
Why Nations Revolt

Institutionalism as approach to conflict: a case study of Euromaidan

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Erasmus University Rotterdam. July, 2015
Word count: 27876

Mii Bozhe mylyi, zнову lykho!

Calamity Again!

Мій боже милий, знову лихо!
Було так любо, було тихо;
Ми заходились розкувать
Своїм невольникам кайдани.
Аж гульк! Ізнову потекла
Мужицька кров! Кати вінчанні,
Мов пси голодні за маслак,
Гризуться знову.

*Dear God, calamity again!
It was so peaceful, so serene;
We but began to break the chains
That bind our folk in slavery
When halt! Again the people's blood
Is streaming! Like rapacious dogs
about a bone, the royal thugs
are at each other's throat again.*

- Taras Shevchenko, 1859¹

¹ Taras Shevchenko. *Poeziia 1847-1861*. Zibrannia tvoriv: 2003. 712-715. Translation: John Weir.

1. PREFACE

Whoever has had the pleasure of taking a taxi to the suburbs of any Ukrainian city, has most likely had the pleasure of listening to an endless monologue on all that is wrong with Ukraine's political leaders. No matter my horrible understanding of that beautiful Russian and Ukrainian, frustration and disappointment with prominent figures as Tymoshenko and Yanukovich were clear whenever I had attempts at conversations during the few months I spent in Odessa, Ukraine, in 2013.

The ambiguous sentiments towards both Europe and Russia were sensible: the right path that should be taken was unclear for all. What was clear nonetheless, was the pride over those colourful Ukrainian outfits, the flower crowns, the – originally Ukrainian – *borsjt* and Ukraine's historical heritage. It was this cultural pride that got me in Ukraine in the first place: the city council of Odessa aspired a listing on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Whether Odessa is actually worthy of such a spot is not discussed any further here, for the sake of the argument.

As I embarked upon a research proposal on the untenable position of the Yanukovich government in September 2013, little did I appreciate its predictive value or the notion that this topic would grow internationally salient in the following months. The images of EU flags and symbols employed at Kyiv's Independence Square, soon flooded news feeds. The interpretation and explanations of the conflict surprised me. As it appeared, this conflict was about the people choosing the EU as their future path. That did not concur at all with the sentiments I had felt.

The research itself stranded at the proposal, as the events quickly followed each other and required devout attention. When Erasmus University introduced me with the theory of institutionalism, this stimulated me to academically streamline my frustration with public media and scholarly debate on Ukraine into the realization of this research.

As an EU citizen with high regards of Ukraine's people, I hope this research does justice to them in the most objective manner possible.

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2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

2.1 Introduction

The recurrence of violent conflicts in history is a never-ending story. Parallel has been the urge to describe and explain these complex phenomena. Nevertheless, no causal blueprint has been identified yet. Neither to the outburst of conflict, nor to peaceful solutions.

The academic field of conflict studies has furthered several streams of thought that are of great value. Not only have these theories proven their explanatory value in many cases on a political level, they have also inspired critical academic thinking and reflection. The most recurrent feature of critique, however, is the intrinsic excluding nature of the theories. By accurately analysing phenomena of conflict, the focus on and essence of periods of stability has become marginalized. This is reasonable, up to the point of essential narrowing down the focus of any research: if conflict is the subject of the research, it is the problem that requires scrutiny and not periods of mutual understanding. The focus point of many theories in conflict analysis is thus on clashing interests, whereas sufficient attention to higher levels of stable and ongoing processes is neglected. However, considering that these peaceful periods create the structural components of a society, it is sensible to include the roots of these structures in an analysis of conflict.

An alternative narrative on failure in nation-states is provided by the British James Robinson and Turkish-Armenian Daron Açemoglu. Their *Why Nations Fail* (2012) offers an institutionalist approach to explain how some nations lack economic progress and social prosperity. Their main observation is that nations are dependent upon historic developments, as these create social, economic and governmental 'lock-in effects'. Changes follow from punctuations of these stable processes.

Although Açemoglu and Robinson (henceforth: AR) provide an overwhelming amount of evidence on the lock-in effects of institutions and chosen paths, little evidence is provided for the conditions of the punctuations – referred to as critical junctures - to come about. Following, the main critique on their adaptation of institutionalism is the inability to explain instability and radical changes. Again, this is reasonable up to the point of essential narrowing down the focus of research: stability is identified as the main goal and characteristic of society and consequently requires most scrutiny.

However, considering that the critical junctures are the main cause of an altered path and have significant influence over institutional changes, it is sensible to include these junctures in any analysis of institutional breakdown.

This research aims at addressing underlying causes of conflict that have not been sufficiently addressed in academic literature. This thesis does not aim to unlearn the far-reaching findings of conflict studies or institutionalism. Rather, it reconsiders the basic assumptions from which these findings were constructed in order to identify a comprehensive approach towards inner-state conflicts.

Following the problem analysis and research objectives, the central research question of this thesis is: *To what extent is the theory of institutional meltdown a theoretical partner towards a comprehensive framework for conflict analysis?*

2.2 Case

Following the research question, it is the extent to which the approaches of institutionalism and conflict studies are of authoritative explanatory power which is examined in this research. In order to find a comprehensive answer to this question, a solid case study is required that touches upon all aspects of both conflict theory and institutionalism.

Along the northern coast of the Black Sea lies a long path of cobblestones connects the vibrant, flourishing city centre of Odessa, Ukraine, with grey flats and concrete parks in its suburbs. Before reaching these Soviet remainders, the cobblestone path that is called Deribasovskaya has already shown its stroller Odessa's charm: Neoclassical European architecture and proud Russophone Ukrainians, accompanied by the characteristic sounds of Jewish musicians. Odessa is not only home to a recovering Jewish community, it is a city with a highly varied demography in which multi-nationality is more common than being only Ukrainian or only Russian.

However, on 2 May 2014 these cobblestones were the stage for anything but harmony. The relative peace and quiet were suddenly disrupted by violent clashes between pro-Ukrainians and pro-Russians. In a city in which most citizens feel primarily Odessan rather than either Ukrainian or Russian, how could ethnicity be the apparent source of conflict?

The Odessa clashes were, unfortunately, only one of many violent encounters. Since the outburst of the Euromaidan demonstrations in November 2013, Ukraine has been the playfield of civil crisis and exogenous pressures. As generally portrayed, this is the consequence of a two-decades old foreign policy that aimed to achieve the best balance possible between partnerships with both the EU and Russia. The balance supposedly reflects Ukraine's ethnic cleavages between east and west. This balance would tip towards the EU with the signing of their Association Agreement (AA).

The AA on the table was the legalization of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), that explicitly aims at transforming neighbouring states into EU-like states, both normative as well as through market reformations (Trauner, 2014). The decision by the Yanukovich government to refrain from signing, was perceived by a wide civil group as a step back in the democratization process. In fact, with a Russia oriented policy characterizing Yanukovich's presidency, it was even seen as an explicit step towards further cooperation with Russia. Immediately after Yanukovich refrained from signing, crowds gathered at Maidan Square, Kyiv, to show their discontent with this decision. Little was left of the harmonious co-existence in Ukraine, of which the sea city of Odessa had been exemplary.

From November 2013 to February 2014 the wave of demonstrations and civil unrest caught international attention and would soon be referred to as the Euromaidan Revolution. Most academic explanatory arguments on the outburst of the Euromaidan Revolution are built upon two assumptions: First, there is a strong divide between the Ukrainian people. Ukraine consists of competing identities with 'two different visions on the Ukrainian past, future, and "Ukrainianness" itself' (Riabchuk, 442). The protests were primarily connected to the regional divide in Ukraine, being between West and East, between Europe and Russia (For instance, see: Krasnopolsky, 2013; Rywkin, 2014; Saryusz-Wolski). Second, Ukraine's foreign policy consequently remains sandwiched between the EU and Russia (Diuk, 1998; Wolczuk, 2004; Fischer, 2008; Rywkin, 2014). In sum, scholarly arguments focus primarily on the tugging powers of the EU and Russia and its effects.

Media outlets followed a comparable line of analysis. According to the phenomenon of 'primordialism' nationalities and ethnicities are naturally given. In this reasoning, ethnic conflict and violence occurs between groups of 'relatively clearly defined categories of people, (...) based on easily identifiable ethnic differences' (Demmers, 23). Although primordialist reasoning has been widely discredited academically, it persisted in everyday news coverage and daily debate on Ukraine (For instance, see Krushelnycky, 2013; Smeets, 2013; Freeland, 2013).

The academic and media broadcast arguments confirm a mutually exclusiveness of ethnical groups in society and therewith follow the traditional assumptions of ethnic conflict theory.

Following the perspective that AR provide, the Ukrainian ethnic division, nor the multi-vector policy between and towards the EU and Russia are adequate in explaining the conflict. Rather, the outburst of the Euromaidan clashes is the consequence of domestic factors that are primarily economic and political. Structural discontent with these institutions eventually led to a meltdown of their governing functionality and thus to a societal revolt.

The Euromaidan protests reached several violent climaxes, one of which was in February. Protesters vainly demanded constitutional change to its pre-2004 form, which would mean a severe decline in presidential power. This is a key indication that the uprising was indeed much more about underlying frustration with a corrupt, unsuccessful system, than merely about Europe or Russia sympathizers. The political and economic institutions of the Yanukovich government had failed to satisfy popular demands.

The case of the Euromaidan Revolution offers evidence and room for both a conflict and institutional approach. Media and scholarly literature have used explanatory arguments that perfectly fit mainstream conflict theory lines. At the same time, the political and economic systems of Ukraine follow the characteristics of extractive institutions' as pitched by AR.

Simultaneously, this evidence points at the possible weaknesses in both theoretical approaches. The approach of conflict study leaves little room for arguments other than incompatible ethnic differences. The equilibrium in society, then, is conflict, because it is imperatively divided by social structures with conflicting interests. The institutional approach in its turn, leaves little room for close scrutiny of this division as it is mainly concerned with Ukraine's political and economic historical path. Therefore, it requires scrutiny whether institutionalism is an appropriate addition to the field of conflict studies.

2.3 Methodology

The aim of this research is to examine the reach of institutionalism and ethnic conflict studies. The empirical research is based on the Euromaidan Revolution, which provides this research with a solid case study that touches upon all aspects of both conflict theory and institutionalism. The main evidence that this case study shall provide answers to, is to hypotheses along the lines of both theoretical approaches, which are the following.

- The differences in natural ties in Ukraine are essentially incompatible and lead to inevitable conflict
- The political institutions of Ukraine underwent a meltdown in functioning and led to popular discontent and conflict
- The economic institutions of Ukraine underwent a meltdown in functioning and led to popular discontent and conflict

The observations needed to prove these hypotheses are mainly theoretical. To properly analyse them, some theoretical starting points are evaluated. The variables in this research are not under control of the researcher, making the research design of experiments impossible (Kellstedt; Witten, 2013). This observation directly leads to the field of observational research. A general distinction in observational research runs between quantitative and qualitative.

2.3.1 Quantitative research

Two quantitative research designs are under scrutiny here: cross-sectional observation design and time-series design.

A cross-sectional study examines the connections between variations of several dependent variables. However, the design implicates there is a clear distinction between cause and effect (Kellstedt; Witten, 2013) when in fact, this research aims at understanding underlying structures that have generated observable outcomes. This is problematic, as the concepts of cause and effect thus cannot be directly observed. Instead, they are the main objects of examination and are themselves the subject of scrutiny.

The times-series research design is 'a comparison over time within a single spatial unit' (Kellstedt; Witten, 87). In extent of this design, the hypotheses should be reformulated to 'How has domestic tension

developed over time?' and 'How have the economic and political institutions developed over time'? However, this takes the research in an oppositional direction of its central aim: to prove the validity of applying of one approach over the other.

A second, related problem with both designs is their feasibility. In order to generalize findings under cross-sectional and times-series designs, a large number of cases is required. However, this goes well beyond the boundaries as well as the aim of this research. This endangers the internal validity of the research, as it would decrease its accuracy. Both these hurdles can only be overcome by theory drawn arguments rather than by statistical techniques.

2.3.2 *Qualitative research*

The qualitative research case study method offers comprehensive understanding of the decisive factors that need to be identified in order to find an answer to the research question. The case study method offers thorough in-depth scrutiny. The two case study designs under examination are co-variational and congruence analysis.

A co-variational research compares at least two cases. The co-variational approach relies on 'scores of the independent and the dependent variable for its data analysis' (Blatter; Haverland, 63). However, the collection of this empirical information in light of this research shall be mainly theoretical. This leads the research towards a congruence analysis design.

Congruence analyses typically look at one case and 'establishes congruence between theoretical expectations and observations within the case' (Blatter & Haverland, 147). At the core of any congruence analysis lays the comparison of empirical findings with theoretically deduced expectations. The aim of a congruential research is 'to contribute to the broader theoretical discourse' (Blatter; Haverland, 197) because the results of the study may be employed as 'arguments for the adequacy and fruitfulness of new or marginalized theories or new combinations of theories' (Blatter; Haverland, 197).

Congruence analysis thus puts theories in a different perspective. The external validity of this research is thus mainly theoretical, as it should lead to different conclusions and allow for more viable theoretical paradigms. The competing theories in this case are ethnic conflict theory and institutionalism.

Operationalising from the conviction that 'paradigms and theories [...] provide the basic frameworks for understanding the world' (Blatter; Haverland, 204), the research method of congruence analysis is highly adequate in deducting the relative explanatory power of both conflict and institutionalist theory. The in-depth theoretical approach that the case study research design of congruence analysis offers, is most appropriate to achieve validity in this research.

2.3.3 *Observations and expectations*

The biggest risk of the congruence analysis is a search for 'confirmation for a pre-existing belief, conviction' (Toshkov, 2). The challenge is, to keep the search open for satisfactory complementation to existing scholarship by bringing in theoretical observations and ideas that are new. After all, science only proceeds by collective scrutiny and criticism that allow for adjusting what others have done before (Toshkov, 2015).

The first hypothesis is in accordance with classical theories of conflict analysis. Most arguments in this theoretical field follow lines of clearly identifiable ethnic differences as cause of conflict. If the hypothesis is to be found largely applicable and correct, there should be evidence of cultural tensions at the outburst of Euromaidan unrest. It should also indicate that this tension was significantly stronger in November 2013, the start of the conflict.

The second and third should be examined with arguments provided by the institutionalist field. Institutionalists such as AR argue that an institutional meltdown is caused by a path-dependency upon wrong institutions. Because there is a strong interdependent relationship between economic and political institutions, a nation-state runs the risk of falling into a negative loop: political institutions enable the elites power to choose economic institutions that enrich them, in turn consolidation their political power.

Evidence for the hypotheses should indicate a strong decline of institutional strength and stability, providing motive for civic revolt in November 2013. According to the theory, this does not indicate a break-down of the institutions in place, rather that they fail in their task of achieving prosperity.

The overall assumption that could be extracted from the chosen theories is that both actors and institutions are captured by ethnic or historical tracks. The most adequate approach of research to political processes is thus to assess developments over time. This exposes the structural constraints influencing political behaviour (Pierson, 2002). Yin (2009) identifies various sources of data for case studies. Insights in this case are mainly drawn from primary documents, official public statements and secondary and scholarly literature.

2.3.4 *Social and theoretical relevance*

The Euromaidan Revolution case is of significant societal importance for several reasons. Firstly, the aftermath of this particular conflict is highly destructive for the economic and political build-up of the young nation in question. From a global perspective, Eastern Ukraine has become the focus of concern in Western capitals as the unrest has disrupted the myth of European peace and stability in the post-Cold War world. As the destructive aftermath of Euromaidan continues to rage in the border regions between Ukraine and Russia, the case study under scrutiny has proven to be a pivotal historical event.

The outcomes of this research will be of little interest to the Ukrainian leading his everyday life, but pinpointing some of the root causes will offer relief in comparable cases. A different perspective on conflict leads to different conclusions. New conclusions may lead to quicker and more viable solutions in future conflict resolution. This is of crucial social relevance in light of global stability and development.

The larger objective of this study is to identify an improved profile for a theoretical framework concerning conflict analysis. It seeks to add to the existing theoretical field in order to develop it further. If the research identifies that traditional approaches are inadequate, future research should consider including institutionalist lines of analysis.

As the main focus in congruence analysis is on the theories selected and used, these require extra attention. The theoretical literature under scrutiny in this research provide a set of propositions that shall be compared to empirical evidence. The following chapters shall shed light on these theories and forthcoming propositions.

AIM OF RESEARCH

The analytical frameworks of institutionalism and ethnic conflict theory are used in this research to assess **to what extent the theory of institutional meltdown could be a theoretical partner towards a comprehensive framework for conflict analysis.**

These theories do not have similar goals. Rather, this question is based on the expectation that although many conflict analyses are rooted in an ethnic conflict approach, institutionalism may offer a much more **comprehensive framework for root cause analysis.** This expectation is applied to the case study of the Euromaidan Revolution in Kyiv, 2013.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

All theory fosters understanding of certain phenomena or processes. These are tangible in the case of domestic conflict. The study of conflict has kept scholars writing for decades and has advanced several streams of thought that nurtured academic understanding, political responses or even solutions. A predominant aspect of conflict analyses in both media and some scholarly literature is a focus on the ethnic differences between societal groups and the inherent division between them. However, the understandings produced by one theory, may have blinding side-effects to alternative explanations. In this case, embracing the theoretical approach offered by conflict study could even reduce the capacity to deal with this conflict.

The acceptance of ethnic groups as dynamic, changing entities is what differs academic conflict theories from conflict analyses in mainstream media. However, it is also its major weakness. Firstly, the focus on ethnicity reduces consideration of other factors. Secondly, the scope of an assessment of conflict is inherently limited to its field of research: the conflict itself. Accordingly, consideration of the stable periods precluding a domestic conflict is limited although it is arguable that these preludes possibly carry early or structural barriers of conflict.

A different approach is needed to incorporate these structural factors. Institutionalism serves the goal of explaining the systems, policies and customs of a society. Institutional approaches are regularly used to analyze the consequences of policy 'lock-in effects' and the absence of conflict (Pierson, 1993), because the approach is highly adequate in examining patterns of social, governmental and historic interdependence.

