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# WAR AND OTHER WORRIES OF THE PEOPLE

**VIEWS ON UKRAINE FROM UKRAINE**

by **Simo Mannila & Natalia Kharchenko**

There are different views on the conflict in Ukraine. Russia defines the conflict as a civil war, claiming to deliver only humanitarian support to the eastern separatist parts of the country. For Ukraine and most of the world, Russia is an active participant of the conflict and often its main inflictor, and there is a wealth of evidence to support this view.<sup>1</sup> This article describes the development of popular beliefs and attitudes in the Ukraine of today on what should be done in the country, while also taking into account that the war is not the only problem in Ukraine. This article also reviews the Ukrainian-Russian attitudes and changes in the geopolitical orientation of the Ukrainian people since 2014, both of which seem to be considerably influenced by the war. The data are based on opinion polls in Ukraine, focusing on what is happening in the Donbas region, how the conflict should be resolved, what is the preferred political orientation of the country, how ethnic relations look today, and other worries of the people. The key findings of this article are based on the data of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) along with some other poll data that are used for supplementary and comparative purposes. The KIIS data were collected by surveys carried out in compliance with international standards of public opinion surveys. The findings are discussed in relation to regionalization and the development of a modern civil society.<sup>2</sup> The occupation of Crimea is not addressed.

Since 2014, the social and economic situation of Ukraine has worsened. The present war, which started in full-fledged form in 2014, has had a major negative impact on these developments. Even without the war the economy of the country would be in a rather poor state and in need of urgent reforms. For 2015, the IMF reported a GDP reduction of 9.9% in Ukraine, which was the second massive drop since 2014, but for 2016 there was 2.3% growth, which seems to have continued at the pace of 2% in 2017, and the IMF and the World Bank forecasts for 2018 are growth between 3.2% and 3.5%. Thus, Ukraine is recovering to the modest, European level of economic development; nevertheless, the losses of 2014 and 2015 have not been compensated for. The economic recovery is uncertain, with international experts having given rather reserved comments on its sustainability and emphasizing the need for long-term external support and funding.<sup>3</sup>

However, a way out of the war in the eastern territories of Ukraine is not at hand; there are continuous casualties, and the interpretations concerning the Minsk 2015 agreement and its implementation are heavily contested. With the separat-

ist territories, Ukraine is estimated to have lost approximately 20% of its economic potential – either in separatists' hands or destroyed by the war<sup>4</sup> – and there is a considerable internal refugee problem bearing a potential impact also beyond the Ukrainian borders both in the Russian Federation and Western Europe. According to the UNHCR<sup>5</sup>, the conflict has affected 4.4 million people in Ukraine, of whom 3.8 million need humanitarian assistance. The population has also diminished, some moving to the west and others to Russia. For instance, it is estimated that there are up to 800,000 Ukrainian citizens in Poland, many of them working informally, although this is not only due to the war, and it also reflects the link between Ukraine and the EU.<sup>6</sup> Serious problems of governance remain in Ukraine, and the popularity of the present political establishment as well as trust in many key institutions is down.<sup>7</sup>

ACCORDING TO HABERMAS,<sup>8</sup> public opinion is constituted in the public sphere, which is accessible to all, by means of rational discourse, where anybody independent of their social status can contribute. Rationality is a heuristic idea, however, and in practice it is not the case that all citizens have equal access to the public sphere or an equal capacity for discourse. Public opinion is strongly influenced by elites and interest groups, and the public sphere is today international. In Ukraine, public opinion is of key importance: the concept of “cyber war” was first coined for international usage during the first year of the war in Ukraine, and it has been estimated that Internet information concerning what is happening in Ukraine is often manipulated. It is advantageous for the people if there are various groups or elite blocs in a country, because in that case the groups or blocs need to compete for the support of the people by utilizing various media, and this is an argument for democracy.<sup>9</sup> However, the competition also takes place by means of distorted information, and there can be external stakeholders manipulating information, which seems

to be the case in Ukraine. In the case of a massive and successful distortion, people might end up living in a “hyper-reality” or “hyper-realities”, whose links with factual reality are few even though factual reality still exists.<sup>10</sup>

