has been used to try to salvage rigged elections and topple unsavory regimes.

Funded and organized by the US government, deploying US consultancies, pollsters, diplomats, the two big American parties and US non-government organizations, the campaign was first used in Europe in Belgrade in 2000 to beat Slobodan Milosevic at the ballot box.

Richard Miles, the US ambassador in Belgrade, played a key role. And by last year, as US ambassador in Tbilisi, he repeated the trick in Georgia, coaching Mikhail Saakashvili in how to bring down Eduard Shevardnadze. Ten months after the success in Belgrade, the US ambassador in Minsk, Michael Kozak, a veteran of similar operations in central America, notably in Nicaragua, organized a near identical campaign to try to defeat the Belarus hardman, Alexander Lukashenko.

The operation - engineering democracy through the ballot box and civil disobedience - is now so slick that the methods have matured into a template for winning other people's elections.

Washington has brought the model of the 'Color Revolution' to the very doorstep of Russia once again. This time, however, the dynamics at play have been dramatically altered in the wake of the massive destabilization of the MENA region known as the 'Arab Spring.' The hackneyed 'Color Revolution' model of Western intelligence and the State Department has been updated; in some ways more trite, in others more destructive and explosive. Events have demonstrated that a failure of 'civilian based power' initiative to seize power can quickly degenerate into a violent struggle for power with NATO willing to support its side with ruthless military force. In the international landscape after UNSC Resolution 1973 against Libya (itself of dubious legality) a Western-backed 'Color Revolution' can rapidly turn into a ruthless bombing campaign. Alternatively, a Syrian scenario — whereby NATO and GCC intelligence massively arm and train extremists to foment civil war and overthrow the state — is equally feasible, with NATO having no aversion to employing extremists for regime change. The threat that the new NATO-backed regime in Kiev may engage military adventurism against Russia of Belarus remains as well.

The recent US history of meddling in Ukraine is unequivocal; nevertheless, Washington's strategy in the near term — conforming to the Obama regime's 'leading-from-behind' strategy — is to remain bashful about its ongoing subversive activities. From the US perspective, unwanted attention on its activities discredits the potential vassals it wants in place. This attitude for Washington's recent wave of regime change was recently summed up by Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor for the Obama regime, who according to The New York Times plays a role more prominent than his official title:

These democratic movements will be more sustainable if they are seen as not an extension of America or any other country, but coming from within these societies," said Benjamin J. Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser. "For the longer term, it is better to let the people within the country be the strongest voice while also ensuring that at the appropriate times you are weighing in publicly and privately.

This "weighing in" privately by the world's foremost power is the crucial aspect of the multitude of movements sponsored by Washington to unseat leaders, while its public face lends diplomatic cover and legitimacy. Recently however, Washington received unwanted exposure to its activities, thanks in part to Russia. In a leaked recording, the US's top diplomat for Europe, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Victoria Nuland

and the ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt were exposed as plotting to effect a coup to oust the democratically elected leader of Ukraine. The Washington Post, house organ of US government foreign policy apparatchiks, had to concede that Nuland and Pyatt were “laying bare a deep degree of US involvement in affairs that Washington officially says are Ukraine’s to resolve.”

The recording also shows the US diplomats indicating which opposition figures should and should not be included in a new Ukrainian regime. The revelatory recording also shows a certain intimacy with these opposition figures. It shows that in contrast to the US rhetorical posture of supporting another spontaneous ‘democracy’ movement, it is active in seeing the Ukrainian crisis end in their favor. Indeed, in a triumphant and lofty speech, preceded by three visits in a five week span, Nuland delineated how in the past two decades the US has spent \$5 billion dollars to subvert Ukraine and sever it away from its historic relationship with Russia. This imperialism is on the cheap in comparison to the Bush II regime, which was notable for its costly use of overt military force and posturing.