A weakness of institutionalism is its inability to explain instability and radical changes, because consensus is accepted as the main goal of society. A change in chosen paths is referred to as critical junctures in the punctuated equilibrium. The response to a juncture leads to policy drift in a certain direction. These disruptive moments have not been extensively incorporated into the analytical framework, as these are research fields entirely of their own.

It appears that the aforementioned theories are complementary in their respective weaknesses and strengths, which is why these theories were chosen as analytical frameworks for this research. Nevertheless, their field of practical overlap is marginal as they are rarely combined. This study explores the relative merits of institutionalism and ethnic conflict theory in explaining national conflicts. The findings of the research can support the theoretical discourse in both fields and may lead towards a future approach in which the overlap or switch between both analytical frameworks creates improved explanatory authority of both.

A theoretical framework shall be offered following, in which first the main findings of conflict theories are given. Second, the main concepts and schools of institutionalism shall be presented. The theoretical body shall be concluded by a presentation of the main areas of spill over between both theoretical fields in the form of a theoretical approach.

3.2 Conflict theory

What drives human action, what their interests, needs and structures are, are questions asked by numerous academic fields. These form an equal basis of motivation for the field of conflict analysis. This field attempts to give a counter reaction to the overly basic and oftentimes subjective assumptions that policymakers, politicians and citizens may make, as their reading is decisive for the sort of action that will be taken.

Many relevant frameworks have been produced to improve and widen explanatory possibilities. The field of conflict studies shows several trends in views that changed along with the geopolitical outlook. In this paragraph, a review of the main paradigmatic approaches and theories debated in the discipline is provided. Several conditions for and definitions of conflict can be taken from the theoretical literature, of which an overview is offered.

During the Cold War, local conflicts were mostly seen as the by-products of the bipolar split in global political power and ideologies. Accordingly, most conflicts were explained in terms of ideological divides or the consequences of post-independence state-building: 'identities of groups and countries in their struggle for independence were defined in terms of their ideological and political links to either Moscow or Washington' (Jeong, 14). However, as the Cold War came to an end, conflicts carried less obvious connection to Cold War heritage.

Focus then shifted towards the agency of local actors and contexts. Of particular attention were the aspects of identity formation, group dynamics and ethnicity. Conflicts were 'coded as 'ethnic' or 'ethno nationalist': ancient hatreds and primordialist identities were seen as root causes' (Demmers, 4) that replaced the former ideological tensions. This thesis is commonly referred to as 'civilizational clashes'.

Since the late 1990s, conflicts are framed as driven by greed, terror and evil and framed in terms of human (in)security and state fragility. Particularly after 9/11, terror became a commanding policy framework.

These analytical frameworks operate out of an expectation and presence of conflict. They accurately explain complex phenomena, but root causes of conflict growing during periods of policy lock-in seem neglected. Nevertheless, structural factors and societal components do receive a vast amount of

attention. Several analytical concepts of conflict theory that connect underlying principles with conflict, are explained below.

3.2.1 Concepts of conflict theory

Definition

The approaches mentioned above attempt to explain the causes of conflict. The definition for 'conflict' is, however crude, dependent upon the number of annual battle-related deaths, of which the threshold is 1000 people, before it is defined as 'war'. According to Sambanis (2004) a conflict is classified as 'violent' if it causes at least 500 deaths. A civil war means an armed conflict of rebellious actors against the government.

A general model of conflict was first provided by Mitchell (1981) and pitched as 'any situation in which two or more parties perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals' (Mitchell, 17). Violence is thus not an essential criterion for conflict behaviour. Conflict behaviour can take on a wide variety of forms, in addition to physical actions. Conflicts includes all disobedient strategies ranging from demonstrations and strikes to non-cooperation in general.

Social identity

The concept of social identity takes a central place in conflict theories. It could be defined as the experience of sameness, the feeling of belonging to a social category or group. A social identity is relational, in the sense that it excludes another identity. To illustrate, belonging to a certain religion, implies not belonging to another. This may even be the basis of any identity's construction: the process of self-othering determines identity in many ways (Said, 1988). Nevertheless, an actor may feel connected to multiple identities from different social categories. Some are more prominent. The identity is largely defined by societal regulations and is therewith connected to some concepts of institutionalism. A conflict of identity only arises when regulations and identity are incompatible in practice.

The danger of defining a certain identity is similar to its meaning: it is relational and excluding. In an analytical framework, this risks extracting identity as bounded blocks. This approach is called primordialism and argues and of 'fixed ethnic identity' (Bayar, 1647): nationalities and ethnicities are naturally given. Accordingly, ethnic conflict stems from solidified frustrations or even hatreds between ethnic groups, because of incompatible differences in 'natural ties' that derive from religious, racial, or regional connections.

This approach has been widely discredited academically, but is mentioned here because it seems to still have dominant impact in media and popular scholarly writings: 'It is an important narrative through which both insiders and outsiders understand, and act upon ethnic violent conflict' (Demmers, 24). Furthermore,

although the theory is regarded as a negative influence on academic objectivity, its influence on ethnic conflict theories is notable as competing interests of social identities are often put forward as causes for conflict throughout the Euromaidan discourse.

Agency

Roughly, the field of conflict studies is theoretically divided between agency-based approaches and structure-based approaches. The former locates the source of conflict at the level of the individual actor. According to rational choice theory, actors' behaviour is always greed-motivated. Consequently, social life is a constant conflict and competition over the distribution of resources and power. Society then, is a competition, made up of individuals competing for limited resources. Broader social structures reflect the competition for resources in their inequalities (Gershenson, 2000).

Two agency-based approaches could be defined as constructivist conflict theories: elite theory and ethno-symbolism. Elite theory of conflict, or instrumentalist conflict theory, argues that ethnic war is functional. This approach is rather top-down, as agency is placed at the level of elites internally and externally. These actors strategically create or affirm antagonist identities and boundaries. The 'unequal decision-making power over the allocation of resources' (Jeong, 87) that follows, generates wealth related divisions in society. Conflict in this approach thus stems from deliberate manipulation, emerged from the desire for individual or group gains.

Ethno-symbolism questions this elite-centered approach and states that the more groups can rely on ethno-symbolic resources such as past, mission or homeland, the greater their capacity is to sustain themselves. Reversed, this capacity decreases in the absence of symbols. Agency is thus placed with the identity building capacity of the particular group.

Structure-based approaches see a bigger role in the organization of society, meaning the power of structures by which human behaviour is determined. A conflict then might arise when a collective belief system is ruptured. As opposed to primordialism, constructivist conflict theory argues that ethnic group boundaries are changeable. The ethnic group is 'an imagined, constructed community, created through social interaction' (Demmers, 26). Identity is contextual and not independent. However, because of the rules of boundaries, not all are easily accepted as members of the group. Conflict then is a product of historical processes over time that result in divergent ethnic identities and hostility between them. The overall assumption that could be extracted from structure-based approaches with regard to society, is that domestic conflicts are the result of opposing social identities, albeit admitted these have been formed through historical processes which have undeniably influenced political and economic contexts.

3.2.2 Critique

The aforementioned concepts of identity and agency essentially boil down to ethnicity related struggles. For instance, the right to self-determination could be seen here as an important aspect of peace and stability. But simultaneously, the multi-ethnic state is perceived as a 'breeding ground for growth of nationalistic manifestations [...] where claims to exclusive rights to self-determination generate the domino effect of ethnic unrest' (Jeong, 222). Not only does this point of focus render stability as an impossible phenomenon, it also unfairly disregards non-ethnic societal struggles. Although many structure-related approaches look at the economic and political organization of a society and acknowledge how ethnic attachment and identity is ultimately socially constructed and thus just as malleable, they 'at the same time emphasize the persistence and emotional power of these attachments' (Demmers, 30). The main focus remains on the impact of societal organization on social identities.

The general conclusion that 'many serious communal conflicts are rooted in value differences and the repression of the need for autonomy and identity' (Jeong, 31) is grounded, yet possibly accepted too swiftly. Cultural and ethnic factors are embedded in an institutionalized social and economic discourse that may reflect prolonged exploitation or cultural marginalization. Therefore, these social and economic systems require further scrutiny.

3.3 Institutionalism

AR (2012) pitch an institutionalist theory that argues how domestic instabilities and political failures are often caused by a path-dependency upon defect institutions. These institutions are upheld by extractive governments who are unaccountable or unresponsive to citizens. Although the vivid historical developments used to exemplify their theory are convincing and refreshing, many of their positions are well developed views in the field of institutionalism.

This field studies how structures, rules of social order and behaviour function according to certain informal and formal rules. In most studies, these rules are defined as 'institutions'. In general, the field of institutionalism can be categorized into 'Old' and 'New' institutionalism. Old describes formal institutions of government and state. Weber (1978) focused on the organizational structure within society and institutionalization created by bureaucracies. The focus was thus descriptive and analytical, rather than explanatory.

What mainly differs New from Old Institutionalism is the explanatory approach, which added explanatory authority to the field. New Institutionalism pays closer attention to organizational forms, structural components and rules and the classifications and habits that are taken for granted. These are perceived to be the primary source of influence. Exemplary are the works of North (1991) on economic institutionalism and the revisit of Weber's work by DiMaggio and Powel (1991).

Three main strands of New Institutionalism have emerged as leading approaches to institutional analysis, these being historical, rational choice and sociological institutionalism. All three have strong underlying continuities, such as a primary interest in institutions as dependent variables and a related interest in supra-individual influences, such as culture. Formal structures are regarded as the product of cultural frameworks. Thus, they are responsive to their environment. The basic similarity in all institutional theoretical claims is that something identified at a higher level is used to explain processes and outcomes at a lower level of analysis: institutions are the rules that structure behaviour. Also, political processes are regarded as naturally stable and incremental: once arrangements are institutionalized, they become difficult to alter. Where they differ, is over 'their understanding of the nature of the beings whose actions or behaviour is being constructed' (Steinmo, 126).

The similarities and variances of historical institutionalism as pitched by AR in comparison with the relevant concepts of rational choice and sociological institutionalism shall be discussed further.

3.3.1 Concepts of institutionalism

Definition

A plethora of academic definitions of institutions exists, varying from formal to informal rules and laws, to norms and habits. AR consider institutions to be everything from social norms to a political system. Formal institutions, such as law and constitution, are created by the behaviour, incentives and constraints that informal institutions produce. They follow the definition provided by the aforementioned economist North: institutions are 'humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions' (North, 1991), e.g. the formal and informal rules that shape human interaction, that form the basis of all societal, organizational and even individual change.

Institutional change

The main explanation for institutional change is found in ideational and cultural factors. AR place these factors within historical boundaries. They regard historical pathways as the main influences to shape a society in certain directions. Following the traditional historical institutionalist route, they argue that institutions are not necessarily created for functional reasons only, but that they are also consequences of diverging responses to historic processes. This indicates that actors only limitedly operate rational because they are bounded by the institutional legacy of the past.

Changes additionally stem from sporadic ruptures. This is defended by punctuated-equilibrium theory method. From this point of view, changes in institutions are hard to achieve because of an assumed prevalent equilibrium. Large-scale deviation of the path is only possible as a result of sporadic punctuations. These can, for example, occur when governmental programs or circumstances are altered

dramatically and subsequently, policies are questioned at the most fundamental levels. AR follow this method, but call the moments of punctuated equilibria 'critical junctures' in time (AR, 101).

In response to change, the punctuated-equilibrium theory provides two coping mechanisms. First, in cases of successful policy monopoly, the system enables a minimization of positive change and critique. This is referred to as 'negative feedback'. The opposite scenario occurs when small changes cause a process of amplified policy change. The system is then undergoing a 'positive feedback' process.

AR further define negative feedback options. Because there is a strong interdependent relationship between economic and political institutions, a nation-state faces a higher risk of falling into a negative loop: political institutions enable the elites power to choose economic institutions that enrich them, in turn consolidating their political power. Even if this loop were to be interrupted by new political actors, these newcomers are subject to the same limited set of restraints and concentration of power. Consequently, they 'have incentives to maintain these political institutions and create a similar set of economic institutions' (AR, 82).

Agency

Actors and formal institutions operate in an environment primarily consisting of other institutions. Following a rational choice institutionalist approach, 'institutions are important quite simply because they frame the individual's strategic behaviour' (Steinmo, 126). Characterizing rational choice institutionalism is the set of behavioural assumptions. Actors have a set of preferences and seek to maximize the realization of these preferences and utilities (Hall, 1996). The actor is thus driven by strategic calculation. Institutions, ranging from social interactions to formal rules, affect the actor's calculus by limiting the range of alternatives.

AR in large follow these lines and affirm the assumption that actors behave out of self-interest, which could lead to extractive institutions. However, the emphasis is placed on these defect institutions themselves, which cause economic and political weakness. Behaviour depends on the individual and his context, making human beings 'both norm-abiding rule followers and self-interest rational actors' (Steinmo, 126). This is more in line with some of the concepts of agency offered by the sociological institutionalist approach.

Much of the research in that field has a focus on the influence of institutions on human behaviour. Human beings are fundamentally social and act out of legitimacy. Humans are 'neither as self-interested nor as 'rational' (...) but are satisfiers who act habitually' (Steinmo, 127). This logic is referred to as the 'logic of appropriateness', the shaping and guiding authority of formal and informal institutions. Legitimacy is both the organizational imperative as well as a justification for certain procedures and practices.

Nevertheless, what is perceived as acceptable is constructed by cultural practices and the perceived and recognized analysis by the actor of the governing rules. Accordingly, institutions are more than just the formal rules, procedures or norms, but more general the 'moral templates that provide the 'frames of meaning' guiding human action' (Hall, 14). These are culturally specific.

Consequently, 'even the most seemingly bureaucratic of practices have to be explained in cultural terms' (Hall, 15) because they operate with norms that are culturally defined. The same goes for individual actors. Individuals who have been socialized into particular institutional roles, internalize the associated norms and are thus equally affected in their behaviour by institutions. Although these actors might still act out of rational goal-oriented purposes, what an actor sees as 'rational' action is itself socially constructed. From this viewpoint, all institutionalist approaches agree that rules, norms and routines are guidelines for social behaviour.

Path dependency

The mentioned informal rules that structure the form and character of institutions as determined by historical patterns. In historical institutionalism, this is referred to as 'path dependence'. The central assumption of AR falls in line with historical institutionalism in the sense that it considers policymaking and political change or stability as characterized by long periods of considerable stability which might be interrupted by turbulent, formative moments. It leads actors to confine within the paths that were chosen or designed before them and provides templates for interpretation and action in the form of institutions (Hall, 1996). Policymaking systems thus tends to be conservative and focused on 'defending existing patterns of policy, as well as the organizations that make and deliver those policies' (Peters, 1276). Adjustments of pre-existing frameworks remain confined to the margins.

AR secondly argue that domestic instabilities and political failures are often caused by a path-dependency upon wrong institutions. Prosperity is based on institutions, such as 'rules influencing how the economy works, and the incentives that motivate people' (AR, 73). If these are extractive, they do not encourage participation in economic activities or enable individuals to make their desired choices. To be inclusive,

'economic institutions must feature secure private property, an unbiased system of law, and a provision of public services that provides a level playing field in which people can exchange and contract; it also must permit the entry of new businesses and allow people to choose their careers' (AR, 75).

In extractive institutions, a small group of individuals exploits the rest of the population. Under inclusive institutions, the majority of people is included in the process of governing, therefore obstructing exploitation.

3.3.2 Critique and further remarks

Numerous theoretical and analytical dilemmas in the approach have been identified. The main critique geared towards institutionalism is the focus and scope of the research. The extensive attention paid to the periods of stability has had obvious limiting effects. The interrupting, formative moments that break the cycle of path dependence, have been incorporated into the analytical framework only minimally. The focus on structural variables prevents historical institutionalism 'from providing a clear conceptualization of policy change and, indeed, limits the possibilities for a theoretical explanation of change' (Peters, 1277).

This theoretical concern begins with a lack of definition. None of the three approaches provide an objective judgment on 'what sort of a change should be reckoned to be significant enough to say that there has been a deviation from the path' (Peters, 1287). Rather, institutionalism assumes a rather top-down approach and retrospectively interprets causality. A consequence of the focus on persistence, is the failure to distinguish underlying dissensus from apparent stability, as well as sudden political conflict from explicable change. At this point, several concepts proposed by conflict studies could accompany institutionalism.

However, if we are to use the historical institutionalist theory proposed by AR as a benchmark for conflict analysis, some additional theory specific remarks are in place to create a useable and functioning theoretical framework.

Institutional or national failure

As AR follow an historical institutionalist path, some distinction between nation failure and institutional failure is in place. AR are mainly concerned with national performance and 'how national institutions can explain why some nations perform much better than others. In other words, with failure, the failure to achieve an accumulation of power and prosperity in the world is meant. In this way, the translated title of the book makes much more sense in other languages, which is 'Why some nations are poor and others are not'.

National failure according to AR is poverty and a lack of general welfare. Institutional failure in this sense is thus closely linked to national failure. It indicates that a society's governing structures have proven too weak to create economic, political or cultural incentives towards greater welfare. This does not indicate a break-down of the institutions in place. Rather, these structures exist, yet form too little restraint on power concentration in the hands of the ruling elites, ultimately creating extractive institutions.

To sum up, institutional failure means the failure of institutions to fulfil their task: create welfare. What is left unclear in the theory is which institutional weaknesses could cause a tip over in the balance of societal

and civic stability. Many nation-states face some institutionalized weak processes, yet experience long terms of stability and even welfare. What requires further scrutiny in this research, is the point at which a certain institutional weakness or a combination of several proves fatal and creates an actually dysfunctional state.

Not all nations fail

AR find the cause for dysfunctional institutions in the hands of the elite holding power. A concentration of power affects the distribution of resources in society, for better or for worse. Nations with efficient and prosperous institutions are the exception. However, a concentration of power by itself does not necessarily imply economic or political slow growth and underdevelopment. Even if it does, power concentration and forthcoming economic leakage are phenomena that spread through many liberal constitutional democracies. According to the simplified hypothesis of AR, this would mean that eventually, all nations fail.