In today's society, mass media, including social media, plays a key role in the constitution of public opinion, and television is of key importance, because Ukrainians watch television more than most European nations.<sup>11</sup> There are major regional differences in television watching in Ukraine; for example, in 2015 32% of all Ukrainians watched, among other channels, Russian channels, while the corresponding share in

## abstract

The article describes Ukrainian views on the war in the eastern region of the country and other worries of the people as well as Ukrainian-Russian relations and the views on the EU. The empirical material is from opinion polls carried out by the Kyiv International Institute for Sociology in 2014–2017. The conflict in the east is the main concern of the population. Two thirds of Ukrainians rely today on international negotiations as a means for resolving the conflict. Since 2014 the majority of Ukrainians have turned politically towards the EU, while the support to the Russian-led customs union has diminished. The esteem of the Russian government is down, which is not reflected in the ethnic relations in Ukraine. There are major regional differences in Ukraine, and Donbas stands out. Distrust in government and policy-makers is typical of the whole Ukraine.

**KEY WORDS:** Ukraine, Ukraine-Russia relations, Ukraine-EU relations, opinion polls, governance.

the Donbas region, i.e., Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, was 82%. Approximately one third of the people in Donbas did not have any confidence in the information from Ukrainian television, while the corresponding share of distrust in Russian television information was only 7%. In contrast, in the whole country 15% did not trust the information from Ukrainian television, while the share of those who distrusted Russian television information was around 50%.<sup>12</sup> These figures indicate the influence of Ukrainian versus Russian mass media, although the differences in regional mass media practices have deep historical, cultural, and linguistic roots.<sup>13</sup> These differences are in compliance with what we find in the people's opinions of the war, the possible ways out of it, and their confidence in social institutions, and they might at least partly explain the differences.

In this article, we want to give a rare insight into Ukrainian views on the war in the eastern region of the country, Ukrainian-Russian relations as they are experienced at the grassroots level, and other worries of the population during the ongoing conflict. This insight is rare not due to a lack of adequate and reliable data, instead, to a lack of interest in Ukraine, which is internationally often considered to be a mere passive reflection of Russian or NATO/European interests. For a constructive debate, it is of paramount importance that methodologically correct opinion polls are carried out and the results widely disseminated. These polls and the dissemination of their results are important both in Ukraine and internationally, if we want to avoid strategic deception or self-deception.<sup>14</sup>

## Research materials

During 2014–2017 KIIS conducted several targeted opinion polls with samples covering (a) the whole country, (b) the whole country excluding the territory under separatist rule, or (c) selected oblasts. The interviews are carried out as telephone interviews in urban settlements and major regional centers and as face-to-face interviews in smaller sampling units. Crimea and the separatist territories were mainly excluded from the polls as of July 2014 due to the safety risks for interviewers and interviewees. The sample sizes usually vary between 2,000 and 3,000 respondents, and the results are representative at the level of oblasts and the whole country. Below we refer to KIIS survey results by the authors of articles or press releases if they are mentioned on the KIIS website; otherwise, we refer to the results anonymously as KIIS publications. Additional methodological information (e.g. data collection dates, sample sizes, and sampling errors) for the surveys utilized here is available from the KIIS website (<http://www.kiis.com.ua>).

In this article, we focus mainly on poll types “b”, and when focusing on selected oblasts (poll type “c”), we address the eastern and southern oblasts of Ukraine, i.e. Dnipropetrovsk, Zapor-

izhza, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolayiv, and Odesa oblasts plus the government-controlled parts of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

## The conflict – war or something else?

According to KIIS,<sup>15</sup> Ukrainians from the very onset of the war most often (40%) supported the view that the Donbas conflict was a war between Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, approximately one fifth of the respondents in 2014 said that they believed that the conflict is a civil war provoked and supported by the Russian Federation. Thus, the majority of Ukrainians put the blame for the conflict on Russia. There was, a minority of 12% who considered that there was a geopolitical conflict between Russia and the US taking place in the territory of Ukraine. This

is in stark contrast to international debates often circling solely around US-Russian relations. In the southern and eastern regions of the country in 2014 there was also a minority of 14–21% who regarded the conflict as a civil war provoked and supported by the Kyiv Government. Thus, in these territories the blame for the war was originally put on the Kyiv Government as often as it was on

the Russian Federation. Regional differences were considerable, and the response pattern remained very much the same in 2016; while in all Ukraine 65% of the respondents considered the conflict to be a war between Russia and Ukraine, in Donbas only 8% saw the conflict in this way.<sup>16</sup>