NATO’s Right-Wing Extremists in Ukraine



The recent coup in Ukraine arrives with the backdrop of recent NATO sponsored efforts to smash existing states across MENA. What these destabilization demonstrated was a willingness of the Western powers to engage with and use otherwise unpalatable extremists groups to produce desired results. In Libya, Egypt, and Syria this took the form of a willingness to engage with political Islamists and their radical Islamic extremist allies, groups whose erstwhile depiction in the West has been highly unfavorable, due to their proclivity for sectarianism and terrorism. In Ukraine this has taken the form of Western blanket support for extreme right-wing and quasi-fascist groups within the opposition; these groups have steadfastly remained at the forefront of the effort to unseat Yanukovich. This usage of extremists is departure from earlier “Color Revolution” models which mainly employed young well-meaning neoliberal democracy activists — the golden youth. These extremist groups — still hailed as “protestors” in Western parlance — were responsible for the explosion of violence and tumult which overtook the Maidan in Kiev and which gradually increased as they gained in confidence and resolve. Their proclivity for violence has roots in Nazism and can be classified as neo-Nazi.

Their overall militant formation is called “Right Sector.” It is an umbrella organization for a catalogue of right-wing ultra-nationalist groups. It includes “Svoboda” (Freedom) Party, “Patriots of Ukraine,” “Ukrainian National Assembly,” and “Trizub.” The common denominator for these groups is an ideology that is anti-immigrant, anti-Jewish, and virulently Russophobic while promoting the idea of “one” “pure” Ukrainian nation.

The most prominent and politically successful group is the All-Ukrainian Union Svoboda party led by Oleh Tyahnybok. In the 2012 parliamentary elections the party secured secured 10.45% of the vote. Svoboda is currently Ukraine’s fourth biggest party and holds 36 seats in parliament. Its origins, like that of its allies, lie in the National Socialist Party of Ukraine. When the party was registered in 1995 it used the a swastika-style “wolfsangel” rune as its logo and restricted membership exclusively to ethnic Ukrainians. Like its Right Sector comrades, it promotes the anti-Jewish National Socialist ideology, including advocating the denaturalization of Jewish Ukrainians. According to its leader Tyahnybok, Ukraine is being run by a “Muscovite-Jewish mafia.” Unsurprisingly, the World Jewish Congress called for

Svoboda to be banned for its hardline anti-Jewish positions. The group frequently appears on academic studies of Neo-Nazism in Europe. A Tel Aviv University report from 1999 termed the group as “an extremist, right-wing, nationalist organization which emphasizes its identification with the ideology of German National Socialism.”

Their tradition is one that composed an entire Waffen-SS division. Tellingly, these groups all have a common reverence for the leader of that division, the infamous Ukrainian Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera. He was the leader of the “Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists,” a group which fought against the Soviet Union and committed some of the worst atrocities of World War II. Hailing primarily from Galicia in Ukraine’s Western extremities (previously under Polish and Austro-Hungarian rule and generally Catholic) Ukraine’s neo-Nazi groups view themselves as continuing their ancestors legacies to liberate themselves from the yoke of an Orthodox-centered Muscovite civilization.

In the timeline of events, the protests against Yanukovych’s EU Association rejection — christened Euromaidan by and Eurorevolution by Radio Free Europe of the State Department — however misguided, began relatively peaceful. The violence escalated when extremists groups resolved to seize the initiative, and force the president out of office, by any means necessary. The movement at first was redolent of the discredited Orange Revolution. But then on 1 January 2014 the dynamics in the street changed when Svoboda organized a march of 15, 000 in a torch-lit memory to Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian nationalist Nazi collaborator that fought against the Soviets. Since this watershed event violence became more wide-spread and in mid-January rioters armed with clubs, helmets, and Molotov cocktails began to unleash brutality to kill police and those with suspected pro-government sympathies.