Several conditions to actual failure could be drawn from the work of Skocpol (1994), who considers social revolutions to be a consequence of institutional failure. The identification of regime types susceptible to societal revolt in her work involves their 'inclusionary' nature, comparable to the inclusive society AR define. Because of a civil detachment from the political system, but also because an 'exclusionary' society creates 'a common enemy for groups and classes that may be nursing very different sorts of economic and political grievances' (Skocpol, 266), a revolution is more likely to take place and thus goes well beyond ideological motivations.

At this point the additional remarks proposed earlier can be taken into consideration. Not all nations fail, because in some cases an electorate or non-democratic popular majority is included in governing processes, meaning a control mechanism is in place that obstructs structural exploitation. The actors in power that rationally build upon their own models of prosperity and preferences, consequently face both resource constraints as well as socially imposed contracts. This being the major difference between the rise of extractive and inclusive institutions, there is a point at which unstable or unreliable institutions are no longer tenable in the eyes of a population.

In addition to a weak control mechanism, Skocpol finds that 'social revolutions [...] could not happen without a breakdown of the administrative and coercive powers of an old regime' (Skocpol, 7). The point at which some nations revolt thus follows from changes in the social control mechanisms as well as a rupture in the existing institutions.

Empirics that work in hindsight

As mentioned, institutionalism assumes a rather top-down approach and retrospectively interprets causality. Divergent responses by political and economic elites to critical junctures cause institutional drifts. This is even more present in the theory of AR, as nation failure is taken as the norm of research and theory. This means that it is not an understanding of positive political and economic incentives which is sought. Rather, an understanding of all that is inefficient and socially undesirable.

The problem with this norm is that 'since more real-world societies are some combination of extractive and inclusive institutions, any given degree of growth (or its absence) can then be attributed either to inclusive or extractive qualities ex post' (Fukuyama, 2). Firstly, this assures for all empirics to work in hindsight. Additionally, conclusions remain vague and unfulfilling concerning the identification of what sort of institutions create or promote growth and welfare. Therefore, as a theory *Why Nations Fail* appears to fall short in recognizing what historical event could be identified as a critical juncture ultimately creating the new feedback cycle.

Liberal democracy has the future

Lastly, what AR define as inclusive institutions equals the institutions of western societies with constitutional, liberal democracies. This approach is ideologically charged and automatically excludes all non-democratic nation-states. The assumption indicates that any nation in a different political condition is moving toward liberal democracy and its inclusive institutions. However, the possibility of a partially democratic system might be an enduring form of government and therefore worthy of investigation, especially for younger nation-states in transitional stages. In fact, 'what is often thought of as an uneasy, precarious, middle ground between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship is actually the most common political condition today of countries in the developing world and the post-communist world' (Carothers, 18).

Ironically, AR's case study of China provides them with the most challenging empirics to which the conclusion is drawn that although China might be growing today, because of the extractive nature of economics and politics this will eventually come to an end. A point of remaining research should consider the possibility of alternative pathways towards inclusive growth and prosperity.

3.4 Theoretical approach

Institutions have anchored behaviour in politics, economy and society all over the world. Nevertheless, they are taken for granted because they are embedded in or have created a status quo. The need to closely examine institutions is what guides institutionalists in seeking adequate explanations for policies

and societies. The approach of inclusive and exclusive institutions and elites in power provides this research with a framework for analysis of historical, political and economic paths.

The given concepts of institutionalism and conflict theories are highly capable of explaining change and continuity in their own respective fields. The strength of institutionalism in identifying recurring themes and the influence of rules and structures, is reduced by the absence of a comprehensive model on conflict, institutional rupture and critical junctures.

This is where the strength of conflict studies is found, as it provides the field of conflict analysis with explanatory models that are comprehensive and thorough. The overall assumption that could be extracted from structure-based conflict theories with regard to society, is that domestic conflicts are the result of opposing, incompatible social identities, albeit admitted these have been formed through historical processes which have undeniably influenced political and economic contexts. The analytical concepts provided by conflict approaches have led to the following questions: Did conflict emerge out of the rupture of a collective belief system? Did conflict arise because social identities became incompatible in practice? Did conflict emerge from a competition over resources?

Additional critique on AR's theory of failed nations and institutions allows to be summed up as following: firstly, as all nations worldwide show institutional weaknesses, a comprehensive assessment should involve the identification of the point at which a certain institutional weakness or a combination of several actually indicates a dysfunctional state. Following, there is a point at which unstable or unreliable institutions are no longer tenable in the eyes of a population. What requires additional scrutiny, is why and at what point some nations revolt. Thirdly, the authority of historical institutionalism in the field of conflict studies would improve drastically if it could identify what historical event could be identified as the critical juncture that ultimately creates a new feedback cycle or institutional drift. Lastly, a proper analysis should adopt a less normative approach concerning the path towards inclusive institutions, which is not necessarily the path of liberal democracy.

The aforementioned remarks essentially imply that although an institutional analysis may be adequate in deducting the effects of and providing an analysis of a given set of formal and informal rules in society and nations, it is harder to find a theoretical point from which to explain where international institutional differences come from.

These questions and remarks serve to answer the main question of this research: to what extent is the theory of institutional meltdown a theoretical partner towards a comprehensive framework for conflict analysis?

4. Ukraine: an ethnic conflict approach

Post-communist states faced a dual process of transition. Next to questions of political and economic nature, Ukraine and many of its neighbours were confronted for the first time with 'stateness' (Offe, 2004) and the necessity of state-building. This task was further elaborated upon in the 1996 constitution, which stresses Ukraine as a unitary state and the necessity of continuing the 'centuries-old tradition of the Ukrainian state formation' (Constitution, Art. 2). This notion fundamentally side-lined the idea of a state-nation, which would acknowledge and accommodate a multiplicity of cultures.

The contemporary state connects the people that rely on it for security and the protection of freedoms, through a shared culture, history or even only common borders. In this way, 'territorial states thus became nation-states' (Spruyt, 133) as is the case for Ukraine. Accordingly, the shared national identity is predominantly based on the idea of a nation. In this case, the nation is based on a relatively recent political construction and has known very little continuity in its formation. The dynamics of Ukrainian culture have often been determined by outside forces. The Habsburg Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Ottoman Empire and most recently the Soviet Union (SU) have all influenced Ukraine's boundaries, identity and societal structures. Forthcoming interventions, internal divisions as well as variations in language policies, elite conflicts and institutional weaknesses laid a shaky foundation for unification.

The multiplicity of external influences has produced regional differences. These are manifested in various cultural outlooks between the Slavic, Russian minority and large Ukrainian group. Accordingly, through language policies favouring Russian or Ukrainian in turns. Lastly, through the regional differences in voting patterns, consistently creating an array from east to west.

The main issues that are examined in the academic debate on Ukrainian cultural identity are language and historiography. These have undergone dynamic developments intrinsically connected to state policies. The aim of this chapter is to examine whether these developments and their consequences confirm the differences in natural ties as crucially incompatible in Ukraine. The theoretical lenses for this assessment are ethno-symbolism and instrumentalist conflict theory, which offer due thought to the earlier identified questions: whether conflict emerged out of a rupture of a collective belief system, the practical incompatibility of social identities or a competition over resources. These considerations aim to provide insight into the hypothesis that *differences in natural ties in Ukraine are essentially incompatible and lead to inevitable conflict.*

4.1 Ethno-symbolic approach

According to the theory of ethno-symbolism, a social group relies on ethno-symbolic resources such as a shared past or language to sustain itself. These create the boundaries of multiple social identities. Symbolism in Ukraine as cultural reinforcement is contested mostly by differing views on history and language. First, there is a distinct difference between the history of Ukraine and Ukrainian history. Its historical path concerns a continuation of shifting borderlands and foreign dominations. The struggle against foreign domination throughout is remarkably different from the traditional path that leads to the 'birth of a nation'. This has caused for severe struggles in Ukrainian nation building and a continuously changing historiography. Second, a homogenous country without ethnic and linguistic fragmentation can only be the outcome of deliberate policies (AR, 2012). As for Ukraine, many laws and policies have enabled both Russian and Ukrainian to develop in turns.

To understand the role that the people played in the fall of the Yanukovich presidency and how a shared yet divisible cultural identity has influenced the demand for the ousting of Yanukovich, their available ethnic symbols are assessed following.

4.1.1 History

Most commonly, the history of Ukraine starts with the foundation of Kyiv. Although its date of birth is uncertain, it most likely dates back to the 4th or 5th century. The territory which is now called Ukraine was known as 'Kyiv-Rus' and Ukrainians called themselves 'Ruthenes'. The dynamic Kyiv Empire fell apart in the 10th century. By then, the empire had grown into the forerunner of the multi-ethnic melting-pot that Ukraine would become, and consisted of East-Slavics, Fins, Greeks, Armenians, Germans, Jews and Turks (Jansen, 2014).

Meanwhile, new centres of power were emerging next to Kyiv. By the 14th century Moscow had become a new global ruler. The commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania took over parts of Ukraine and Polish influence grew rapidly. Near the end of the 16th century the plains were referred to as 'Ukraine' (Jansen, 2014). The Polish rule brought cultural influences from the West to the Ukrainian areas and reforms to the orthodox and catholic churches.

The second half of the 17th century is known in Ukraine as the *Ruina*. In total chaos and anarchy, Russians, Polish, Turks and Cossacks fought for Ukraine. The Russian expansion led from the entire Black Sea coast, including Crimea, to the north-eastern borderland. The territory became known as *Novorussia*. Between 1778 and 1787 the harvests in New Russia were increased by five hundred percent and Ukraine gained its reputation as 'breadbasket of Europe' (Kozlov, 1992).

Under the Russian rule of Catherine the Great the country was subjected to a *russification* policy. Ukrainian was regarded as a dialect and education was focused on the assimilation with Russian culture (Jansen, 63). From the 19th century onwards, Ukrainian literature, theatre and music gained room for development. The younger Ukrainian generation of *narodovtsi* ignited an enormous growth in nationalist cultural organizations. The *Istoria Oekrainy-Roesy* was written in these times, which gave historical legitimacy to the idea of a Ukrainian nation.

On the Galician side of the region, the Ukrainians formed a minority next to Poles, Jews and Germans. By the early 20th century, the intelligentsia in Galicia distanced themselves from the term *roesyny*, Ruthenians, which resembled *roesky*, Russians, too clearly (Jansen, 2014). National independence was now an ultimate goal. Although nationalist newspapers, politics and language were developing, the Polish stayed dominant and Ukrainian-Polish antagonism grew.

On the eve of the First World War the entire region consisted of a colourful mixture of Russians, Polish, Germans, Jews, Tartars and many whose nationality was just unclear. The war entailed serious consequences for Ukraine. Most Ukrainians were located in either Russia or Austria-Hungary. Consequently, they came face to face with their compatriots.

Only a week after the 1917 revolution ignited in Russia, Ukrainian representatives formed a central *Rada*, representing practically all Ukrainian parties (Borys, 1980). Petrograd however, did not accept the Kyiv demands of independence and the Rada decided to declare itself autonomous. When the Provisional Government in Petrograd was removed and replaced with a Bolshevik government under the guidance of Lenin, the Rada declared the Ukrainian Soviet Republic's independence with the support of Germany. The Bolshevik regime enjoyed nearly no domestic support.

On the Austrian side of the border the tide was turning just as rapidly. In October 1918 the Ukrainian state within Austria-Hungary was declared, with the renamed Lviv as its capital. Now, there were two Ukrainian republics. On January 22, 1919, the union of both republics was signed, but failed to stand united against its two enemies, Poland and Russia. Ukraine became the battlefield for Reds and Whites.

At the end of the civil war, 'Russian was reinstated as the only official language' (Jansen, 97) and communism was to be implemented immediately. Farmers responded with uprisings. Guided by own interests, they turned against national minorities. Between 1919 and 1920 severe anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukraine took place. In December 1919, Kyiv was now for the third time occupied by the Bolsheviks. Meanwhile, Ukraine was perceived as the ideal buffer state in the eyes of Poland. It conquered the country up until the river Dnepr, until the Bolsheviks definitively ensured a soviet victory in 1921.

The administrative unity that came in the Soviet era was new to the Ukrainians. Under a policy of *Ukrainization*, the Ukrainian language was stimulated to promote the integration of the socialist order. The process of nation-building became possible. The thirties also brought a thriving industrialization east of the Dnepr (Jansen, 107), yet the eastern part of Galicia, still in the hands of Poland, kept its agricultural character and underwent an opposed policy of *polonization*.

Due to the forced collectivization of the late twenties, a dramatic famine broke out in 1932 that killed upwards of seven million people, mostly ignored by Soviet press. Since 1991, the famine is called the *Holodomor*, 'murder by hunger'. The famine destroyed the peasantry as a social and ethnic force and 'effectively ended any Ukrainian ethnographic claim' (Kuzio et al, 17) on the regions most severely hit.

The Ukrainization came to an abrupt end in 1932 and the Russian language and culture regained their dominant status, followed by the Great Purge of 1937-1938. Nevertheless, a sense of national solidarity grew under the Ukrainians in Poland, ironically stimulated by the SU: many nationalist organizations were secretly supported as to create opposition against Poland. The wish to form an ethnically homogeneous Ukraines, a united state, grew.

The definitive call for unity came with the first declaration of independence on March 15, 1939. Unfortunately, the promised support from Germany remained a promise and the young republic quietly died less than 24 hours later. Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop-pact, Germany agreed that the territory would remain under the Soviet sphere of influence.

Under the guidance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union the Ukrainian people became reunited in one Ukrainian republic. Once again there was room for *Ukrainaization*, now accompanied by a political re-education campaign that was anti-religious and focused on the nationalization of industry and banks. *Operation Barbarossa* forced the Ukrainians on 22 June 1941 to choose between leadership of Stalin or Hitler.

The expulsion of the Bolsheviks was a welcome development for the Ukrainians. On June 30, 1943 an independent Ukrainian state was again proclaimed. The Ukrainian nationalists hoped that after the war an independent Ukrainian state would emerge and as a precaution they started a cleansing operation against the Poles. As soon as the Germans began to lose the battle, the nationalists attempted to display a more democratic face, in vain. Ukraine was now caught between Moscow and Berlin (Rossolinski-Liebe, 2014).

After the war, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea became a Russian province and its residents were replaced by Russian settlers (Jansen, 2014). The 1945 Yalta conference ensured the loss of Polish territory around Lwów/Lviv, which meant a gain for Ukrainian territory. For the first time in history, the Ukrainian

Soviet Republic was a nation-state for all Ukrainians. Although this embodied a century-old national dream, the union of the Ukrainian territories had a Soviet character. Massive ethnic cleansings were no exception, including a mass migration of Poles and Ukrainians to mutual territories. The extermination of Jews, the deportation of the Poles and the exodus of the Germans made the Ukrainian Soviet Republic ethnically more homogeneous than ever, but this was associated with an influx of Russians and rising pressure on Ukrainians to adapt to Russian culture.

Ukrainians encountered a politics of *re-sovietization* in which civil nationalism was a crime. The eastern parts of Ukraine willingly underwent this campaign, as a substantial part of the people 'felt more 'Soviet' than Ukrainian or Russian' (Jansen, 152). To Sovietize Western-Ukraine, an intense propaganda offensive was launched. Key positions in politics were occupied by Russians or Eastern-Ukrainians. No effort was wasted to underline the connection between Moscow and Kyiv. The communist nationality policies and historiography 'furthered a 'little Russian' complex [...] in which Ukrainians were defined as raw ethnographic material to be nationalized into the New Soviet Man' (Kuzio 1). Not only the strangely misplaced titanium *People's Friendship Arch* in Kyiv stem from this period, it was in 1954 when the Russian Soviet Republic decided to give Crimea to Ukraine.

Nationalism had certainly not disappeared during the communist reign, although the manipulation of history was not an uncommon way to enforce ideologies on the Ukrainian people. State nationalism in the communist period 'required a manipulation of national history' (Gerrits, 11) but anti-Russian sentiments simultaneously became an element of nationalism. National independence and sovereignty were still guiding principles.

By the end of the eighties, the criticism on failing governments found support in most of the country. The first mass demonstrations took place in Kyiv and Lviv in 1989. In January 1990, a human chain between Lviv and Kyiv was organised. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians stood united to remember the union of the two Ukrainian republics 71 years earlier (Magocsi, 2014). On December 1, 1990 the Ukrainian people massively voted for independence. The fate of the Soviet Union had been sealed.

4.1.2 *Historiographic interpretations*

Many of the foreign rulers brought great suffering for Ukrainians. Nevertheless, independent Ukraine benefitted greatly from their territorial conquests and forced modernization. Ethnic cleansings brought homogeneity to the nation. Opportunities for state-building always rose in power vacuums. These chances however, were accompanied by risks for intermingling by larger and stronger geopolitical forces throughout. The alternating annexations, declarations of independence and partial sovereignty of Crimea throughout the years exemplify this risk.

The historical path of Ukraine fails to provide a single, shared historical experience that can call to the idea of a national identity. Accordingly, the construction of a national history has been a prominent problem in Ukrainian nation-building. The historical legacy mostly consists of foreign domination, forming a continuously interrupted process of state formation. Not only has Ukrainian history more than once divided its people, its interpretation has had an ambiguous, changing character under each ruling ideology. The Soviet period in this sense was the most formative as it continued to 'sway the way residents of Ukraine perceive their state' (Marples, 1) and historiography was dominantly used as a service to the regime. After the independence, several blank spots in history were left, as there was nothing to replace the Soviet-view with.

The plurality of interpretations shows further ambivalence in perspectives on its final independence and the path towards it. The different interpretations existing today are mainly regional: as the east and south were subjected to specific Soviet interpretations, the alternative was the nationalistic view of western Ukraine. This has led some scholars to go as far as to state that the entire Ukrainian nation is a construction of historians. Plokhy (1995) argues that Ukraine's independence was the victory of two historical myths. First, there is the notion that Ukraine is an old nation with a glorious past that has been denied its legitimate statehood by the Russian tsarist and Soviet Communist regimes. Second, that Ukraine was an economic power house, in terms of being the 'breadbasket of Europe' and a major industrial power. This leads to two conflicting views of Ukraine as both victim and victor.