IN APRIL 2014, when it was less obvious what was happening and what would happen, the possibility of civil war was brought up in a KIIS survey. Almost 50% of the respondents in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine considered that there was a risk of civil war. Global Attitudes Surveys<sup>17</sup> show that there have been some fears of an ethnic conflict for quite a long time in Ukraine, practically throughout the whole period of independence since 1991. In 2014, the share of those considering that there was a risk of a serious ethnic conflict was as high as 73% in all Ukraine. This finding most certainly also reflects what was happening in Donbas, but there was also fear of an escalating conflict, which happily enough did not occur.<sup>18</sup>

During the initial stage of the armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine, KIIS<sup>19</sup> asked about the potential solutions to the conflict and received a wide variety of responses. The most popular alternative chosen was liberation of the regions by the Ukrainian army, but this was supported by only about a third of the respondents. In Donbas, this alternative was preferred by only 8% of the respondents, while one third of the respondents supported autonomy for Donbas as the way out of the conflict. However, the interview scheme did not go further here by asking how the borders of the autonomic region/s or how the autonomy itself should be defined. Autonomy for Donbas was also often supported in other eastern and southern regions

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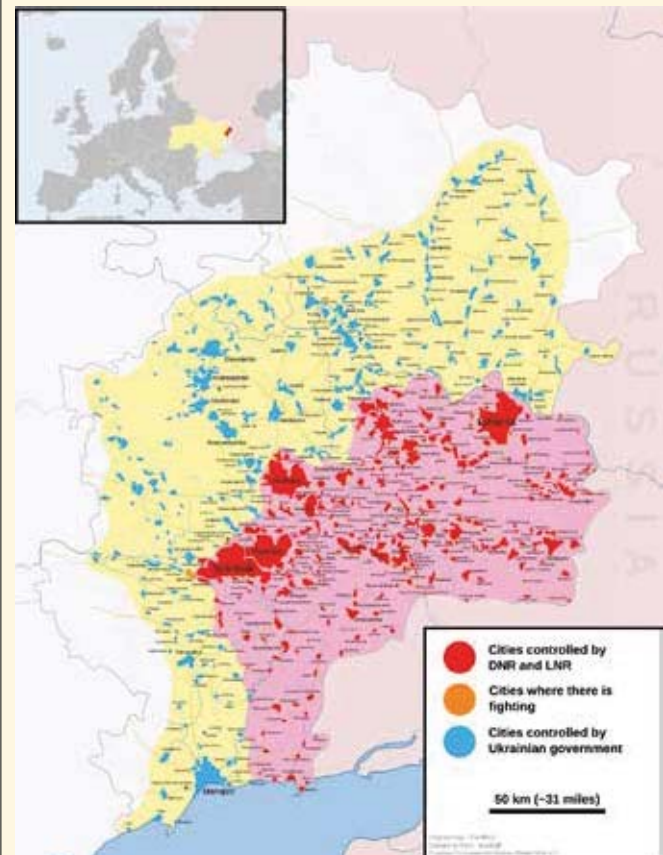
of Ukraine. In 2014, one fifth of the respondents in the western parts of Ukraine supported an economic blockade of the separatist territories in order to make them understand that they would not be able to survive independently. Today, we see these territories drifting away from Ukraine and that some form of blockade has been set up, although it is commonly assessed that the economic feasibility of the separatist territories depends more on Russian support than on the performance of the territories themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the war, Russia has remained an important trading partner for Ukraine, although the trade between the two countries as a share of both country's total trade has declined since the beginning of the war. Today, the EU is the leading trading partner of Ukraine with a share of over 40% of all trade.<sup>21</sup> The change is largely due to the EU accession treaty signed by Ukraine 21 March and 27 June 2014, which led to a Russian boycott of Ukrainian imports. Russia has, however, been a more important trade partner for Ukraine than Ukraine is for Russia, whose economic interests in Ukraine have mainly been indirect and related to energy policies or transfers.<sup>22</sup> European markets must still be conquered by Ukraine. There is, however, a promising perspective due to the visa-free regime established between Ukraine and the EU in 2017.