On January 24 Britain’s Channel 4 reported that the far-right extremists were “at the core of ‘democracy’ protests.” It reported that Svoboda was assuming a leading role in the movement with its splinter paramilitary wing leading in street fighting. When the group seized city hall they displayed a white power logo in the center of the stage along with the Svoboda party flags. According to Channel 4, “ Svoboda flags have been a permanent fixture in Independence Square, with pictures from clashes also revealing the presence of militant far-right groups carrying neo-Nazi flags and the red and black Ukrainian ‘insurgent army’ flags.”

Sergey Kirichuk, member of the group Borotba, which publishes an anti-fascist magazine in Ukraine, lamented how Svoboda and Right Sector were dominating ideologically in the Maidan. “When left-wing groups tried to join the protests they were attacked and beaten by fascists. Svoboda are leading ideologically now. Fascism is like a fashion now, with more and more people getting involved,” he related. Apparently, fascism is also in fashion for Western leaders.



The West, for its part, rather than castigating or blackballing these groups for their ultra-nationalist extremist positions and acts of violence, (as one should expect) they have enthusiastically supported their cause. In fact, neocon US senator John McCain travelled to Ukraine in December to support and egg on the opposition. He appeared on stage with leaders of the three opposition parties. This included appearing on stage with the far-right party Svoboda and its leader Tyanybok (right image), infamous for his extremist positions. Victoria Nuland, the top US diplomat for Europe who was recorded as facilitating the coup,

also made an appearance to egg on the opposition. She handed out cookies. Their extremism, by no means, precludes Western backing.

As Neil Clark, writing for RT posits:

The reality is that you can be as ultranationalist, as Neo-Nazi, as racist and as homophobic as you like – so long as you are opposing a government that the western elites want toppled. The extremism of Ukrainian far-right groups is therefore swept under the carpet, because such groups want Ukraine to sever its links with Russia. Yes, they're fascists, homophobes and racists, but they're "our kind" of fascists, homophobes and racists i.e. anti-Russian ones. But in other European countries – e.g. Hungary – ultranationalist groups are condemned, because their interests are not in line with western elite interests.

Indeed, support a government the NATO bloc wants eliminated and gain impunity.

Yanukovych the Appeaser

Almost from start to end the approach to the crisis taken by the Ukrainian president Yanukovych was that of appeasement and compromise. As he continued to attempt to appease the opposition, they esalted their demands and efforts to unseat him. The opposition's street fighting groups in Right Sector and their allies gradually intensified the level of violence against state institutions and police. It went from rocks, clubs, and throwing Molotov cocktails at policemen to firearms. Far from the violence being one-sided, many policemen lost their lives.

Following the hue and cry from the opposition mob on the streets Yanukovych dismissed the Prime Minister, Azarov, reputed to be pro-Russian, in an impotent attempt at appeasement. Consequently, the opposition escalated their efforts. Following this, in a further attempt to appease the opposition, he offered a national unity government, a coalition government that would share power with the opposition. In negotiations with moderate leaders such as Vitaly Klitschko, leader of the Udar ("Punch") Party, he offered them both the prime ministership and deputy prime ministership, a colossal concession. The opposition seeking approval from the Kiev street, firmly in control of right-wing forces, rejected this offer; they instead escalated their efforts.

Furthermore, perhaps the most significant development for the balance-of-power, he enacted an amnesty for the rioters for acts they committed during the tumult. This released many of the rioters who had been arrested restrengthening their ranks.

As the situation escalated, the rioters seized government administrative buildings, and in Lviv near Ukraine's Western extremity, they seized armories and even military installations. Simultaneously, Western leaders and media remained steadfast in their attempts to lend legitimacy to the groups. In short, Yanukovych tolerated the intolerable, what no European or North American country would. For example, attacks by rioters with clubs or Molotov cocktails or the seizure administrative buildings and armories would doubtless be met with lethal force in any American city. Nonetheless, for President Obama, "We have been watching very carefully and we expect the Ukrainian government to show restraint, to not resort to violence in dealing with peaceful protesters."