Ukrainian historians in the post-Soviet years indeed show a level of ambivalence in perspectives on independence and the path towards it: the Ukrainian path is either one of victimization or glorification. With regard to its longest and most influential ruling, this leads to ambivalence towards the SU. Was it 'the epitome of evil or a benevolent and paternal master that saw the advancement of Ukrainians, as well as other non-Russian nations, in an egalitarian manner?' (Marples, xvii).

Throughout history itself, western Ukraine was mostly subjected to different views than eastern and southern Ukraine. This is reflected in their interpretation of several key historical events. For instance, the *Holodomor* enacted by Stalin was denied as an act of genocide for a long period in the eastern regions (Marples, 2007). Western-Ukrainian historians characterize Ukraine as a victim of other nations in its quest for independence and view the Soviet period as a an equal, negative occupation. This also pitted eastern Ukrainians against the nationalist western Ukrainians, who 'were continually vilified as 'nazi collaborators' and 'anti-soviet renegades' (Kuzio et al, 17).

The influence of national identity on later events in Ukraine questions the legitimacy of the 'non-historical' conclusion. The history of Ukraine shows the story of a people that ultimately came to a shared goal of union and independence, even though stemming from different directions. Deep polarisation was absent in this struggle, although an ethnically based nationalism would never hold in many parts of

Ukraine. History shows that Ukraine has always been a multi-ethnic state, but the knowledge and education on its roots has often been dismissed to a secondary status. State policy directed towards a unified history and historiography, and forthcoming reconciliation between citizens, has been absent. The plurality of historiographic interpretations in Ukraine shows little indication a collective belief system and is a weak addition to Ukrainian symbolism.

4.1.3 Linguistic differences

The creation of domestic consensus and the idea of one people united in one nation has been further complicated by a language division in Ukraine, directly connected to its historical path. In the 11th century the cultural language was Slavic, promoted by the Church, written in Cyrillic. The lower classes spoke the East-Slavic language, from which Ukrainian, White Russian and Russian sprouted.

During the next centuries, most of the rulers recognized Ukrainian as a dialect stemming from either Russian or Polish and it indeed showed both influences. Depending on the policy conducted, Ukrainian went from state language to repressed dialect and back. After the 1848 revolution it was an official language in all layers of education, but by the end of that century the Russian policy became repressive against Ukrainian language and culture (Kulyk, 2013). Under the following policy of *korenizatsia*, all non-Russian languages in the SU were stimulated, to promote the integration of the socialist order. But in the 1930's the Ukrainization was aborted and Russian became the lingua franca of the communist future. Along with the *perestroika*, Ukrainian gained status of official Soviet language. Russian language and literature were phased out of education, and 'Ukrainian' or 'European' values had been introduced through textbooks and new curricula' (Polese, 42)

From his first day in office, former president Kravchuk had 'highlighted the role of the Ukrainian language in politics and identity construction' (Polese, 41). Accordingly, a law was introduced that obliged the President to speak Ukrainian. His successor, Leonid Kuchma, realised 'that the language question was extremely delicate and, if wrongly handed, could negatively impact his political survival' (Polese, 43). The 1996 constitution declared Ukrainian as the official state language, without restraining the use of Russian (Constitution, Art. 10). But because Russian was no longer a state language, it was classified as a minority language, equating Bulgarian and Moldovan. This particular article laid foundations for conflicts in political parties throughout the independence years.

The policies that followed between 1991 and 2010 fully accommodated the development of the Ukrainian language through relatively relaxed programs. The official instructions of the state, explain that at any 'official occasion when a third party could be watching or listening' Ukrainian should be used (Polese, 45). Ukrainians are relatively free to use their preferred language in other occasions. In practice, this means that in schools the state sponsored material is in Ukrainian, yet complemented by Russian examples in

class. A television reporter addresses people in Ukrainian, yet they may respond in Russian. The most peculiar example is that of the medicinal instructions: although Ukrainian is not understood by a large minority in Ukraine, there is no other language on the label.

Numerous surveys conducted by several acclaimed independent organizations show diversity in figures. Questions on the language issue are sometimes asked between numerous questions on EU ties, posited in the context of Russia rapprochement or as the sole subject of the survey. Consequently, contrasting many of these surveys shows highly ambivalent preferences, incompatible even. A majority in 2008 (Kulyk) prefers an increased use of Ukrainian, but the number of respondents opting for a decreased use of Russian is way lower. There is also a large variety in the definitions used in questions. When asked whether the respondent 'identifies' with a language, this may give different results than when asked which language is preferably spoken. Additionally, 'feeling Ukrainian' does not directly imply a dismissal of the Russian language, as this might feel part of the 'Ukrainian feeling'.

The picture of the status quo that emerges is that of existing, yet loosely enforced rules. This may have eased the enforcement of a Ukrainian identity 'even by those who might be unable to acknowledge all the identity markers proposed by the state' (Polese, 43). It became a widely accepted view that firstly, there would be 'little likelihood of a serious conflict between the main ethnolinguistic groups' (Kulyk, 280). Secondly, that the language issue was mostly caused or worsened by political interests, and

'neither an upgrade of the status of Russian nor the promotion of Ukrainian language and culture was in any ethnic or regional group considered nearly as important as an increase of living standards, fighting corruption, or other socioeconomic goals' (Kulyk, 287).

In 2012, the most controversial language law thus far was introduced. The law aimed at preventing marginalization of lesser-used languages (Law No9073, Art. 7). Russian, as well as other minority languages, would be given the status of official language (Interfax, 2012). Although this decisively ended the idea of a unitary state, thus accommodating the variety of cultural differences in Ukraine, the law was highly controversial and led to parliamentary fights as well as protest rallies. Given the widespread use of Russian as a daily language, treating it as a minority language in need of protection raised some red flags. Instead of accommodating ethnic diversity, it 'exacerbated old fears of supporters of Ukrainian that the Party of Regions wanted to pave the way for actual uni-lingualism in the east and south and the predominance of Russian nationwide' (Kulyk, 303). Indeed, Yanukovich often spoke 'of the need to ensure the rights of Russian-speakers but rarely mentions those who (wish to) speak Ukrainian' (Kulyk, 287). The language law was abolished in February 2014, days after Yanukovich' ouster.

If some markers of identity, such as language, are not acceptable on a bottom level, then a top-down approach of language policies may be rejected. But non-Ukrainian speakers are not excluded from the monolingual state that Ukraine is *de jure*, as it is not monolingual *de facto*: linguistic differences were accommodated through laws with loose control. The absence of formal punishment for not abiding the rules is one of the reasons why, besides some small-scale demonstrations, 'no ethnic clashes have been recorded in Ukraine' (Polese, 47) concerning solely the language issue. Tolerance for well-targeted nation-building increases when compliance is possible only in parts. However, the changed law under Yanukovych emphasized the importance of legal protection of Ukrainian. As the language is one of the most tangible and rare boundaries of Ukrainian identity, the issue was highly salient and caused for some civil protest.

4.2 Elite-theory approach

According to elite theory, antagonist identities are deliberately constructed through propaganda and the allocation of resources. Agency is placed at the level of the elites both internally and externally. The most influential external actors over Ukraine are Russia and the EU. Varying between governments, Ukraine has pursued a status as bridge between these, or as buffer zone, or actively conducted an EU oriented policy, alternated with Russia-first strategies. As it comes to internal actors, the competition over resources receives further consideration. The difference between elite and people in Ukraine is largely due to a strong oligarchy influencing politics and economy.

4.2.1 External actors

When the SU was dissolved at the end of 1991, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was established, existing of most of the former Soviet republics. In the early years of Ukraine's independence, its foreign policy was primarily focused on defending this freedom, primarily against Russia, which was struggling to accept the death of the ancient empire. For Russia, the CIS was a structure to coordinate its member states under the guidance of Moscow. Conversely, for Kyiv the CIS was an instrument for further detachment.

Despite the ties that Ukraine has with Russia, it did not succeed to conduct a coherent, co-ordinated Russia strategy (Bukkvoll, 2001) (Bogomolov, 2012). Two main reasons cause the absence of a well-articulated partnership idea. Firstly, for historical and cultural reasons Ukraine is perceived as an integral part of Russia's identity. If a Ukraine policy were to be explicitly developed, it would 'provide Ukrainian independence with more recognition than they wanted' (Bukkvoll, 1142). Secondly, Russia's resources are restrained. The power Russia holds over oil and gas, the informal business networks and the Russian minority were not strong enough 'to effect substantial changes by itself in Ukrainian behaviour' (Bukkvoll, 1145). Instead, Russia relies on 'its national myths to devise narratives and projects intended to bind

Ukraine in a 'common future' with Russia and other post-Soviet states' (Bogomolov, 1). Russia-Ukraine relations thus reflect sentiments of a shared discourse of common values, rather than a forward-looking strategic partnership.

From a Ukrainian perspective, rapprochement with Russia was sought under the guidance of eastern Ukrainian leaders Kuchma and Yanukovich. Yanukovich' Party of Regions in particular adopted 'the Russian theory that Ukraine's present is Russia's past' (Bogomolov, 3). However, an equal relationship was never established. Despite a clearly Russia-oriented policy concerning education and language, no substantial offer was made in return. This leads to the conclusion that 'Yanukovich's naivety about Russia is far deeper than Kuchma's' which might be 'a product of his roots in the working class region of Donetsk which, together with the Crimea, incorporate the most pro-Russian political cultures (Kuzio, 2012, 8)'.

The Party of Regions had positioned itself as representing this minority, thereby 'politicizing cultural and linguistic differences within Ukraine' (Kudelia, 20). Despite the ambivalent relationship, rapprochement with the EU undermined the attempts by Yanukovich to establish stronger ties with Russia. In fact, the agreement between Ukraine and EU which would be signed under Yanukovich' successor, led to a complete deterioration of Ukraine-Russia relations and the annexation of Crimea.

A critical difference with other states in the post-communist region was the prospect and conditionality of accession to the EU market. This secured several attempts domestic changes towards the democratic European framework. However, the EU's attitude towards Ukraine and vice-versa was ambiguous, to say the least. Rather, priority was with Russia relations, commonly referred to as the 'Russia first' strategy. Several dialogues and negotiations with Ukraine had taken place since 1991, but ambiguity grew even stronger when Yanukovich took office and Ukrainian politics rapidly slid back into semi-authoritarianism.

In the meantime, the negotiations with the EU on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), the Association Agreement (AA) and the Action Plan (AP) on visa liberalization continued. In fact, Yanukovich was keen throughout the years in office to stress 'the highest priority of the European strategic course of Ukraine' calling European integration 'key priority of our foreign policy, and also a strategy for carrying out systemic social and economic reforms' (EurActiv, 2010).

Here it should be noted that even before the Maidan events, the true willingness of the Yanukovich administration to implement structural changes was questioned. Unlike other former SU countries, Ukraine had shown ambiguous political will to choose a foreign policy direction. The 'widespread perception that the West has hidden agendas and an anti-Russian bias in which Ukraine is used as a *cordon sanitaire*' (Bogomolov, 6) did not stimulate a decision in favour of the EU. Instead, Yanukovich' predecessors chose to portray Ukraine either as a bridge between East and West or as a buffer zone. By

the time Yanukovych reached office, there was little evidence pointing towards an abandonment of this multi-vector foreign policy.

The EU was aware of Ukraine's rapprochement with Russia, but had no intention to disregard the political conditions it had required up until Euromaidan: the AA and DCFTA would not be signed 'purely on geopolitical considerations' (EurActiv, June 2013). These conditions concerned a transformation of the entire system for 'enforcing laws and administering justice'. Yanukovych's hesitation to meet these requirements makes sense, as the consequences of these changes 'would likely mean that he and his lieutenants would face indictments for their financial misdeeds' (Aslund, 70).

Although both AA and visa regime liberalization were conditional upon institutional reforms in Ukraine, few reforms were actually implemented. Subsequently, whereas the EU demanded a strengthening of democratic principles and inclusive constitutional reform, the weak administrative capacities of Ukraine in their turn hampered reforms towards the European demands. Nevertheless, negotiations continued with a stable pace. A possible explanation could be found in strategic considerations. If the door of EU approximation would fully close, Ukraine's 'only integration option is within the CIS' (Kuzio, 410) meaning Russia would have achieved its strategic objective to keep Ukraine under its sphere of influence.

To sum up, the political dialogue between the EU and Ukraine and Russia and Ukraine had little consequences on domestic policies throughout. Yanukovych's ideological ambiguity was stronger than of any of his predecessors. As he took office, the Party of Regions was clear to stress the importance of strong ties with Russia and conducted a Russia-favouring cultural policy. At the same time, Yanukovych took a pro-EU stance on the international stage. Although refusing to implement domestic changes – instead deflecting towards undemocratic manners, this ambiguity eventually undermined Yanukovych attempts to conduct a truly multi-vector foreign policy and balance Ukraine's strategic partners.

4.2.2 Internal factors

Already in the mid-1990s the oligarchic clans grew into their current size and shape. These groups gained a dominant influence on politics and economics and created unequal decision making processes. Three clans attained most influence throughout the years: the Donetsk clan, concerned with metallurgy, financed by Rinat Akhmetov. Secondly, the Dnipropetrovsk clan, concerned with high-value added steel products, and the Kyiv clan which was least structured of the three yet highly influential as long as it stood united.

The network of personal patronage caused for a far-reaching redistribution of economic favours and privileged access to economic resources. The competition over resources indeed had destructive effects for the societal groups taking part in this competition: the oligarchic elite that sought economic gains and, simply, everyone else. The deliberate manipulation of the political processes, out of a desire for individual

economic gains, created great wealth divisions in Ukrainian society. However, the continuation of leakage and corruption did not cause increased civic unrest under Yanukovich's predecessors.

The main difference with Yanukovich and the previous years was the type and kind of patronage. This was much more personal under his ruling and in essence excluded many oligarchs if they were not familial or closely related to Yanukovich. Eventually, this caused discontent and frustration, meaning an enemy was shaped in his former financial allies. The rise and ruling of the oligarchy in Ukraine shall be further assessed in chapter 6. Suffice to note in light of the conflict analysis question of whether conflict emerged from a competition over resources: a decisive display of the oligarchic frustration was absent until after the unrest had erupted. It was then, when several oligarchs decided to support the Euromaidan movement and the ousting of Yanukovich. Before November 2013, no such phenomenon is observed.

4.3 Conclusions: unaccommodated cultural hybridity

If anything became clear after the events of the 2013 winter and their current aftermath, it is the power of civil society as a moving force. All of Ukraine's previous governments had enjoyed a level of political passiveness of the population or at least of part of it. Under Yanukovich this passiveness had decisively disappeared.

The findings of the ethnic conflict approach do not sufficiently confirm basic assumptions found in many media or even scholarly findings. Despite Yanukovich's Russia-oriented policies, the plurality of historiographic interpretations in Ukraine is a constraint on any rupture of a collective belief system, as there is no such thing to begin with.

The process of state-building in Ukraine was inconsistent throughout. Differences between east and west are a consequence of the various foreign rulers among which Ukraine has been distributed. National history was written down as a battle against foreign, mostly Russian, domination, but was poorly received in eastern regions. In the early post-communist days, nationalism was an attractive alternative to communism, but communism regained popularity when the economy was down. Ukrainian became the official state language, but Russian is the dominant spoken language in most parts of the country. To sum up, Ukraine's national tradition was never fully developed and was seriously undermined in several ways.

Thus, when the protesters came together on Independence Square, there was little readily available linguistic symbolism nor historical mythology to be employed to show identity. Many symbols came from ambivalent backgrounds and had multiple connotations. Also, many nationalist symbols developed during Soviet ruling and are therefore associated with the past. In line with the post-Soviet character of

Euromaidan, there was general refusal to 'borrow ideas and symbols from the past in order to outline the future' (Gerasimov, 36). Nevertheless, 'national issues were not the only items on the [Maidan] agenda - in fact, they were not even central. Neither were, for that matter, questions of language or historical memory' (Gerasimov, 28). Rather, the central aim was modernization of political values and eventually, the forthcoming ouster of Yanukovich.

The void of symbolism at the Maidan Square was further filled with an embracement of cultural hybridity. Public, leading figures of the movement did not avoid deploying a multi-faceted 'Ukrainness' by admitting that despite 'belonging to Russian culture, they are comfortable in the Ukrainian-language environment and consciously embrace Ukrainian 'ethnic' culture' confident in intermediary position (Gerasimov, 33).

The absence of national imagery led to some remarkable appearances of public figures. For instance, Poroshenko responded to Russian propaganda referring to Ukrainians as *ukrops*, dill-heads, by wearing an emblem of dill on his clothing (Українська правда, 2014). As the conflict snowballed into a Revolution with the revolutionary demands, symbols of the EU were increasingly visible. These symbols increased the oppositional identity of Ukrainians versus their government.

This hybridity is not a new phenomenon. As the previous paragraphs have demonstrated, the cultural identity of Ukraine has been hard to define and categorise. The problem for the young republic was the double task of creating both a common identity and social identity, while preserving the multiplicity of cultural factors hindering social cohesion. Problematic was the refusal by state institutions to accept this hybridity and accommodate the people's dynamic, cultural diversity. Noteworthy in this context is the aforementioned constitutional amendment of 2004 in which expectations for a unitary state were even further elaborated. By attempting to achieve a homogenous society, a multifaceted culture was denied development.

As a newly independent state, ethnic and linguistic divisions were, according to elite-theory, exacerbated on purpose as it was part of the creation of a nation. Through a revival of historiography, the primordial right over territory could be confirmed and legitimized. The establishment of a common national identity necessitates cultural differentiation from the 'other'. In this sense, anti-Russian sentiments form a crucial element of nationalism and the construction of identity, as it is the 'other' against which the Ukrainian 'self' is created and its cultural core was defined. On the other hand, there appears to be a strong sentimental connection to Russia. Consequently, 'calls for union with Russia are not simply expressions of national

identity but are inevitably bound up with nostalgia for the past' (D'Anieri, 70). This sentiment is further entrenched by the large ethnic Russian minority group.

Incompatibility of social identities may be further exacerbated by external and internal actors. The elite-theory approach exposes little influence of external actors on Ukraine's domestic groups. The attempts by Russia to keep Ukraine under its sphere of influence created an ambivalent attitude of Ukrainians towards their former colonizer, whereas the EU's attempts to the same goal were hesitant from the beginning and met with equal frustration. Actual reforms remained absent.