In 2014, approximately half of the Ukrainian population was unwilling to join the war because the leadership of the army was considered incompetent. This attitude was more typical (79%) in the eastern parts of the country, but in non-separatist parts of the Donbas region with a direct risk of war, the share was 57%. Other government institutions criticized due to the unsuccessful war effort included the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense and the Administration of the President. Approximately half of the respondents saw, however, that the war was necessary in order to defend the regional unity of the country. In the Donbas region, a more typical response (38%) supported resolving the conflict through negotiations.<sup>23</sup>

In the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, people were also asked in 2014 what they would do if the Russian army were to occupy their territory. The most popular alternative chosen was to stay home and not to be involved (36%), although armed resistance was supported almost as much (33%). In Donbas, 60% of the respondents supported the former alternative, which might be explained by the cultural proximity of Donbas to Russia. Giving a warm welcome to the Russian forces or expressing a willingness to join them were alternatives given in the KIIS survey, but they were favored by only a few percent of the respondents.<sup>24</sup> The responses show indifference to the Kyiv government in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, but they do not show any preference for Russian power.

**IN FEBRUARY 2016**, there were simultaneous polls conducted in Ukraine by KIIS and in Russia by the Levada Center on the relations between the two countries. As we might expect, the interpretations of the conflict were different. In Ukraine, 63% of the respondents considered that there was a war between Ukraine and Russia, while 18% did not agree with this. In Russia,





Euromaidan pro-EU protesters in Kiev, December 2013.



People queueing for water in Donetsk, August 22, 2014.



A funeral service for a Ukrainian soldier, September 11, 2014.



Donetsk civilians living in bomb shelter, January 2015.

the corresponding shares were 25% and 65%. In Ukraine, 65% of the respondents said that there were Russian troops in Ukraine, while in Russia this statement was reported as true by 27% of the respondents and false by 52%.<sup>25</sup> What is interesting here is not the Ukrainian views per se, but the difference between Ukrainian and Russian views and their relation to facts. In 2016, KIIS surveyed the sociopolitical situation in Ukraine by also asking how the military conflict in Donbas should be resolved. Now, two thirds of Ukrainians supported the continuation of international negotiations until a complete resolution, and 21% supported military actions until full liberation of Donbas, while for 13% it was difficult to say how the conflict should be resolved.<sup>26</sup> The responses show a sense of reality among the population in Ukraine in a situation where the war had lasted over two years – and now three and half years have gone by with no prospective end to the conflict.

### European Union or Russia – views on Russia and Russians

Ukrainian views on the political and economic future of the country have fluctuated somewhat, but we can discern a clear tendency as of 2014. Support for the EU has in the western parts of the country been two- or three-fold higher compared to that in the southern and eastern parts of the country, especially in Donbas, where only 25% supported the EU in 2014 and the majority was against joining the EU. In Ukraine as a whole in December 2014, altogether 60% of the population supported joining the EU.<sup>27</sup> In March 2017, if there had been a referendum, 77% would have voted for joining the EU and 23% would have voted against it. The support for NATO membership has been somewhat lower in the surveys, but lately it has risen to 60% and more. Earlier regional differences, however, remain.<sup>28</sup>

Before 2014, the support for the EU and support for the Russian-led customs union were usually at an equal level of approximately 40%, but things changed due to the war, probably partly also due to the Russian boycott of Ukrainian goods. As the ex-Finnish Ambassador to Russia René Nyberg<sup>29</sup> stated, “Russia has won Crimea and lost the Ukrainians.” According to the Global Attitudes Survey, the influence of the Russian policy on Ukraine was in 2014 considered negative by two thirds of the respondents, while the corresponding negative view on EU influence was held by one third of the respondents.<sup>30</sup> The support for EU membership and European political orientation, however, fluctuates, while the support for membership in the Russian-led customs union remains stable and low.<sup>31</sup>

For comparison, we might bear in mind, for instance, the Nordic referendums on EU membership in the 1990s, where the support for joining the EU was in all countries at the same level or less than it is today in Ukraine. The difficulty in taking a stand, however, is reflected throughout the surveys carried out by KIIS. The share of those giving no response to key questions or explicitly saying that they do not want to take a stand has often been up to 20%. These results show insecurity towards the future, but we see also a rise in the responses emphasizing the self-sufficiency of Ukraine; people feel more often that instead of relying on

external aid the country must be able to stand on its own. Since 2016, the share of those supporting neither EU membership nor joining the customs union has been 28%, and this is the most popular alternative in Donbas.<sup>32</sup>