This lack of response by the Yanukovych was not missed by some state officials. A group of

military officials called for more decisive action to restore order. A statement on the ministry of defense website said that during a meeting of military officials it was deemed that the “violent seizure of state institutions and interference with representatives of of state and local governments to carry out their duties” was “unacceptable.” They urged President Yanukovich “as permitted by law to take immediate measures to stabilize the situation and achieve harmony in society.” No such actions by Yanukovich were forthcoming and guns became a more prominent feature of Right Sector militants. The Financial Times had to concede, “Some demonstrators wearing camouflage clothing, military helmets and bullet proof vests responded with what appeared to be hand guns.” It also wrote “Right Sector, one of the most militarized protest groups, urged citizens with guns to join the encampment.” German news channel N24 reported that the “radicals of Right Sector have hijacked the protest movement.” It noted that the group consists of “supporters of ultra right-wing organizations across the country,” adding, “With their faces hidden behind masks or helmets, they attack the police in Kiev with batons and iron bars.”

In his final act of appeasement he entered negotiations with opposition figures and secured a “truce” and a pact brokered and signed by the foreign ministers of France, Germany, and Poland. The deal gave more sweeping concessions: a return to the 2004 constitution which would strip the president of many powers and call for early elections. The deal was never upheld, the opposition in street continued their push and drove him out. The foreign ministers who brokered the deal did not make a peep about how the opposition had not upheld their end of the deal. Instead, they continued to work on facilitating the opposition’s seizure of power, to the consternation of Russia.

An Illegal Government in Kiev

When Yanukovich was finally toppled and forced to flee it was by mob rule, the technical term “ochlocracy.” Through unconstitutional methods a new regime seized power. The violent mob — spearheaded by Right Sector — was allowed to take control of the situation by virtue of Yanukovich’s fecklessness. Instead of reestablishing law and order — which was his duty as the president — he allowed violent rioters to overtake central Kiev. Subsequently, a rump parliament took shape — including Yanukovich’s betrayers and those fearful of violent rioters who seized control of the city — to rubber stamp the dictates of the opposition parties. Unconstitutionally, it arrogated powers it did not have.

Yanukovich’s grip on power was swiftly ended after the riot police, the Berkut, pulled out. Their departure was likely an outcome of Yanukovich’s own tepid support for them in addition to the influx of firearms into the fray. On February 20th, The New York Times reported, as the protesters made their final drive for control that “both protesters and riot police officers used firearms in the deadliest day so far.” Additionally, a few dozen policemen were captured and ignominiously paraded around the city “dazed and bloody, toward the center of the square through a crowd of men who heckled and shoved them.” In any case, this watershed event of the police withdrawal sealed his fate. As the Times reported, “Several street fighters...said that they saw police officers walking away from their positions, and that this emboldened them. Some protesters fired hunting rifles and shotguns. Police lines crumpled.” With no forces left to defend the presidential palace and the parliament, where the rioters had been making inroads to overtake, the president was forced to flee. The protestors now effectively seized control of the situation in the city.

The violent protestors, many with guns, were now in control of the city. Buttressed by their mob fury, they surrounded the parliament building and assaulted MPs from Yanukovich’s

Party of Regions in front of the parliament. Pictures in Reuters showed a deputy of Yanukovich's party of regions being assaulted by the Kiev mob. They also showed the protestors standing guard menacingly outside of the parliament building. With a horde of violent rioters bearing animus against them outside of the parliament building, many of Yanukovich's Party of Regions members fled as well fearing for their lives. Many Yanukovich allies including the Chairman of the Rada Volodymyr Rybak faced death threats and were forced to resign. The fact that firearms had increasingly been more prominent in the fray made their situation more precarious.