Yanukovych was even more ambivalent than his predecessors in matters of foreign policy: while conducting a Russia-favouring political and economic policy, he took a pro-EU stance in public. His ambivalence eventually undermined his attempts to conduct an effective multi-vector foreign policy and balance Ukraine's strategic partners. Despite the little actual influence the EU and Russia had on Ukraine, the failed foreign policy eventually caused for geopolitical unrest.

As it comes to internal actors, the competition over resources is largely played by a strong oligarchy influencing politics and economy. Although the civic protests may have been inspired by an overwhelming frustration with corruption and a poorly performing economy, the outburst of the protest is in line with the theory's expectation that conflict is accommodated by actors in order to achieve their own interests and gains. Many of the oligarchic groups actively or financially supported the protest movement against Yanukovych, as he had antagonized them by favouring his close relatives. Nevertheless, a decisive display of the oligarchic frustration with Yanukovych was absent until after the Euromaidan unrest had erupted. It was then, when several oligarchs decided to support the Euromaidan movement and the ousting of Yanukovych. Before November 2013, no such phenomenon is observed. The most influential factor of these is thus the external actors that caused for geopolitical unrest. However, the other indicators remain unconfirmed.

FINDINGS

The ethno-symbolic approach fails to confirm basic assumptions on the incompatibility of Ukraine identities. Rather, **the Ukrainian identity is hybrid** and lacks unitary symbolism.

The elite theory perspective confirms a **failed multi-vector foreign policy**, although the external actors had less influence over domestic policies than commonly expected.

The approach also confirms how internal actors participated in a highly extractive competition over resources. **The competition was disrupted** by the personal patronage approach of Yanukovych.

According to the previously established definition, a conflict is any situation 'in which two or more parties perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals' (Mitchell, 17). Having established a conflict was at play, the question that remains open after these findings is who these conflicting parties were. Social identities nor the competition over resources proved practically incompatible. The problem that appears, is the refusal by the state to accept and accommodate cultural identity. No decisive foreign policy nor cultural policy had been conducted. This indicates the main actors in the Euromaidan were, in fact, not EU or Russia sympathizers. Rather, it was a failing government and a dissatisfied people. In this light, the political institutions of Ukraine shall be further assessed.

5. Ukraine: political institutional framework

Through the 19th century, society in Ukraine and most parts of Europe was dominated by serfdom, meaning little freedom of movement or economic opportunities existed. Farther east, the empire of the Russian Peter the Great was 'consolidating an absolutism far more intense and extractive than even Louis XIV could manage' (AR, 107). Tsars and nobility represented about 1 percent of the population and organized the political institutions to perpetuate their power. The repetition of history is rarely as evident as it is in Ukraine.

The disintegration of the USSR led to a prioritization of state and nation building. The definition of Ukraine's political community and institutions was blurred by questions of the extent of power that should be centralized or devolved to territorial regions, the creation of the new state apparatus and the creation or further development of a common national identity. Thus, as opposed to many Western European states in which state building largely preceded nation building, Ukraine embarked upon both processes simultaneously, addressing the civil, political and social requirements of effective democracies.

Both the Declaration of Independence as well as many of the laws initiated in the early independence years, were 'modelled specifically after those of the European Union and its Member States (Wray, 825)' and the US. Accordingly, Ukraine aspired a statehood of independent democracy and sovereignty. What Ukrainian politics today are perhaps most known for, are the physical altercations in parliamentary sessions. More than once, MP's decided to turn to decision-making-by-fist strategies over language, budget and corruption laws. Besides the sensitivity of the subject matters, the underlying reasons for these situations could quite possibly be found in the fluctuating power of several political formal institutions.

An effective and functioning democratic state, is supported by democratic institutions that ensure the state can 'guarantee territorial integrity, physical security, conditions for the effective exercise of citizenship, the mobilization of public savings, and coordination of resource allocation' (Kuzio, 10). This indicates that the state institutions have the capacity to 'raise and collect taxes, implement policies, and institutionalize a judicial system' (Przeworski, 4). A weak state and underdeveloped institutions threaten the democratization and state building processes. Without an effective state 'there can be no democracy and no markets' (Przeworski, 4).

Key national political institutions throughout the independence years are the Constitution, the office of president, prime minister, Cabinet of Ministers, and *Verkhovna* or Parliament. The President is directly elected for a term of five years, with a maximum of two terms. The 450 members of parliament are elected for a four year term with an exception between 2006 and 2012, when this period covered five years. Before 2006, a proportional representation rule was complement by single-seat constituencies.

After 2006, all members were elected by proportional representation. Although these formal institutions remained unaffected in name, their level of power and authority have changed throughout.

5.1 Overview

In order to evaluate whether the political institutions of the Yanukovych presidency underwent a meltdown in functioning and were decisive to cause conflict, an assessment of the institutional development shall be given here. From a political-economic perspective, oligarchs, patronage and corruption have had a tremendous impact on party creation, decision-making and coalition forming in parliament. From a liberal democratic perspective, the weak institutional setup and fluctuating parliamentary powers have led to a weak or absent sense in ideology and open politics. A particular consensus in scholarly assessments on Ukraine's political framework is found in the impact of the presidential power and the threat of overbearing presidential power. Most scholars seem to agree that the relationship between the executive and legislative body has determined politics ever since, and even before independence.

These conclusions all have equal value. However, the assumptions that follow should be questioned. An apparent conclusion is that the main problem in Ukraine is the absence or weakness of a scrutiny system over the executive or that there is too weak a rule of law. However, the problem is not that the control mechanisms are too weak, but rather that strong power is hidden in it: law 'is a weapon to be selectively applied against one's adversaries' (D'Anieri, 2007, 7). Constitutional requirements or prohibitions exist, but are rarely enforced and mostly on an inconsistent basis. Consequently, it seems that these formal institutions constrain behaviour in some situations and not in others.

The fundamental question that shall guide the assessment of Ukraine's political framework is whether the Euromaidan conflict could be the result of institutional weakness of the political system during the Yanukovych administration. This gives insight to the hypothesis that *the political institutions of Ukraine underwent a meltdown in functioning and led to popular discontent and conflict.*

To properly answer this question, the route of Ukrainian politics is categorized threefold here. Firstly, the early independence years from 1991 until 1994, under the guidance of Leonid Kravchuk. Secondly, the years 1994-2004 governed by Leonid Kuchma. Thirdly, the Orange Revolution in 2004 marked the fraudulent election of Viktor Yanukovych, who was then replaced with Viktor Yushchenko until 2010.

A concluding chapter shall attempt to identify the point at which institutional weakness led to unrest, and consider whether there indeed was a fundamental meltdown surfacing under the Yanukovych presidency which led his position to be untenable.

5.2 Kravchuk's semi-presidentialism

The political disorientation during and following the Euromaidan turmoil is comparable to the early post-Soviet years in which Ukraine's future was undefined. Guidance was expected to come from the newly elected president. Leonid Kravchuk, who held high positions in the Ukrainian SSR, resigned from the Communist Party after the August 1991 Soviet coup attempt. He then was elected as the first Ukrainian president.

The transition from Soviet state to independent nation took place peacefully: there was no political revolution in Ukraine in 1991. The Soviet system did not merely inspire Ukrainian state building. Rather, it remained largely in place. New administrative institutions were built 'within the institutional framework constructed by the Soviets (and with almost all of the same personnel)' (D'Anieri, 14). Many political parties consisted of the business elites from before the breakdown. Exemplary of this phenomenon is the election of former communist Kravchuk.

The early independence years mark a period for Ukraine in which some attempts to reform were taken, in the form of small changes in legislation and foreign policies. Parliamentary amendments on law and constitution are countless, jurisdictions overlapped and provisions were contradictory. However, the commitment to fundamental reforms was doubtful.

The development of the Ukrainian presidency as a political institution must be considered from the same perspective. Soon after independence, the office of president was grafted onto the Soviet-style system of government in which all political power derived from Parliament. After independence, reasons to support a presidential office were easily found: 'Communist deputies [...] viewed the office of president as a strong executive power [...], an autocratic institution that they could and would control. After all, Leonid Kravchuk, the leading candidate, was *their* man' (Kuzio et al, 113). Additionally, most focus was on the accommodation of nation-building and state development for which the office of president was regarded as facilitating.

Resulting from this desire for a strong presidential body, Kravchuk soon sought power expansion. For instance, shortly after his inauguration as President in 1992, he launched the 'Law on the Representatives of the President of Ukraine' meaning the president thereby gained power to appoint heads of *oblast* state administrations 'which effectively formalized presidential control of local government' (Kuzio et al, 126).

The influence of the Soviet system over the Ukrainian system meant a continued concentration of power. Short term, the institutional continuity fostered stability. On the longer term, it led to an obstruction of reform. The monopoly on power during Soviet rule was held by the Communist partners. Reforms were necessary, because bureaucracies and legislatures were built upon this institutional feature. The separation of executive, legislative and judicial branches barely existed. All three 'were expected to hold

to a single line, defined by the executive branch and the Communist Party' (D'Anieri, 13). Although the Soviet constitution was amended to specify that all legislative power derived from parliament, the *Rada* was limited in capacity. Much of its power to propose and implement legislation 'rested squarely with the ministries, which were [...] dominated by the *nomenklatura*' (Wise and Brown, 268).

As for the political institutions in place, the term 'semi-presidentialism' seems most adequate to label them. A prime-minister holds office alongside a popularly elected president. He depends on parliamentary confidence, but is chosen and fired if necessary by the president. The president was not restricted in any way in his choice and was not obliged to follow parliamentary recommendations. The only possibility of dismissal was unilaterally by the acting president. This is exemplary of the skewed distribution of power in Ukrainian politics. It was only after the constitutional reform of 2004 that a dismissal was the sole power of parliament.

Kravchuk initially enjoyed widespread popular support. However, regional popular discontent with the system of president's representatives had grown, as well as the economic problems. Parliament took advantage of the waning support and passed the 'Law on Formation of Local Government Bodies', which established a structure to improve economic and political strength of subnational governments. It effectively 'undermined direct presidential control by eliminating the office of president's representatives' (Kuzio et al, 127). Parliamentary and presidential elections were scheduled early for March 1994 and June of that same year.

5.2.1 *Comments: continued prominence of ex-communist power elites*

That the independence of Ukraine did not result in either the 'destruction of Ukraine's Communist party' (Prizel, 366), nor in institutions built bottom-up, had two major consequences. Firstly, because there was no new framework for constitutionalized political authority on the table, the ambiguous political landscape was characterized by closed political discourses. This made the system highly vulnerable to an authoritative executive seeking to control economic and political spheres, which became clear after Kravchuk's power expanding laws and initiatives. The 1992 law on the president's representatives was only one of many examples.

Secondly, the political elite transformed from being an agent of the Communist system into independent political actors with little incentives to change the existing order, nor any identification with or accountability towards the people in whose name they ruled. Ukrainian statesmen holding the political power represented economic interests, rather than social and societal interests. This, together with the former brutal rule of the KGB in the USSR years, created a highly malleable population. Exemplary of this are polling and voting results in the independence year: 70% of the votes in March 1991 were in favour of

the SU. When asked the same question in December of that same year, an extraordinary 90% of the population was in favour of independence (Prizel, 367).

Alongside the popular sense of 'political helplessness, a culture of victimization [...] and deep distrust of authority' (Kuzio et al, 7) it was also unclear what exactly this general interest was in the first place. Overall, the 1989 collapse of communism in Eastern Europe instigated a necessary search for political systems capable of replacing the old. Ukraine declared an open intention of building a liberal democracy and wrote its institutional arrangements in this direction. However, the collective sense of national consciousness was still being solidified, blurring the definition and meaning of the right path towards a stable political regime. This was an additional obstruction to the implementation of actual political and economic reforms.

In sum, the continued prominence of ex-communist power elites fostered Ukrainian political parties and ministries largely existing of, or created by business groups. Initially, personal gains rather than the creation of a stable political regime were pursued. Ukraine had many of the institutional attributes of an independent state, but these same attributes were hollow and incomplete. For example, Ukraine had a foreign ministry prior to 1991, but 'it [...] was essentially a branch of the Soviet Foreign Ministry. It had no capacity to formulate or direct the foreign policy of an independent state' (Kuzio et al, 40).

Despite the power dealt to the office of President, Kravchuk failed to provide a constructive forward-looking vision. The development of a fully democratic state was consequently delayed, as well as its forthcoming political and economic reforms. With a population detached from politics, the system was highly vulnerable to authoritative executives.

5.3 1994 – 2004: Kuchma's competitive authoritarianism

The 1994 presidential elections appointed Kuchma as the successor of Kravchuk, who then voluntarily left office. The parliamentary elections held earlier that year showed a comeback of the communist party (Nohlen, 2010) most likely in response to the severe economic disappointment of the past years.

A first look at the political institutional context of Ukraine in 1994 would suggest the likelihood of renewed attempts towards an open and competitive political environment: after the severe economic disappointment of the first three years, the economy was improving and the vibrant debate for which the Ukrainian parliament is now infamous, initially was a signal and symptom of the vibrant plurality of political parties' ambitions.

The administration of President Leonid Kuchma, however, showed various means of restricting values of democratic liberty and deteriorating institutional stabilization. Many political moves in this period were concerned with 'efforts to limit political competition (or to predetermine its outcomes' (d'Anieri, 2007, 5)

and took advantage of the vulnerability of the system to authoritarianism. Most pressingly, Kuchma sought further expansion of presidential powers almost immediately upon his election. The system that followed from his actions is commonly referred to as 'competitive authoritarianism'. Competitive authoritarian regimes are defined by the uneasy coexistence of democratic institutions and authoritarian practice. Elections are unfair but remain competitive. Legislature is weak, but a source of opposition. Media face constant harassment but can be critical of the government (Levitsky; Way, 2002). Put simply: the president is the most powerful political institution.

For instance, following the elections Kuchma moved to subordinate the elected chairmen of all *oblasti* to the president. In September 1994 Kuchma establishes the Council of Regions, an advisory body existing of those same chairmen (Sasse, 2001). A complete bypass of parliament concerning regional matters was now complete.

Kuchma pressed parliament to conclude a constitutional accord. The 'Law on Power', which became popularly known as the 'Power Bill' was created to temporarily fill the role of a permanent constitution, while the further provisions of the constitution were still negotiated. The power sharing agreement was enacted in May 1995. Existing ambiguities over the separation of executive, legislative and judicial branches were only partially resolved in the Power Bill.

Additionally, it made regional councils accountable solely to the President. Moreover, it gave Kuchma the ability to appoint all chairmen of local councils to the position of head of their respective state administrations. Regional legislative and executive powers were now unified under the presidential body. Overall, 'significant ambiguity still remains, most notably regarding institutional control over sub-national governments' (Wise and Brown, 268).

Conflict between President and Parliament continued throughout 1994 and 1995. Parliament was simply not powerful enough to veto the presidential edicts and the office of president slowly turned into a law-giving entity. The new parliament-president relationship meant the president was dealt the exclusive right to 'form a government, issue decrees, appoint elected chairmen of local and regional councils as heads of state administrations, and dismiss the heads of local administrations for violations of the law' (Kuzio et al, 115) without any parliamentary confirmation.

Next to the weak powers of parliament, parliament faced the equally heavy burden of internal struggles. Inefficiencies as overwhelming pluralism and underdevelopment hindered democratic consolidation. Therefore, even if parliament was dealt more power, there is little reason to assume the influence of the presidency would have been weakened.

In 1996 the first Ukrainian constitution was adopted, which brought several institutional changes. Until 1996, an important political institution was the Rada Presidium. This body presided over plenary sessions

of parliament and held power to both suspend government acts, submit candidates to the constitutional courts as well as to state motions. Additionally, it had the authority to issue budget- and expenditure legislation. The Presidium determined and confirmed the weekly legislative agenda of the Rada. The new constitution moved its legislative power away from the institution, yet rather than distributing this to Parliament, the right of initiative was now in the hands of the President, Cabinet of Ministers, people's deputies and the National Bank governor. The President had power to veto laws.

The new constitution made the prime minister's position even less tenable, as the President now had the constitutional right to 'appoint the Prime Minister of Ukraine, [...] terminate the authority of the Prime Minister of Ukraine and adopt a decision on his or her resignation' (Constitution, Art. 106, 1996). Additionally, he 'appoints [...] members of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, chief officers of other central bodies of executive power, and also the heads of local state administrations, and terminates their authority in these positions' (Constitution, Art. 106, 1996).

Together with a decline in parliamentary legislative powers, Article 106 demonstrates how regional powers declined. Many decrees in their favour were reversed. The 1996 Constitution contained no prerogatives for regional power: 'there is no decentralization approach embodied in the letter of the law; regional councils are granted relatively limited powers' (Kuzio et al, 129). All strategic, budgetary and cultural decisions made in Kyiv now had even bigger effects on regions and localities.

As the Kuchma years went on, the dominant political elites increasingly came under the influence of oligarchs, further securing the president's power. The four opposition parties were against Kuchma's regime. However, they failed to unify their positions. The first small-scale Ukrainian civil protests emerged after the Gongadze murder and scandal surrounding Kuchma's involvement, infamously known as 'Kuchma gate'. Kuchma supported Yanukovich as his successor.

5.3.1 *Comments*

As the new millennium began, several former SU nations that had chosen democracy as a political end destination were further ahead on this path. Ukrainian governments had claimed to aspire a similar goal, but had hardly achieved this. Two key consequences did result from the constitutional changes: firstly, the Constitution built upon the idea of a state nation, implying a rejection of Ukraine's multiplicity of cultures as the state was expected to be unitary. This created hostility in several regions.

A second consequence of the new constitution was that Ukraine was now also formally established as a unitary state. The heads of *oblast* administrations were separated from their councils and became governors, falling into the executive category. This further strengthened presidential control, as his executive power was now formally connected to regional levels. This added a new source of patronage to the list. Kuchma used his power to appoint governors as a promise to political parties, in exchange for

their support to the draft institution (Sasse, 2001). Kuchma also came to rely upon his governors to mobilize voters for which in turn the regional executives' powers were extended, accompanied by the 'transfer of lucrative state assets' to their control' (Konitzer-Smirnov, 2005). Regional policy under Kuchma was thus mostly elite-oriented.