THE KIIS ALL-UKRAINIAN survey in 2014<sup>33</sup> contained a question concerning double citizenship, which today is not available in Ukraine. Almost half of the population took a critical stand against double citizenship, while around 30% supported it. The responses were, again, very much linked with the region – the western and the central parts of the country were against it, while the southern and the eastern parts were for it. The reasons for the double citizenship were, however, very practical; the respondents who supported it did so because they felt it would allow them to have formal employment abroad and would make travel easier. This is most relevant for those Ukrainians who traditionally have worked in the Russian Federation, which in today's situation might be more complicated if they want to maintain their Ukrainian citizenship, and it is also relevant for the Ukrainians working in the EU and might gain in relevance due to the visa-free EU regime for Ukrainians. However, dual citizenship is not favored by the decision-makers in Ukraine.

Besides citizenship, the views on the political and economic orientation of Ukraine are linked with ethnicity and language, but the relationship is far from simple. Ukrainians have a very positive view on Russians, which is productive for the social climate of the country, because Russians are a very important minority in Ukraine and made up 17% of the Ukrainian population in 2001.<sup>34</sup> The polls indicate that discrimination and ethnic intolerance are higher in the separatist territories than in the remaining Ukraine, and the attitudes in separatist territories are hardening, while there seems to somewhat increasing tolerance in the remaining Ukraine.<sup>35</sup> Polese<sup>36</sup> found that the development of the Ukrainian nation has been a tolerant process, due less to official political declarations and policy-making than to the everyday practices of the population – Ukraine is an officially monolingual country but in practice the country is bilingual. Utilizing Richard Sakwa's<sup>37</sup> terminology, we might state that officially monistic policies have not been supported by monistic practices in Ukraine, and there is an interesting parallel in Russian developments, where the officially pluralistic policies have not been supported by pluralistic practices.<sup>38</sup> Taras Kuzio<sup>39</sup> discussed the concept of “the other” in Ukraine and stated that Russia does not have the status of the “other” in Ukraine in contrast to what is often presumed. The relationship with Russia and Russians is very important in general for Ukraine and Ukrainians, and Russia is regarded as “the other” only by a small percentage of Ukrainians. Sakwa's

and Kuzio's arguments focus on different things; Sakwa looks at legislation, while Kuzio emphasizes policy-making and everyday practice.

Ethnicity in Ukraine is separated from the mother tongue, and a very large segment of the country speaks Russian but defines itself as Ukrainian. In 2011, altogether 47% of Ukrainians spoke only Ukrainian at home, 37% spoke only Russian, and 16% spoke both. In practice, bilingualism is the standard, with only approximately one fifth of the population stating that they only know Ukrainian or Russian well.<sup>40</sup> In 2017, only 1% were concerned about the status of the Russian language and 2% about the relations between different nationalities in Ukraine.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the views on the Russian Federation and its policies have become much more negative, which might in the longer run also have a social and cultural impact, especially when taking into account that a similarly increasing distance to Ukraine has been found in the Russian Federation. The loss of almost monolingual Russian Crimea has considerably weakened the status of the Russian language in Ukraine.<sup>42</sup>

In general, the Russian views on Ukraine and Ukrainians have always been less positive than the Ukrainian views on Russia and Russians. Volodymyr Paniotto<sup>43</sup> compared the development of Ukrainian attitudes to Russia with the corresponding Russian attitudes towards Ukraine, the latter data being based on parallel

research by the Levada Center in Moscow. The earlier positive attitudes seem to become rarer in both countries. While in 2006 up to 88% of Ukrainians had a positive view on Russia, the share in 2014 was down to 48%. In Russia the corresponding share in 2008 was 55%, but in 2014 it had been reduced to 32%. The change took place in 2013–2014 in both countries, and the most obvious reason for this is the war and

war-related media. Paniotto<sup>44</sup> finds several reasons for the popularity of Russia in Ukraine, including the differential policies and the impact of mass media in Russia and Ukraine, the influence of pro-Russian lobbies in Ukraine, the increasing routinization of war, and distrust among the population of Ukraine of policy-makers in their own country.