From this point onward the parliament was, in effect, a rump parliament. With any potential dissent coming from Yanukovich's Party of Regions effectively neutralized, the opposition was able to ram through any measures it deemed necessary. Indeed, a testament to this fact, the Times reported that on a key vote after his departure "at least 106 lawmakers [were] absent, most of them members of Mr. Yanukovich's Party of Regions, which had controlled Parliament until its leaders fled on Saturday and then were dismissed from their posts in similarly lopsided votes."

Natalia Varenko of the Ukrainian Socialist party offered an incisive assessment of the situation. The unfolding events, including the new rump Rada's decision to impeach Yanukovich and pardon criminals, were unconstitutional:

On February 22, militants and terrorists of the Euromaidan Parliament [i.e. the Kiev fascist mob] executed a neo-Nazi coup using armed force. Violating all norms of the Constitution, international law, and trampling European values, Parliament exceeded its authority and committed criminal acts.

Washington and Brussels — who told the world and all mankind that Euromaidan is a nonviolent action of the Ukrainian people, to make a European choice and protect democracy and European values — should now honestly admit that the Ukrainian people got nothing. They used a Nazi coup, carried out by the insurgents, terrorists and politicians of Euromaidan to serve the geopolitical interests of the West.

1) The change of government happened in an unconstitutional way. This violated the European rule of law. In violation of the XIIIth section of the Constitution (which describes in detail the procedure for changing the Constitution), without the participation of the Constitutional Court, the state system of our country has been changed by the Supreme Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine;

2) Going beyond the powers of the Parliament of Ukraine, violating article 19 of the Constitution, Parliament appointed overseers over the Ministry of the Interior, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the Prosecutor General's Office. These supervisors are installed with the aim of exerting the political violence of Euromaidan over the constitutional institutions of the state to promote the interests of the West in an unconstitutional way

3) Ukrainian President Yanukovich (whom our party has opposed as we have made clear for the last four years) was deprived of his constitutional powers in gross violation of the Constitution. The Constitution does not provide for a right of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine to deprive the president of power in the way this has just been done.

The Constitution provides a detailed impeachment procedure which is specified in writing. But again, not guided by the rule of law, but rather by alleged revolutionary expediency, while flouting the European principle of the presumption of innocence, Yanukovich was removed from office and a new president was appointed in violation of the Constitution;

4) The Parliament, eager to defend the militants and terrorists of Euromaidan, pardoned and made heroes of all its members, beginning the process of giving

them the presidency.

This means that there will be no accountability for those who use armed force to kill civilians or innocent law enforcement officers, who seize and smash office buildings and warehouses with armed force, who carry out lynchings, or exercise blackmail and kidnapping. This creates a basis for the formation of a neo-Nazi repressive state machinery.

The U.S. and EU should know that this power grab by political parties and movements including neo-Nazi forces (such as “Svoboda - Freedom” and “Right Sector”) , announced the implementation of a national revolution under the slogans “Ukraine for Ukrainians,” “ Glory to the nation - death to enemies, ” “ Muscovite tools and Communists to the gallows ! ” and others.

Far from the trite Western narrative on Ukraine, what the opposition’s seizure of power amounted to was mob rule. It bore no resemblance to any democratic process. In a country of 46 million, a protest of, at most, 30,000 people took control of the capital city of Kiev and imposed their rule by force. Far from a boon to democracy, the movement’s success was a blow to democracy. Yanukovich was democratically elected in what was, according to outside observers such as the OSCE, generally fair and free election. Moreover, their views of EU integration and ousting Yanukovich did not represent that of the majority of the country.

Polls in December determined the country was divided over the question, unsurprisingly, mostly along an east and west axis where the country has been divided historically, culturally, and linguistically. As Russian expert Stephen Cohen observed in his piece “Distorting Russia,” “...every informed observer knows—from Ukraine’s history, geography, languages, religions, culture, recent politics and opinion surveys—that the country is deeply divided as to whether it should join Europe or remain close politically and economically to Russia. There is not one Ukraine or one “Ukrainian people” but at least two, generally situated in its Western and Eastern regions.” The gaggle’s seizure of power saw a minority impose its will illegally, backed up only by the force of the mob and the diplomatic cover of its international Western supporters. This fundamental reality did not stop the NATO bloc and its media propaganda ministers from hailing it and praising the opposition’s solidification of power.