Resulting from the constitutional amendments, the semi-presidential system under Kravchuk had come to a definitive end. The 'competitive authoritarianism' or 'superpresidential' model concentrated power even more towards the single individual that held presidential office. This means that 'superpresidentialism chills party development in part by holding down incentives for important political and economic actors to invest in politics' (Ishiyama and Kennedy, 1179). Consequently, the incentives for political actors to associate with political parties and ideologies lowered as in the end, the legislature just had too little say in the political discourse.

The lack of political will among Ukraine's leaders is an added consequence of the indecisive break with the former elites and a weak civil society. Following this line of arguments, a full authoritarian system would be a likely outcome for the Kuchma era. However, despite the indeed grown strength of the executive body, full authoritarianism was restrained by several structural components. Some of the enduring constraints on the consolidation of authoritarianism are for example the regional divisions of Ukraine. These create the need for cross-regional support, politically resulting in coalitions. Regionalism also has its institutional effects. Because of the strong sentimental attachment to an actor's regional background, politics will always be balanced. A tip of this balance towards a region would automatically spark resistance. For instance, the issue of language laws in Ukraine has always been salient, because any decision changing the status quo is interpreted as overly favouring western, southern or eastern regions.

A second constraint on the consolidation of authoritarianism is the weakness of Ukraine's economy. An underperforming economy weakens support for the incumbent (D'Anieri, 2011). The enduring conflict between parliament and President also indicates that despite the increased informal and institutionalized powers of the president, this 'did not succeed in fully subordinating the "oligarchs" and preventing a coordinated opposition' (Matsievski, 12). Other members of the political and economic elite were not fully subordinated, allowing for some degree of political pluralism. As Kuchma was able to excessively concentrate political power, opposition was a logical consequence.

The set of provisional rules of procedure before adoption of the Constitution, lacked specific details on role and jurisdiction of the existing political bodies. The provisional rules were further improved and elaborated on in 1994 and 1996, mostly after example of several European parliaments, the US Congress and Soviet parliamentary system. However, there was still no enforcement mechanism to oversee a consequent implementation of these rules. The rules might 'describe the 'correct' procedures, there are no sanctions for their violation, and consequently they are broken quite frequently' (Wise and Brown,

270). Again, the problem was not that there was a lack of rules, rather, that they were inconsistently applied.

5.4 2005-2010: Yushchenko's failed revolution

Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich was handpicked by Kuchma as his successor. His victory in the presidential elections would soon be proven fraudulent. A large-scale protest at Independence Square, the later host of the Euromaidan protests, followed. The protests would become known as the Orange Revolution. This revolution successfully overturned the official election results and led to new elections. The mass mobilization showed similarities with the later Euromaidan protests, but never escalated into comparable violence.

The new president of Ukraine was thus chosen amid a background of profound political change in Ukraine, a period of turmoil and crisis. The winner of the new elections became opposition leader and head of the Our Ukraine party Viktor Yushchenko. His victory was 'marred by the attempted poisoning of Yushchenko' and 'an attempted separatist breakaway movement in the eastern regions of Ukraine, particularly the *oblasts* of Donetsk and Luhansk, where the Orange triumph was perceived as the result of Western influence on Ukrainian political life' (Marples, 240). The breakaway is illustrative of the nature of the Orange protests: widespread, but not unanimously supported.

After the Orange Revolution, the Yushchenko administration had strong ideas of a democratic and functional Ukrainian future. It adopted two institutional reforms leading to the reduction of the president's power as well as the adoption of a fully proportional election law. Initially, Yushchenko brought the promised changes in both constitution and electoral laws.

Election laws until 2004 supported a mixed system in which half the seats were elected proportionally while the other half was determined by majoritarian districts. After the reforms, this was changed into a fully proportional system which meant Ukraine went from presidential back to a parliamentary-presidential government system: a return to earlier semi-presidentialism, in which a prime-minister holds an actual meaningful office alongside a president. Ideally, this would consolidate a party system, making a president rely less on fragmentation and patronage in cabinet formation.

However, the reform program would never be fully implemented. Disagreement in the party coalition with Tymoshenko over the privatization of several large companies led to internal bickering and weakened governance. The reforms concerning the prime-ministerial office intensified rivalry between the Yushchenko and Prime Minister Tymoshenko. After the parliamentary elections of March 2006, the Orange Bloc was divided over Our Ukraine and the Tymoshenko Bloc. Combined, the parties received the majority of votes. However, the united Party of Regions proved stronger and Yanukovich returned as Prime Minister with support of Donetsk's oligarch Renat Akhmetov. Yanukovich in turn agreed to

'abandon his Russia-oriented policies and to continue the course outlined by the president in the direction of Europe' (Marples, 240) under the 'Declaration of National Unity'.

The years that would follow are characterized by feckless pluralism, a frequent turnover of coalitions and four PM's. Active foreign diplomacy announced the direction of Europe and Ukraine appeared committed to joining the EU as well as NATO. No memberships were offered.

Some modest reforms were achieved in the Yushchenko years. With the re-composition of the elite, some 'increase in political competition and pluralism, an expansion of media freedom, and the emergence of a civic political orientation among the inhabitants of most regions of the country' (Matsievski 19) could be observed. Along with a reduction of the presidential powers, these modest achievements appear adequate in restraining a potential future threat of authoritarian consolidation. Additionally, the protests 'did produce a certain degree of political awakening among many Ukrainians (Kuzio, 2005, 122).

Nevertheless, nearing the end of his term, Yushchenko had failed to fulfil many of his promises. The judicial system and political system remained largely intact. Overall, the 'regime has not brought corruption, as a systemic phenomenon, under control' and 'ties between state representatives and citizens continue to be those of patron and client (Matsievski, 21).

Yushchenko was defeated in the first round of the presidential elections in January 2010. The battle for presidency would continue between rival Tymoshenko, and Viktor Yanukovich, with whom the earlier struggle for presidency had led to a poisoning attempt.

5.4.1 Comments

The most comprehensive reforms that Yushchenko promised on the Maidan venue were hindered by strong institutional hurdles. For instance, the elite fragmentation was an obstacle to compromise and cooperation. Instead, the 'chief political players preferred to "play to a victorious finish"—that is, a "zero-sum game" that ended in everyone losing.' (Matsievski, 18). Yushchenko failed to delve deeply into the corruption and misdeeds of his predecessor and officials and became popularly known as an indecisive leader. With a continuation of corruption from the lowest to highest levels, oligarchs controlling key commodities and uncertainty over the national image, people grew fatigued of both Yushchenko as well as politics in general.

The most visible indication of the failure to reform and a still developing national consciousness, is the ease with which Yanukovich returned in politics. His defeat in 2004 seemingly discredited him completely, but his return to power indicates that the Orange Revolutions 'was a revolution in name only and did not result in fundamental political or social changes in Ukraine' (Gorenburg, 7).

Several conclusions can be drawn from the failed reforms. Firstly, the Orange Revolution did not bring change to the 'rules of the game'. Rather, it brought different players. 'A rotation of the elite took place, which at first glance looked like the fall of the regime' (Matsievski, 16). This questions the nature of the revolution itself: because of a lack in actual political changes, the mass mobilization appears to have been an instrument of the succeeding elite in its defeat of the ruling elite. This is further confirmed by the unwillingness or incapability of the elites under the Yushchenko administration to come to democratic reforms. Instead, 'like Kuchma's team, Yushchenko and his colleagues focused on using their power to extract profits rather than improve governance' (Gorenburg, 4).

The rotation of those occupying executive positions leads to the second conclusion to be drawn from the Yushchenko years. Bluntly put: the 'depth to which political corruption has penetrated all pores of society' and equally 'infected 'the "Orange" authorities with this disease' (Matsievski, 22). Because the rules of the game were institutionalized so strongly under the predecessors, these institutions continued to guide and govern politics. The members of the Yushchenko government were a full part of the institutional setup. Therefore, it was inherently impossible to undergo fundamental change.

5.5 Comments: 1991 - 2010

The political arrangements between 1991 and 2010 went from semi-presidentialism, to competitive authoritarianism and back. The relationship between executive and legislative remained problematic throughout. Parliamentary powers were continuously weak, while the power of the presidential office fluctuated. This has caused for disincentives for stable party development and a further deterioration of already weak political ideologies. Politics in Ukraine were personal rather than ideological.

Although strong presidentialism is not an immediate indicator for conflict in all cases, Ukraine certainly did experience several negative consequences. The constitutional amendments of 2006 to cut the powers of the President appeared to be a step towards a stronger legislature and a more balanced distribution of political power. However, the institutional arrangements in Ukraine appear to be the products of interests of the privileged actors that design them. This made the institutions both independent as well as dependent variables. At this point, a discussion of what would create stronger democratic functioning and a more balanced distribution of power in Ukraine is 'irrelevant if this design is not in the interest of powerful actors' (D'Anieri, 2007, 15), because these actors can effectively fight changes 'that will take away their economic privileges and political power' (AR, 107).

In line with the hypotheses proposed by AR, the political elites in power saw and sought self-enriching benefits in certain institutional formats and had great interest in keeping these formats in place. This is not rare, nor is it problematic, as long as resources of power and wealth are evenly distributed. If not, a balanced political system is hard to achieve. Actors that hold extensive control over key political

resources, can then 'use institutional design to solidify its hold on power' leading to a highly extractive, negative feedback loop' (d'Anieri, 2007, 11). The assessment of Ukrainian politics between 1991 and 2010 confirms this negative feedback loop. The institutional design of Ukraine has indeed created self-enriching opportunities for self-interested political actors.

In inclusive institutional designs, other sources of political influence such as patronage, selective law enforcement and the state role in the economy are limited because of control mechanisms in place. In extractive environments, these are 'disproportionately controlled by the executive branch of the government' (d'Anieri, 2007, 12) which in the case of Ukraine has mostly been the Presidential office and the oligarchy, supporting all political parties. This is referred to as neopatrimonialism, meaning personal patronage and privileges are combined with modern bureaucracies in a partial reform equilibrium. Because bureaucratic and judicial decisions were continuously subject to political interference, the formal institutions in Ukraine have proved to be 'inadequate to constrain the behaviour of key actors (especially the president)' (d'Anieri, 2007, 7). This has created an ideal playing field for power politics, in which actors have been able to pursue their goals outside of the institutional framework.

Nevertheless, the Orange Revolution could be seen as an attempt at escape from the negative feedback loop of state capture. However, in hindsight the conditions for the revolution for it to be a critical juncture have not been met. The aftermath of the Orange Revolution did not show radical change as the executive power did not sufficiently address the solidified corruption and other problematic Soviet heritage. Instead, the grip of oligarchies tightened and even continued to dismantle political constraints.

This confirms a by AR proposed expectation, who argue that oligarchs are able to reproduce and reinforce themselves not only through the system in place, but also through a new political group in control. The essence of this particular facet of the vicious circle, 'is that new leaders overthrowing old ones with promises of radical change bring nothing but more of the same' (AR, 361). In this light, the aftermath of the Orange Revolution proves the strength of the vicious cycle. It should, however, also be noted that the most fragile inclusive institutions are strong enough to create a dynamics of positive feedback, gradually increasing inclusiveness. In the case of the Orange Revolution, the inclusive institution that was created is the public awareness and fatigue with political corruption and fraud.

5.6 2010: Return to super-presidentialism

If the Yushchenko years could teach Ukraine anything, it was that the extractive feedback loop could only be interrupted by a comprehensive reform of the institutional setup instead of a mere change of participants. But the main presidential candidates in 2010 were Yanukoych and Tymoshenko, representing the largest business coalitions.

After the Orange Revolution, the Yushchenko administration had adopted two institutional reforms: the reduction of the president's power as well as the adoption of a fully proportional election law. Additionally, a level of freedom of expression had been institutionalized. Thus, when Yanukovich reached office, both his mandate and formal power were initially limited by the formal institutions in place. However, he soon expanded the reach of his formal powers beyond presidents of previous regimes.

In 2010 the National Institute for Strategic Studies published an eighty page long document of 'prognostic support' on reforms in Ukraine. The document envisions many reforms. It identifies that 'the world needs profound changes in its financial, economical and geopolitical architecture' (NISS, 3). The declared institutional reforms initially indeed indicate a turning point away from the previously established extractive feedback loop in Ukrainian politics and economics.

The changes in furtherance of finding a 'new course toward profound reforms and a systemic modernization 'completing the "new wave" of social and economic transformations' (NISS, 8) would, however, contribute to further institutional regression rather than a critical juncture. The directions of institutional improvements are unclearly defined in the initial document, but basically come down to a 'correction of organic legislation' (NISS, 15) clearing the way for various dubious interpretations.

The actual interpretation that would follow, meant a complete legislative return to the 1996 version of the Constitution. A majority of 252 MPs from the ruling coalition approved the decision that the amendments to the Constitution in December 2004 were made in violation to the relevant constitutional provisions (Venice Commission, 2010). This created legal basis to restore the former Constitution and resulted in the decision of 1 October 2010 by the Constitutional Court that definitively overturned the constitutional changes resulting from the Orange Revolution. The reinstatement of the 1996 Constitution meant a full restoration of the super-presidentialist model as under former president Kuchma.

The reforms that followed significantly reduced parliamentary control over the executive power. At the beginning of 2011 the term of both the Verkhovna Rada was prolonged from four to five years, a change in favour of the ruling coalition. Additionally, the electoral system was now introduced with a mixed proportional-majority system: 225 of the MPs were elected by national constituency from the election lists of all parties. The remaining 225 seats were elected by majority in single-mandate constituencies. Additionally, blocs could no longer take part in elections, which was in all previous elections the primary source of coalition opportunities. The option "against all" was deleted from the ballot.

Immediately after the adoption of the former Constitution, Yanukovich 'received wide unilateral powers to hire and fire executive branch officials, while a set of subsequently adopted by-laws required the president's consent for any of the government's initiatives' (Kudelia, 21). As the parliament no longer had a comprehensive say in law-enforcement, legislation and appointments, high official functions were given

to family and family friends. Eventually, the Verkhovna Rada was turned into a 'compliant institution ready to rubber-stamp the president's initiatives' (Kudelia, 22). Both corruption and cronyism grew tremendously, although in a more concentrated manner than under Yanukovich's predecessors.

Exemplary of the personalization of the autocratic system is an August 2013 law 'On Amending the Tax Code on Transfer Pricing'. It introduces a comprehensive list of rules on transfer pricing, which requires taxpayers to file annual reports for tax audits (EY, 2013). The law could be received as a step towards the direction of OECD standards: it burdened Ukraine's largest exporters and business with extensive rules to comply with. But in turn, these rules significantly reduced 'room for avoiding taxes and boosted the extractive capacity of the state's revenue-collecting agencies' (Kudelia, 29). In the eyes of the oligarchs who had been crucial in the election and support of Yanukovich, this was a hindering step that mostly just consolidated rent sharing with 'the family'.

Further evidence of the 'tight presidential control of several key 'independent' institutions' (Kudelia, 21) and the many democratic transgressions under the Yanukovich administration is the ouster of his former rival Yulia Tymoshenko as Prime-Minister. The objectivity of the persecution of Tymoshenko and some of her associates was dubious. The European Court of Human Rights declared in April 2013 that 'there has been a violation of Article 5 §1 of the Convention' (ECHR, 2013), meaning simply that her right to liberty had been unlawfully deprived. Despite the established arbitrariness of the arrests, the 'judges who convicted her and her former interior minister Yuri Lutsenko later received promotions and other material rewards from the state' (Kudelia, 23). Yanukovich had been handed 'indirect control over judicial appointments' in July 2010 (Kudelia, 23). The judicial branch was under full control of the presidential body.

After the October 2012 Rada elections, Yanukovich's popularity had plummeted. Core support remained strong in eastern regions, but on average 'every second respondent in the western part of the country expressed a willingness to join protests against adverse economic and political conditions' in 2012 (Kudelia, 24). Following, he distanced himself from the Party of Regions and shuffled cabinet and PR figures 'with personal loyalists who could 'channel rents and state resources into the building of a new power base' (Kudelia, 25). His 'family-first' strategy narrowed the circle of 'those who benefited from major rent-seeking schemes' (Kudelia, 22). However, it had 'left many more feeling shut out and angry - an outcome that made the capacity to coerce businesspeople a higher regime priority' (Kudelia, 22).

Over the year 2013, the majority of Ukrainians professed 'a lack of confidence in all of the major national leaders they were asked to rate: President Viktor Yanukovich (23% confidence, 69% not)' (IFES, 3). By October 2013, the decline in confidence in political leaders was accompanied by 'a decline in confidence in many institutions in the country. Confidence in the Verkhovna Rada has fallen from 23% in 2012 to 16%

in this year's survey (75% lack confidence)' (IFES, 4). Civil dissatisfaction covered the entire scope of the political system.

After months of ongoing protests, escalating into violence more than once, Yanukovich rushed through parliament a law that decreed criminal penalties for public protesting. This last effort to strike down the protests was in vain. Yanukovich fled the country on February 21, 2014. The presidential troops were left without a commander and soon abandoned their post: the presidential compounds were left unguarded. The pretentious estate that was uncovered would become the hollow symbol of his reign.

5.6.1 Comments

The rule of Yanukovich had deteriorated the state as a political entity and transformed it further into an 'instrument for the extraction of profit' (Matsievski 28). The absence of institutional checks on the executive body had been present throughout the independence years. Several measures took the already defect institutional setup of Ukraine one step further in the direction of authoritarian consolidation in comparison to his predecessors. Following the lines of AR, this consolidation is the ultimate form of extractive institutionalism. If this is indeed the ending point of institutional functioning, then the nations' revolt was a likely outcome.

Several factors advanced the protests. Firstly, the personalized autocratic system promoted the 'family' as a business cooperation but hindered oligarchs inside and outside the coalition. This eventually resulted in some of the biggest businesspeople interfering and supporting the Euromaidan protests by 'quietly funding the protests as a form of self-defense (the main demonstration, in Kyiv, cost about \$70,000 a day)' (Kudelia, 29) or by broadcasting favourable coverage through oligarch-owned television networks.