HOWEVER, WHEN WE discuss the attitudes towards “Ukraine” or “Russia”, we might refer to the country or to the nation. Both in Ukraine and Russia, the respondents make a clear difference between these two concepts. In 2014, altogether 74% of Ukrainians had a positive attitude towards Russians, and the corresponding share among Russians towards Ukrainians was 60%. In 2016, the positive and negative attitudes towards Russia were even in Ukraine – the share of those with a positive view was 42%, and the share of those with a negative view was 43%. This trend has continued during 2017 with the latest share of positive views at 37%.<sup>45</sup> Still, 67% of Ukrainians have a positive attitude towards

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Russians, while the corresponding attitude towards Russian political leaders was only at 8% in 2016.<sup>46</sup> The populations both in Ukraine and Russia make a clear distinction between politics and people.

### Instead of a conclusion: stability or change?

The KIIS survey in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine in 2014 pointed out key issues to be addressed by the central government of Ukraine. These were disarmament and the dispersion of extremist groups (39%), dialogue with Russia (23%), and support for regional development by means of supporting regional business (22%). The first issue might have been raised because of the separatist groups, but also because of the right-wing organizations that are active and demonized in the Russian media. There was rather modest support (23%) for the armed occupation of government buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk, which was how the separatist movement originally manifested itself.<sup>47</sup>

A clear majority in all Ukrainian regions has supported the unity of the country throughout the conflict. In Donbas in 2014, 14% supported a merger with the Russian Federation, and 9% supported independence. Those were the highest figures by oblasts – in other eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, the share of those supporting the merger with the Russian Federation was only 3%. Also, the Global Attitudes Survey<sup>48</sup> has shown a high level of support (77%) for the unity of the country, and only in Crimea did the separatist feelings have a small majority when the conflict started (54%).

Ukrainian findings show, despite the clear regional differences, that there has been no strong support for separatism in Ukraine. It is unclear how the opinions have developed lately, however, because reliable data from the separatist territories are not available. Interestingly, in corresponding surveys carried out in Russia in 2014, 61% of the respondents felt that some (unnamed) parts of the neighboring countries belong to Russia<sup>49</sup>, and the legitimacy of Ukraine as a state was seen as questionable.<sup>50</sup>

**THE WAR IN** the eastern part of Ukraine is the most important concern for an overwhelming majority. In the spring of 2017, it was a concern for 72% of respondents, followed by standard of living (60%), economic situation (47%), and the security of Ukraine (27%).<sup>51</sup> This also shows that for 28% of the Ukrainians the war is rather a distant problem, and everyday life related to income and subsistence are also major worries of the population. The response pattern has remained rather similar in the course of the past few years. KIIS has assessed social and individual well-being in Ukraine since 2012, and we can see that social well-being has declined considerably since 2014, while individual well-being remains more or less stable. The former trend is largely related

to the worries of Ukraine's economy, and regionally the worst expectations are in the southern oblasts.<sup>52</sup>

These findings show an interesting discrepancy; while at the individual (and family) level there has been no major downturn, the perspectives of the society as a whole are considered to be increasingly negative. The popularity of the president and government that existed – at least for the president – in 2014 is gone, and the majority of the population feels that the government is leading the country in the wrong direction.<sup>53</sup> The response alternatives of the question were definitively right/ rather right/ rather wrong/ definitively wrong/ difficult to say. In light of other findings reviewed in this article, the responses show general criticism and disappointment in politics, but do not directly tell which direction would be desirable. It remains to be seen whether this will be reflected in the elections of 2019.

One key reason for criticism and disappointment is corruption, whose core element is misuse of public office for private gain. Ukraine was ranked 131<sup>st</sup> out of 176 countries according to the 2016 corruption index by Transparency International, and this was only a modest improvement from 2012. A KIIS report<sup>54</sup> with comparative data from 2007–2015 had similar results. In 2015, 66% of the respondents had encountered corruption during the past 12 months, and 21% encountered it monthly, which was a slight reduction since 2011. The reduction was largely due to decreased offers of bribes to public service providers, which

might be explained by impoverishment of the population. Voluntary bribes are, however, not the most typical form of corruption, extortion by the civil service seems to be more than twice as common.