Ukraine’s Oligarch Problem

But what accounts for the temperate approach by Yanukovich? Why was he unwilling to effectively crackdown on the increasingly violent rioters and protestors? If he was the inveterate authoritarian depicted in mainstream media surely he would have had recourse to clearing the Maidan with a few minutes of machine gun fire.

Far from the Western mainstream media narrative — which insists that Yanukovich’s conduct was guided by pro-Russian considerations or ever further that he was a Russian “puppet” — Yanukovich was more beholden to the Ukrainian oligarchy than to any other group. It is from this group that the behavior of Yanukovich in the crisis was ultimately determined. This is because power in Ukraine gravitates around this group. The beneficiaries of the wave of massive privatizations of Soviet state resources following the collapse of the Soviet Union, these oligarchs control media, many industries, and influence politics. Unlike in Russian where Putin has effectively truncated their power in politics, these groups maintain an inordinate influence. There has yet to be a leader in Kiev strong enough to rein in Ukraine’s oligarchs. They continue to control a number of MPs, television stations, and stay extremely close to political leaders.

The approach taken by Yanukovych to the situation for Russia was inadequate. As Moscow watched the situation on its borders escalate, it repeatedly called for Yanukovych to reestablish order; the oligarchs who were ostensibly backers of the president and those who claimed neutrality, called for compromise or moderation. Russia lamented Yanukovych's refusal to seize control of the situation. In an interview with Sergey Glazyev, Putin's leading advisor on Ukraine, he lamented Yanukovych's conciliatory approach, stating, "The authorities are not fulfilling their duty to defend the state, negotiating with putschists as if they are law-abiding citizens....As for starting to use force, in a situation where the authorities face an attempted coup d'état, they simply have no other course of action. Otherwise, the country will be plunged into chaos." As the situation escalated, this was also reflected by Russia's prime minister, Dmitri Medvedev, who began losing patience with Yanukovych. The Times reported he "told his cabinet the Ukrainian government should restore order and not bow to pressure from the outside." He remarked "it's necessary that the partners are themselves in shape and that the authorities that are working in Ukraine are legitimate and effective, so that people don't wipe their feet on them like a doormat."

Contrasting with the Russian calls for order, Yanukovych's oligarchical allies signaled they wanted a conciliatory approach. In an almost unnoticed but doubtless significant event, Rinat Akhmetov — the country's richest oligarch and ostensibly a Yanukovych ally — called for moderation and dialogue hours before Yanukovych initially entered negotiations with opposition. The dynamic between the two is that Yanukovych was the 'political director' while Akhmetov the 'business director'. According to political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko "Yanukovych became president because of Akhmetov, and he remains the only oligarch who can call the president directly and affect his position."

A statement on Akhmetov's company website read: "It is only by peaceful action that the political crisis can be resolved. Any use of force and weapons is unacceptable. With this scenario there will be no winners in Ukraine, only victims and losers. But most importantly, the use of force will not help to find a way out." Following this call, Yanukovych softened his approach to the situation. As Shaun Walker commenting in the London Guardian observed, in Ukraine "Akhmetov is the most powerful [oligarch], and the timing of his statement, on the same day as the president's complete change of tack, seems unlikely to be a coincidence."

The primary interest of the oligarchs is to preserve their wealth. Many of the Ukrainian oligarchs have intertwined their fortunes with Western capital and markets. Ukraine, as a pariah state — depicted as partaking in a dramatic crackdown on 'peaceful protestors' in the Western narrative — would threaten these interests. Moreover, some Ukrainian oligarchs were discontented by the conduct of Yanukovych, who according to them has facilitated the rise of a group called "the family," a group of businessmen around the president promoted and given favorable contracts.