Secondly, as a result of the Orange Revolution, a civic political orientation had been growing. This national consciousness was institutionalized by the moderate liberation of public media. Liberal democracy in Ukraine might have been weak in its roots, the presidential control over key institutions could not guarantee public mood. Indeed, as skilfully predicted by Yuri Matsievski in 2011, most Ukrainian citizens would 'object to restrictions on freedom of expression and on political participation and competition, and therefore the likelihood of mass protest will hang like a sword of Damocles over the president's head' (Matsievski, 29)'.

5.7 Conclusions: Yanukovich' sword of Damocles

Açemoglu and Robinson explain how it is the self-created benefits for the elite that stimulate instability. These create the desire to replace the current elite, because their positions bring excessive wealth and benefits. Accordingly, 'infighting and instability are thus inherent features of extractive institutions' (AR, 150)'. These features create further inefficiencies in the shape of the 'persistence of extractive institutions

and the persistence of the same elites in power together with the persistence of underdevelopment' (AR, 344).

Although this hypothesis might appear a valid explanation for the instability of November 2013, it is not applicable in full. The main success factor was the combined strength of oligarchy, opposition and civil society. The bottom-line objective of the protests, was the ouster of the current elite rather than their replacement by new players to the same game. This in contrast with the Orange Revolution, in which the protests were electoral and which aftermath did not result in elite changes. Thus, the main hypothesis on instability is applicable to some extent, yet does not cover the entire range of elements of the Euromaidan unrest. A more thorough explanation can be found in the wider framework of institutionalism.

Taking the phenomenon of path dependency into account, several institutions have been considered with regard to the consolidation of authoritarianism and, accordingly, the institutionalization of extractiveness. It has been observed that in the administrations of Kravchuk, Kuchma and Yushchenko the institutional setup of Ukraine lacked a consistent application of the existing control mechanism. This created room for presidential power expanding and a closed political landscape. Corruption became strongly institutionalized and continued to guide politics throughout. Following these lines, the political elite had little incentives to change the landscape, due to the favourable profits created by the extractive setup. Furthermore, the regional policies during these years were absent or elite-oriented, meaning they served the direct benefits of the executive. These extractive institutions were partially enabled by the absent national consciousness and civil passiveness.

The abovementioned institutions partially enabled the consolidation of extractiveness in Ukraine from 1991 to 2010. However, several comparable factors hindered a full slide towards authoritarianism. The economic weakness, which shall be further highlighted in following sections, undermined popularity of the incumbent continuously. Because of a lack of natural resources, reliance on oligarchic support had been essential for all presidents to maintain support. Thirdly, the regional differences of Ukraine are a recurring theme in Ukrainian politics. Most policies have been elite-oriented, strengthening presidential powers as previously noted. However, it also indicates that both 'a regional basis for forging an opposition movement is always available' (D'Anieri, 2011, 31). This is an institutional effect of cultural identity based on regions: in order to dominate national politics, the necessity of cross-regional support is decisive so as to avoid automatic resistance based on this identity.

The institutionalized factors that had both enabled and constrained the consolidation of extractive authoritarianism remained intact when Yanukovich reached office. However, as observed above, the familial approach of Yanukovich left the oligarchy in anger. The moderate media freedom that had hindered political orientation, was now an institution in favour of the conflict as many business-owned

stations broadcasted the events. Simultaneously, low public trust and political fatigue had been present throughout the independence years: 'citizens are alienated from, and indifferent to, the state which provides them with few services' (Kuzio, 2012, 2). This had led to distrust towards both those in power as well as the opposition. However, political orientation had developed and collectively the opposition, oligarchy and civil society formed a strong and disadvantageous front against the president that was unique in Ukraine.

As for the developments of the system between semi-presidentialism, competitive authoritarianism and super-presidentialism, no political arrangement is a sure path towards stability. However, it is widely argued that political systems with a powerful legislative body hold political elites from 'ignore, circumvent, or suspend the democratic rules of the game' (Bunce, 711) in conflicts. This further confirms the observation that in Ukraine the problem is not the absence of a control mechanism, rather its inconsequent application. The power that is hidden in arbitrary and selective use of law further deteriorated Ukraine's electoral democracy into an authoritarian or electoral authoritarian system under Yanukovich. The fraught positive changes, which were minor from the start, were easily reversed. This reflects how the rules of the political game and balance of power in Ukraine prevented positive feedback loop from solidifying.

Although these institutional development appear to clarify the root causes of the Euromaidan events, these same arguments have accounted for the institutional equilibrium of the anterior years. The theoretical problem that seems to occur here, is that the institutional approach efficiently conceptualizes institutionalized weak aspects, agents and circumstances of the political system in Ukraine, but that it falls short in anticipating the likelihood of a political conflict occurring.

FINDINGS

The political institutions of Ukraine between 1991 and 2010 both **enabled and constrained the consolidation of extractive authoritarianism.**

However, the Yanukovich years marked a **return of the social control mechanism** through the development of a national consciousness.

Additionally, the **institution of oligarchy in politics was ruptured**, indicating a breakdown of this extractive institution.

6. Ukraine: economic governance

In many ways, the governing institutions of a nation's economy and politics overlap. A modern market economy requires the framework provided by the state, its institutions, to function effectively. In turn, these institutions create a level playing field and encourage investments (AR, 2012). Consequently, the distinction between both structures in this research may appear artificial.

However, the remarkable overlap between economic and political governance in Ukraine has been an additional factor of democratic deterrence precisely because they are so easily translated into the other. There is state ownership in the economy confirming the political-economic relationship. The other way around, wealth can easily be converted into political power, 'most notably by obtaining a seat in the Ukrainian parliament' (D'Anieri, 2007, 65). Because the nature of political power is highly concentrated, so is the distribution of economic power. Consequently, any succeeding actor shall have similar motives to pursue extractive strategies. The causes of Ukraine's economic backwardness require further separate scrutiny.

Independent Ukraine was burdened with economic frustration and extraction as guiding and continuous principles in the institutional development and stability of Ukraine's economy, due to late industrialisation and highly extractive serfdom and absolutism. The impact of the communist organisation of and reign over economics, further hindered the development of an entrepreneurial class.

The transition from socialism to a market-driven democracy was thus burdened by institutionalized extractive mechanisms. In Ukraine, this transition was 'characterized by perceived corruption and poor economic performance' (Zyla, 263) as illustrated by low voter turnout, political alienation of civil society and a disconnection between electorate and government, as observed earlier in this research. However, an effective market economy relies heavily upon public support of and trust in state institutions. Perceptions of corruption are 'proven to harm investment, leading to an increase in participation in the shadow economy and high levels of capital flight' (Zyla, 264). In turn, this decreases the available revenues for the government, hindering it from providing civil services. This further erodes the legitimacy of the government, placing it in a strong vicious cycle.

Support of the state institutions and market economy is created only by the precondition of enabling governing institutions, meaning effective control mechanisms are in place. Transitions to development require strong state capabilities for dealing with several critical market failures. A government should identify areas for improvement and focus on the development of control mechanisms, in the form of capable institutions. These areas of improvement are often sustained by rent seeking and corruption, as privileged groups spend resources both legally and illegally to influence the state to distort property rights in their favour. Causality is thus two-fold, because weak property rights and welfare-reducing

interventions also create incentive for rent seeking and corruptions as individuals and groups try to work their way around these government failures, by bribing or influencing bureaucrats and politicians. It is hardly possible to stop the damage, because of the absence of an accountable government. So, to stop corruption and rent seeking, it is necessary to reform politics and improve democratic accountability simultaneously. Only then, broad structural may be addressed (Khan, 2012).

6.1 Overview

In the early sixties the economy grew and most Ukrainians seemed to accept and identify themselves with the Soviet regime (Jansen, 154). But in the seventies and eighties the Ukrainian industries grew overly dependent of oil and gas from Siberia, although it simultaneously invested in independent energy supplies such as nuclear power. The economy collapsed and critique at the failing government grew.

After independence, attachment to a dominant role of economic state intervention remained, but society impoverished and unemployment rates grew as rapidly as social inequality. People suffered from an early socio-economic crisis and a lack of perspective. Attempts at economic reform were disastrous, subjected to economic shocks and crises and lack of consistency. From 1991 to 1997 GDP declined with nearly 68%, industrial output by 52% (D'Anieri, 1999, 91).

Ukraine seemed incapable of moving away from the communist tradition where 'real' politics were still limited to the small self-appointed elite of oligarchs (Gerrits, 1992). The effects of this continuing connection have been established concerning the political institutions in the previous chapter. However, with economy and politics so closely connected, its effects on the economy shall also be examined. This examination adds insight on the hypothesis that *the economic institutions of Ukraine underwent a meltdown in functioning and led to popular discontent and conflict.*

6.2 Shaking off the Soviet system

The optimistic expectations of economic growth that accompanied Ukraine's independence, would quickly prove false. As the influence of the communist elites remained substantial in the political and administrative systems, so was their influence over the development of Ukraine's internal and external markets. Reforms were mostly blocked altogether or only partially agreed upon so as to create 'vast opportunities for enrichment' (D'Anieri, 2007, 71). Instead, most existing domestic arrangements stayed intact and unprofitable companies were kept alive with enormous subsidies. Inflation rose sharply and savings disappeared.

The earlier in this research identified group of oligarchs, the *nomenklatura*, were guilty of the most extractive practices. This was enabled partially because of the laws and regulations adopted under the

Kravchuck administration. Undoubtedly in an effort to enlarge state authority over the economy, 'new mounds of administrative regulations, licensing requirements, and tax laws and selective loopholes were employed' (Kuzio et al, 138). The effects were indeed in favour of the government, however against the development of a growing economy: the state gained more instruments and tools to dispense 'favors and patronage and to extract valuable rents from commercial interests' (Kuzio et al, 138).

Accordingly, Ukraine's markets were not liberalized in the early independence years. Instead, reinforced were the 'Soviet-style administrative controls which further distorted the economy' (Prizel, 370). Arguably, Ukraine indeed contributed 'over 40 percent of the industrial output and 30 percent of agricultural output of the USSR' (Kuzio et al, 91). However, the central planning system was hardly concerned with efficiency. The imbalance between unfinished privatization and unfinished liberalization led to a depletion of natural resources and an 'economic structure that is completely inappropriate for the market' (Kuzio et al, 37).

Following, the Ukrainian economy quickly collapsed under the pressure of opening up to the global economies. Next to an inadequate market model, there was no demand for the heavily industrial supply goods Ukraine could offer in the post-Cold War world. Ukraine was left with a severely outdated and inefficient heavy industry. Russian energy no longer came at 'friendly' prices, but at regular market prices. Almost three quarters of Ukrainians were living below the poverty line in the early nineties (Jansen, 2012).

Kravchuck's Prime Minister, Leonid Kuchma, proposed several reforms to reorganize Ukraine's large state enterprises. He aspired to transform them into joint-stock companies, with a controlling interest of the government. His presidency in July 1994 would indeed bring some moderate liberalization: by 1999, '55 percent of Ukraine's [GDP] was privately produced' (Goldsmith, 403) after a large-scale privatization program had begun in January 1995. However, the process was slow and unsteady. The Rada had 'reduced the list of enterprises subject to mass privatization [...] from eight thousand to four thousand, and halted the privatization of oil and gas industry firms' (Goldsmith, 405).

Kuchma also imposed 'a degree of fiscal discipline, bringing budget deficits in line with requirements of the IMF for purposes of stabilization lending' (Kuzio et al, 93). Social welfare programs were slashed, salaries were delayed. Initially, this flamed inflation: 'shrinking from a monthly rate of around 20 percent to 3 percent by April 1996' (Diuk, 108). Which created a situation stable enough to introduce the Hryvna as Ukraine's own currency.

However, the development of modern administrative institutions of government remained absent and this lack of administrative capacity 'to manage the finer points of fiscal reform would threaten Ukraine's reform efforts' (Kuzio et al, 93). The largest enterprises in the mining industries of Donetsk and Luhansk,

the industrial enterprises in Dnipropetrovsk and machine-building plants in Kharkiv remained unreformed and un-privatized (Goldsmith, 2001).

In 1999 Kuchma had appointed Viktor Yushchenko as prime-minister. His cabinet service would improve the economy. His reform program included many efforts in the promotion of privatization and anticorruption. These measures successfully 'returned more than US\$2 billion to the budget, which was used to pay wage and pension arrears' (Kuzio, 2005, 119). Despite widespread popular support, the reforms were not beneficial to the oligarchs. Yushchenko's government 'soon became embroiled in a confrontation with influential industry leaders' (Kuzio, 2005, 119) from the coal mining and natural gas industries. A no-confidence vote removed Yushchenko from office in 2001.

The 2004 Orange Revolution followed a four year economic boom in which Ukraine's GDP had risen by an average of 9 percent (ICPS, 2005). The liberal market economic program that Yushchenko announced was aimed directly at 'corruption and misuse of government power'. Oligarchs were cautioned to 'pay a fair share of taxes and the full price for properties made available through privatizations' (Aslund, 2005, 338). Yushchenko was balancing the interests of his electorate, 'combatting the rich' (Aslund, 2005, 350) with the protection of small entrepreneurs and influential oligarchs.

6.3 Oligarchic influence

Already in the mid-1990s the oligarchic clans grew into their current size and shape. As part of the privatization policies, 'members of the *nomenklature* purchased industrial plants at low prices' (Matuszak, 9). During Kuchma's term, three clans were formed: the Donetsk clan, with Yanukovych as its most prominent representative and concerned with metallurgy, financed by Rinat Akhmetov. Secondly, the Dnipropetrovsk clan, which provided two prime ministers financed by high-value added steel products, and the Kyiv clan which was least structured of the three. The network of patronage caused for a far-reaching redistribution of economic favours and privileged access to economic resources.

At the outset of the Orange Revolution, the oligarchic regime had created a tension for any candidate that would succeed Kuchma. The mix of informal relations and procedures with rational-legal bureaucratic order was highly volatile. After Kuchma's delicate balance between the dominated party factions in parliament, the owned media empires and government privileges, 'the election of a politician who would represent any of the groups posed a very serious threat to the interest of all the others' (Matuszak, 19). The consequence of this awareness was an increased need to secure a political basis, resulting in 'an increase of the influence of big business on the party system' (Matuszak, 19). A second consequence is the rise of competition between the groups, on both the political as well as the public stage. Oligarchs 'dominated not only the presidency and media, but also the parliament (since March 2002) and the cabinet of ministers (since November 2002)' (Aslund, 2005, 337).

The grown oligarchic influence before and after Yushchenko was possible due to two factors. Firstly, the practices of rent seeking had changed. Thanks to the privatization policies and deregulation, oligarchs were less dependent on the state for revenues. Secondly, because the clans were the main financial support of the political parties, their interests in strong property rights, deregulation, and other interests, were consolidated. Consequently, both politics as well as the market were monopolized. This constrained competition, but also meant that the government in many cases is guided by the interests of the oligarchs who are sponsoring it instead of the interests of their country' (Aslund, 2005, 336).

The Orange Revolution brought some changes among the oligarchs, as Yushchenko was mostly backed by the middle class and medium-sized businesses. Although the influence of the interest groups was weakened to a certain extent, their existence continued. The Donetsk clan remained the financial motor of the Party of Regions, which in the following parliamentary elections 'received more votes than other parties and blocs' (Matsievski, 23). Although some shuffles were triggered, the system itself stayed unchanged.

During his two years as Prime Minister, Yanukovych already 'toyed with price controls for gasoline and agricultural goods, promoted multiple state interventions, and doubled pensions' (Aslund, 2005, 350). Quickly after he had reached office, Ukraine sprung up on the Transparency International rankings, with a score of 144 out of 177 on the Corruption Perceptions Index, measuring the level of perception of corruption in the public sector (Transparency International, 2012). Yanukovych turned to his most trusted people: 'his sons and little-known politicians who were loyal exclusively to the president.' (Matuszak, 41). The level of corruption had many interlocking features concerning politics. Ukrainian election campaigns were, in proportionate terms, among the most expensive worldwide. In relation to GDP, 1% on average is spent. That is two-thousand times more than is spent on a US election campaign (Aslund, 2014). Corruption in Ukraine's civil service peaked and many state agencies 'main function [was] to wrap things in red tape' (Aslund, 69). Seats in parliament in the Yanukovych administration were for sale, as the Party of Regions 'could offer high bidders "profitable jobs' (Aslund, 67). Many of these posts were either part of the state apparatus or at heads of state enterprises, therewith closing the oligarchic circle. As money was the path to political power, so was power the path to riches.

The World Bank indicates that growth in GDP per capita in 2012 was lower than right after independence in 1990 (World Bank, 2014). The World Economic Forum ranked it 73rd among 144 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index in that same year. It notes that 'the country's most important challenge is the needed overhaul of its institutional framework, which cannot be relied on because it suffers from red tape, lack of transparency and favouritism'. Corruption is marked as second most problematic factor for a healthy economy (World Economic Forum, 2012). The oligarchs had gained control of the heavy industry sectors already under Kravchuk. There had been no economic growth between 2008 and 2012 (World

Bank, 2014). Many factors may attribute to these observations, but rent seeking activities lead to the conclusion that 'the main impediment to economic growth in Ukraine has been corruption' (Aslund, 67).

The nature of corruption and rent-seeking was threefold. Firstly, the trade in natural gas has proven lucrative for the gas companies involved. The artificially low price at which gas was sold by Gazprom, rose with every intermediary company involved. The IMF estimated that '7.5% of Ukraine's GDP had been going to energy subsidies that were passed on to privileged 'businessmen' (Aslund, 65). Similar but smaller-scale rent-seeking took place 'in other energy sectors, notably coals and nuclear' (Aslund, 65).

Secondly, with personal connections on several key positions in the state apparatus, Yanukovich enabled direct government embezzled. For instance, when Yanukovich dismissed the head of the State Tax Administration in his early presidential days, he appointed the Donbass born Vitaliy Zakharchenko (BBC, 2010). Zakharchenko was closely associated with Yanukovich' son Viktor Yanukovich and further allowed for theft from state budget. Zakharenko would later be charged with ordering the violent *Berkut* clashes.