This provides another example that oligarchy, wherever it exists, is never concerned with national interests but instead with the perpetuation of its own oligarchical privileges. This reality informs one of the most crucial domestic realities of Ukraine where the oligarchs have run wild.

Ukraine's Looming Economic Impoverishment

Adjacent to the neo-Nazi fascists, the other important component of the Ukrainian "opposition" hail from the the "Fatherland" Party of Yulia Tymochenko, the jailed billionaire

oligarch. This group is composed of “Orange Revolution” retreads. The group, pro-Western, are, in effect, IMF agents. Their business is neo-liberalism. Now that they have seized power, what looms for Ukraine is economic impoverishment.

Conveniently deleted from the narrative of Western media was the brutal reality of the EU’s Association Agreement. Economically, it would have been subjected it to Washington-Consensus neoliberalism which will leave it a dumping grounds for Western multinationals, gutting its manufacturing base, and impose draconian IMF austerity dictates. This is same austerity that precipitated unrest in the EU in countries such as Italy, Greece, and Spain. Ukraine will be forced to attenuate its social safety net: driving down wages, slashing pensions, and crucially the critical gas subsidy.



The EU and and US have leaned heavily on Kiev to accept the Western aid package led by the International Monetary Fund, asserting that only it could solve Ukraine’s fiscal problems. As the Times reported, “ With this in mind, Europe and the United States have largely subcontracted the job to the I.M.F., which has been negotiating with Kiev for months over an aid package that, unlike the money offered by Moscow, has numerous strings attached, notably requirements that Ukraine scythe a thicket of bureaucratic regulations and cut subsidies that keep domestic energy prices low — and cripple the government’s finances.” Such a cut to pensions and the energy subsidy will be hard felt by the working people of the country. Indeed, “Among the reasons Mr. Yanukovych turned away from signing political and trade accords with Europe in November was his unwillingness to carry out painful austerity measures and other reforms that had been demanded by the International Monetary Fund in exchange for a large assistance package” the Times also reported. The \$15 billion aid package from Moscow had no such strings attached, and in contrast kept gas prices below market value. Yanukovych understood that the Association Agreement would lead to economic ruin and as a corollary create a political calamity.

As the new gaggle assumes power the pro-EU and pro-West leadership are looking to quickly solve the economic concerns of the country. They are already moving swiftly to accept the Western aid package. Yatseniuk, or “Yats,” the favorite of Victoria Nuland of the State Department was appointed interim prime minister and already expressed the need for expediency to implement Western economic demands. US Treasury Secretary Lew spoke with Yatseniuk on the phone saying he urged Yatsenyuk to “quickly begin implementing economic reforms” and enter talks with the IMF. Lew also conferred with the IMF head Christine Lagarde on how to provide assistance. To not leave anything in doubt, the IMF made clear it will demand its typical austerity measures and more changes as a prerequisite to any assistance it may provide.

As a portend of the looming economic and political catastrophe, protestors confronted a government official of the new regime in Kiev. The Times reported, “Peppered with angry demands that the Parliament raise pensions, reopen closed hospitals and find work for the jobless, Mr. Lytvyn struggled to respond but basically called for patience, a virtue that is likely to be in short supply if the interim government does not manage to convince people it is working to improve their lives, not line its own pockets.” These demands, reasonable and

commonsensical, will not only go unfulfilled, but their opposite will occur. These well-meaning Ukrainian liberals expecting any of these measures are in for a shock — IMF style. When the austerity regime begins to implement itself patience will be indeed be in short supply.

Chris Macavel is an independent political analyst based in Harlem, NY. He writes for the blog “The Nation-State” at thenationalstate.wordpress.com. He seeks to enlighten about the growing dangers of NATO imperialist ambitions and Wall Street domination in American political life. He is the author of the forthcoming book “Imperialism in the “Arab Spring: How Western Imperialists Guided the MENA Uprisings”.

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