Lastly, linked to the Euro 2012 soccer tournament in several Ukrainian and Polish cities, Yanukovich handed out several large projects on personal discretions. The kickback of the competitive bidding and dishonestly run infrastructure projects is estimated at 50% (Aslund, 2009) which is unusually large.

Despite external pressure by the IMF to adopt legislation in favour of honest competition, monopolisation and corruption strongly intensified. Ukraine's shadow economy of budget embezzlement, bribes and additional commissions is estimated between 34% of GDP (MEDT of Ukraine, 2012) to 44% of GDP (Schneider, 2012) between 2010 and 2013.

A new element was the business of the Yanukovich 'family', the people directly linked to Yanukovich and his son. Despite Yanukovich' unseen large political powers, his financial strength was largely dependent on the consent of the oligarchs. Further consolidation of the 'family' business would go at the expense of the oligarchs and was thus 'likely to bring about a conflict between Yanukovich and most representatives of big business' (Matuszak, 80). As these same representatives formed most of Yanukovich' political base, cautiousness was essential.

6.3.1 Comments: how to fill a void

The main challenge for any post-Soviet transitional state was to rebuild the political and economic institutions away from Socialist remnants towards a market oriented democratic system.

As opposed to its surrounding newly independent nations, in Ukraine no shock therapy took place to make drastic institutional turnovers such as privatization happen. This actually enlarged the old business elite's powers, as the implementation of the privatization program was highly in their favour: as the partially privatized economy was now tied to the world economy, which created 'options for enrichment

that did not exist previously' (D'Anieri, 2007, 27). Although a drastic institutional turnover seems more than rational in hindsight, the tools by which economic conflict and development were managed under the Soviet regime were the only way for Ukraine to fill the void in this transitional period, due to the hindrance by state- and nation-building.

As the former Soviet institutions remained in place, they were weak in control because the authority they had previously held disappeared. This power vacuum was filled by the *nomenklature*, which did not remain 'in the political corridors but those same individuals [were] now seen in the corridors of the new financial institutions' (Zyla, 248). Inclusive governing capacity was thus limited when the Orange Revolution took place. The weak administrative capabilities in the fiscal and monetary areas were burdened with Soviet-era bureaucracy, 'confused and overlapping subject-matter jurisdictions; penetration of the state administration by powerful economic interests; outright corruption; and fluctuating levels of commitment to reform on the part of political leadership' (Kuzio et al, 91). The absent connection between economic reform and institutional capacity severely constrained any potential reforms. This leaves beside the question of whether the objectives of the Yushchenko presidency were reformative in nature.

Extractive economic institutions are only viable if they are built upon the 'foundations laid by a set of highly extractive political institutions' (AR, 270). With oligarchs dominating both political institutions as well as the main business actors, this condition was met. The status quo therefore remained in place: economic power was nearly sufficient to obtain political power and vice versa. Because the 'narrow set of elites closely connected with the state apparatus' (D'Anieri, 13) strongly reinforced this circle, the incentives for corruption were powerful for those in and out of this elite. The consequence of growing corruption and state control over the economy has been civil alienation from economic activity and forthcoming loss of legitimacy for the government.

The political machine that got Yanukovich elected was strongly reliant on oligarchic support. The Party of Regions was enabled to buy votes, dispense patronage and engage in corruption. These practices are mainly observed during the Kuchma presidency and to a lesser extent during Kravchuk and Yushchenko. The main differences appear twofold. Firstly, the patronage under Yanukovich' predecessors was much less personal and favoured a multiplicity of oligarchs rather than one family. Secondly, the weakness of economic governance posed no acute threat because of a civic passivity. Not only did this passivity lessen the need for reforms, it also enabled the state to increase its demands due to low civil resistance.

The problem that occurred for Yanukovich was the increased alienation between society and economic participation and the political awakening that the Orange Revolution had triggered. According to a nationwide survey in 2011, 34.2% of the respondents felt there was no attempt at economic reforms at all

(Razumkov Centre, 2011). Together with the oligarchic frustration, this led to a situation in which only a direct cause would spark wide resistance.

6.4 Conclusions: Damocles' sword revisited

The term 'dual economy' might be closest to accurate to describe the great differences between Ukraine's urban life and modern heavy industry, agricultural and city. This dual economy did not develop naturally, but is the result of long running extractive government policies that destroyed economic incentives. Economic benefits from investments have not been protected sufficiently, meaning ownership of profits was uncertain due to possible extraction by the elites. The institutions governing Ukraine's economy failed to create a level playing field.

This weakness and forthcoming economic backwardness is further reinforced by the political leverage that the extracting elites held. State capture by economic interests is a reoccurring theme in Ukrainian politics and economics. However, as the presidential office of Ukraine held comparable interests in personal economic gain, these economic interests were captured by the state to a comparable level.

The incentives for comprehensive reforms to tackle this backwardness, are minor. Although corruption is a major problem in the establishment of functioning economic institutions, 'breaking its vicious cycle in Ukraine is in fact a political task of the highest order' (Aslund, 69). However, the power for elites to enrich themselves through both economic as well as political institutions in place is larger than the motivation to consider larger, national interests. Ironically, the opening speech on Ukraine's economy that Yanukovich held during a meeting in February 2013, deploys much of the indicators for the necessity of structural reforms: 'It is impossible to work in this way [...] I realized that only radical systemic reforms can ensure key objectives of the state economic policy' (Yanukovich, 2013). Leaving the double-sided state capture aside, the 'requirement for the successful modernization of the state', according to the main authoritative body, 'is an effective, professional and responsible authority' (Yanukovich, 2013).

The oligarchic elites form a remarkable aspect in the cycle of self-enrichment through political institutions and corruption. An expectation that arises in the case of strongly centralized power, is that of infighting and instability: 'extractive economic institutions imply that there are great profits and wealth to be made merely by controlling power, expropriating the assets of others, and setting up monopolies' (AR, 366). However, the oligarchic clans merely influenced politics to solidify their influence, rather than substantially enlarging it. This indicates firstly, that the greatest source of power was not in politics. Secondly, if the political institutions are expected to guard oligarchic interests, any deterrence from this path would create tension between economic and political institutions. The personal patronage that Yanukovich employed created this tension.

This tension was further increased by the developed social consciousness. Civic alienation from economic activities was strong and a growing demand for representative institutions was hard to ignore. Nevertheless, the absent connection between economic reforms and institutional capacity severely constrained any potential reforms.

Although these conclusions indicate that the governing capacity of economic institutions was weak, they insufficiently indicate at which point the unreliable institutions led to national revolt. Instead, a scene of swelling tension is portrayed in which any spark could potentially cause a fully dysfunctional state. This does confirm the overall question of this research, of whether the Euromaidan conflict could be the result of increased institutional weakness during the Yanukovich administration.

FINDINGS

The institutions governing Ukraine's economy are characterized by Soviet mechanisms and corruption throughout 1991 and 2010. The **combination of improved national consciousness and increased alienation between society and economic participation** between 2010 and 2013, was problematic.

Yanukovich' exclusive, familial approach caused for frustration among oligarchs and a **rupture in the oligarchic institution.**

This combination rendered the institutions governing Ukraine's economy dysfunctional.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Case findings

This research has embarked upon a twofold exploration of root causes of the Euromaidan Revolution of November 2013 in Ukraine. The questions that guided these explorations addressed the influence of several issues on domestic and societal stability. The main hypotheses were the following:

- The differences in natural ties in Ukraine are essentially incompatible and lead to inevitable conflict
- The political institutions of Ukraine underwent a meltdown in functioning and led to popular discontent and conflict
- The economic institutions of Ukraine underwent a meltdown in functioning and led to popular discontent and conflict

The findings of the ethnic conflict approach do not sufficiently confirm basic assumptions found in many media or even scholarly findings. From the ethno-symbolic perspective, both historiography and linguistics in Ukraine lack a unitary outlook. Therefore, it hinders any possible rupture of a collective belief system: the Ukrainian identity is hybrid. In this light, the increased visibility of EU symbols is an indicator of identity building rather than affiliation *pur sang* with the EU. Instead, the symbols offered alternatives to many of the national symbols that had ambivalent backgrounds. Additionally, it confirmed the contrast between government and people and in this way stimulated identity building through self-othering.

From the instrumentalist perspective, the deliberate construction or exacerbation of incompatible identity markers was expected. Although the main external actors, namely Russia and the EU, have had little influence over Ukraine's domestic policies, the multi-vector policy that Yanukovich undertook was even more ambivalent than that of his predecessors, which would have serious consequences. The failure in this course in foreign policy is illustrated by the interference of both Russia and EU when the conflict further developed, and the geopolitical unrest that followed.

Concerning internal actors, the competition over resources is played by a strong oligarchic community influencing both politics and economy. The approach of personal patronage that Yanukovich employed caused for strong tensions and frustrations with Yanukovich. However, this became apparent only after the unrest had erupted, through their financial and non-material support to the protesters.

The most influential factor exposed by the ethnic conflict approach to Euromaidan was thus the presence of external actors. Firstly, the hybrid elements of Ukrainian identity were sharpened through the deployment of EU symbolism. Second, after the Revolution itself, they caused for geopolitical unrest. This

indicates that the main problem in Ukraine was not an incompatibility of identities, but a failure of the state to acknowledge and accommodate this hybridity.

From an institutionalist perspective, the political developments in Ukraine had created the perfect playing field for power politics, in which elite actors are able to pursue personal interests. The rule of Yanukovich had deteriorated the state as a representative, political entity even further towards an instrument for profit extraction. Ukraine was closer than ever to authoritarian consolidation under Yanukovich. However, this risk had been equally present under his predecessors. Many of the weaknesses in the state of Ukraine that the institutional approach has exposed, have equally created the balance and stability of the anterior years.

Two aspects differentiated the situation under Yanukovich from earlier years: a larger civil awareness as a result of the Orange Revolution in 2004, as well as a frustrated oligarchy following Yanukovich' patronage approach.

The oligarchy in Ukraine dominated the weak institutions governing Ukraine's economy. The state capture by economic interests and vice versa hindered reforms and the development of functioning, economic institutions. In turn, the absent connection between institutional capacity and economic development endured. In fact, the leverage over political institutions was so extensive that they in fact guarded oligarchic interests. The approach of personal patronage that Yanukovich employed clearly stood in the way of the oligarchs' interests. Additionally, the developed social consciousness marked the demand for representative institutions and a returned, fair, participation of society with economic activity.

The Euromaidan Revolution was a conflict, consisting of a threefold combination of state breakdown, elite conflict and popular revolt. Although these conclusions indicate that the governing capacity of economic institutions was weak, they insufficiently indicate at which point the unreliable institutions led to national revolt. Instead, a scene of swelling tension is portrayed in which any spark could potentially cause a fully dysfunctional state.

However, this does confirm the overall question of this research, of whether the Euromaidan conflict could be the result of increased institutional weakness during the Yanukovich administration. Additionally the research confirms how defining the conflict as a struggle between the EU and Russia or even as West versus East, the actual actors affected by and at the roots of the conflict are falsely disregarded. In this case, the institutionalist approach has thus proven efficient in conceptualizing institutional weaknesses. It has confirmed the two institutional hypotheses in the expected functional meltdown. However, even if this meltdown led to popular discontent, the theory has proven inadequate in anticipating a breaking point.

What is also left unanswered here, is whether the conflict is indeed a critical juncture capable of lifting 'earlier constraints on the redesign of political institutions and [making] major innovations more likely' (Kudelia, 32). It is only possible to assess in hindsight whether the events indeed were a punctuation in the equilibrium. The aftermath does show clear changes in political elites. There is room for foreign expertise in many government bodies, even in the Rada itself. The government is strongly occupied with lustration and the overall reduction of corruption. The EU has expressed its willingness to forge closer ties and complements this with guidance and economic support.

This research has prioritised structure over action. Therefore, several other factors have been neglected, such as intra-elite conflicts and the role of multiple agents. Instead, this case study demonstrates that individual actors in institutions are mostly subject to structural issues. To 'successfully pave the way for more inclusive institutions and the gradual institutional changes' (AR, 458), civil society needs to be sufficiently empowered to create bottom up change.

At this point, there are two major risks in Ukraine hindering this development. Firstly, this case has demonstrated that democracy in itself is not a guarantor of civil empowerment or the pluralistic distribution of political power: corrupt politics and patronage networks might persist. Some early warning signs have already been signalled on actors within the Poroshenko administration. This primarily follows the institutionalisation of many of the extractive mechanisms, but also from the domestic crisis that followed. The crisis 'shortens the time horizons of key actors as their priorities shift from crafting democratic governance to stopping the immediate threat of further state breakup' (Kudelia, 32).

Secondly and accordingly, the violent unrest in the eastern regions that followed the regime fall, the attempts at separatism and the annexation of Crimea have seriously impaired the development, acceptance and accommodation of the Ukrainian identity as being hybrid. Instead, differences are enlarged and sharpened and Ukrainian statehood appears to be in an existential crisis.

From both these perspectives, it is too early to provide a satisfactory conclusion of the character of Euromaidan as a critical juncture and its capacity to create a more inclusive future society. What these difficulties do confirm, is that not every revolution will instantly usher in inclusive institutions. The ethnic conflict framing of Euromaidan has increased both extreme right nationalist sentiments, as well as a utopian idea of 'Europe' and 'democracy'. If indeed a radical, reformative political project towards inclusive institutions is to take place, Ukraine must first break free of the posited dichotomy that has been imposed on it.

7.2 Validity of theory

The case findings of this research lead to several conclusions that can be drawn regarding the theories of ethnic conflict analysis and institutionalism.

Firstly, the easiest pitfall in the analysis of conflict appears to be a wrong identification of the main actors in the conflict. This identification burdens the main actors with an identity placed upon them, rather than an objective approach to their motivations. The conflict approach illustrated how antagonist ethnic actors cohabitated throughout various policies conducted over the years. There was little indication of ethnic incompatibility.

The alternative approach of institutionalism was chosen in this research. It has provided an elegant and comprehensive explanatory framework of the conflict. Concluding, institutionalism is capable of describing underlying tensions, long running constraints on the establishment of an inclusive political society and the motivations of each actor when the institutions of a state fail to provide their main tasks. The tension that grew in strength over the years of the Yanukovych' administration needed only a spark to set off the flames of civil conflict. However, institutionalism fails to define and identify this spark.

A predictive outlook is not necessarily expected from a theory. As this research stated earlier, any theoretical framework aims to explain and describe a certain phenomenon, or rather:

'A theory should enable us to focus on the parallels, sometimes at the expense of abstracting from many interesting details. A successful theory, then, does not faithfully reproduce details, but provides a useful and empirically well-grounded explanation for a range of processes while also clarifying the main forces at work' (AR, 429).

Alas, it is the explanatory powers of conflict theory and institutionalism that have been researched here. The results of this case study have demonstrated the inability of conflict theory to identify a rupture in a common belief system, nor to demonstrate if any identities, as expected, were now deemed incompatible with other identities. It did offer room to analyse the development of ethnic differences and the external actors possibly involved in the conflict.

Additionally, it demonstrated some gaps were left unexplained. Institutionalism proved an adequate approach to explain the societal tension that had been growing on numerous fields ever since independence, but more rapidly in the years closer to the eruption of conflict. It did not only fill the gaps that the conflict approach left open. In many ways the conclusions found through the institutionalist framework concur with those found with the conflict approach, but explained these findings from a more thorough, comprehensive outlook.

Despite these positive findings, some points of critique regarding institutionalism have been identified earlier in this research.

Firstly, the definition of institutional failure indicated the failure to create welfare and stability. However, the institutions in this case study failed their task continuously. It appears that the point of civic instability did not follow from institutional failure alone, but from the combination of multiple factors.

Secondly and accordingly, the institutionalist theory used here indicated all nations would fail if a social control mechanism was not functioning properly. Indeed, little socially imposed contracts constrained actors in this case state. But the point at which this was no longer tenable did not follow from this institutional failure alone. Instead, it followed the combination of a larger civic consciousness and thus a returned social control mechanism, and the rupture of the oligarchic institution.

The major risk that this research faced was its retrospective interpretation of causality. Not only is institutional failure the norm of the theory used, it was also the basis of the empirical findings. However, this positively stimulated the identification of what sort of juncture could possibly stimulate a new feedback cycle and put earlier events in perspective. For instance, the earlier societal revolt in the case study turned out to be much smaller of influence, scale and impact than generally assumed. Defining what constitutes rupture is essential in the assessment of any conflict and this only possible in hindsight.

Lastly, institutionalism as pitched by AR tends to assess case-studies as on a path towards liberal democracy. This could neglect the consideration of other political conditions even though these might be more common. Nevertheless, not only did the various empirical findings in this case study demonstrate an, at least theoretical, desire for liberal democracy. The theory also left sufficient room to assess the various halfway forms of political systems and therefore justly assessed their position and role in the development of from an extractive society to an inclusive economy and political society.

It must be concluded that although the root causes of civic revolt are well explainable if the right perspective is chosen, even with the right perspective its occurrence and likelihood is equally unpredictable.

It is inherent to human nature to forget we are defined by our own social context when we regard the other. This means we can only see in the other what is different in them compared to ourselves, rather than what makes us 'us'. This self-othering process should, however, not be taken for granted.

Primordialist explanations, analyses and descriptions appear from mainstream media to scholarly literature. Unfortunately, these have led to ineffective solutions and even destructive foreign policies.

This research is not a critique on conflict theories. Rather, it should be taken as a warning sign that if we are to explain conflicts in primordialist ways, the risks that come with this are unsolvable conflicts, because their roots have not been identified properly. In this manner, institutionalism has not only proven to be an adequate theoretical partner of conflict theory in a more comprehensive analytical framework. It has proven to be essential.

CONCLUSION

In this congruence analysis, the explanatory powers of conflict theory and institutionalism have been researched in order to answer the question **to what extent the theory of institutional meltdown could be a theoretical partner towards a comprehensive framework for conflict analysis.**

Ethnic conflict theory proves adequate in assessing the influence of external actors. **It fails to confirm the incompatibility of plural societal identities.**

Although both theories fall short to predict the moment of societal revolt, **institutionalism provides a more comprehensive explanatory framework for root cause analysis.**

8. Literature

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