Interestingly, the KIIS results point out that there is a difference between the experience of corruption and the perception of corruption. The figures show that since 2011 the actual experience of cor-

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ruption has decreased, while the perception of corruption has increased, indicating a higher sensitivity towards corruption. Even if only one in three Ukrainians would refuse to pay bribes,<sup>55</sup> the share of those who, when facing corruption, would not defend their rights, is reduced from approximately one third of the population to less than 20%. Although it is still largely a very negative picture, we see some indications that a civil society willing to defend its rights is developing.<sup>56</sup>

KIIS's<sup>57</sup> interpretation of corruption links corruption with general impoverishment of public services and lack of good governance. Over half of the hospital patients provide their own medicine and instruments as needed, and 22% consider this to be their obligation without being forced to do it – thus it is clearly obvious that the citizens' right to health care is not fully observed, and people have adapted themselves to the situation. The most typical form of corruption in education is collecting money for class or school funds and paying, for example, for classroom repairs. This might happen voluntarily or by extor-

tion. This means, too, that the public sector – the government – is neglecting its obligations and that civil society is making this up out of its own pockets. We do not know whether there was funding that was misused or if there was no adequate funding, but it is clear that those patients, parents, and relatives who can pay keep the system going.

**THE KIIS RESULTS** show that there are systematic differences between the eastern and southern versus western and central parts of Ukraine concerning the conflict, and also concerning language and culture. The findings indicate that some form of regionalization of the country would be needed, but the key issue is what is politically feasible. Various solutions are on the table, but each of them seems to be unacceptable for different reasons. Bartlett and Popovski<sup>58</sup> stated that the powers of the central government increased during the Yanukovich regime largely due to a concentration of corruption on the central level.

We might define the pre-Maidan Ukraine as “a captured state”,<sup>59</sup> which is not a rare case in post-Soviet countries. In a captured state, the benefits of transition are usurped by a monolithic joint business and state elite, while the costs of the transition (e.g. poverty and degeneration of public services) are shouldered by the whole population. In a captured state, the voters are “clients” of power structures or groupings and are rewarded mercifully for their support; they do not act as decision-makers concerning who is in power and how this power is used.<sup>60</sup> This is shown in politics as strong links between political representation and private interests that are maintained by the vicious circle of corruption and weak civil society.<sup>61</sup>

The discourse on the captured state is in many ways analogous to Alena Ledeneva’s<sup>62</sup> critical analysis on today’s Russia and its “sistema”, with the key difference being that the Russian government presently enjoys high popularity, while in Ukraine the corrupt Yanukovich rule has been replaced by a new regime that, again, lacks popular trust. This shows that we must, besides the war, also focus on other key issues of Ukrainian society and how the population feels about these issues. Salnykova<sup>63</sup> and Shapovalova<sup>64</sup> find that the discourse on regionalization has in the course of Ukrainian history largely been led by regional elites who have utilized it for power negotiations with the central government, without a focus on regionalization as a means of democracy.

There is both stability and change in the views of the Ukrainian people. The regional differences found in 2014 remain similar to those in 2017, and the Ukrainian views about Russians have not changed much. A significant change has taken place since 2014 concerning the Russian government and the geopolitical orientation of the country, with the rating of the Russian government decreasing and that of the EU rising – however, we might consider the latter trend uncertain and very much dependent on EU policies in general and towards Ukraine in particular.

We might interpret the Ukrainian findings as reflecting a transition from an anti-modern society into a modern one. In an anti-modern society, informality, including corruption, is a part of life for everyday coping.<sup>65</sup> It makes up for inadequate public

and private services and helps to cope with structural injustice, and this was the case during the Soviet times and has continued to be the case in independent Ukraine. However, particularistic networks, which are needed when formal institutions fail, are inadequate for efficient functioning of a modern society and might become counterproductive<sup>66</sup> because successful functioning of a modern society requires societal-level capital where trust is universalized.<sup>67</sup> In the somewhat rising trust in NGOs, we might see urgently needed modern social capital developing; however, whether this process will be enhanced and a new civil society will emerge as a result of this remains to be seen. The support for the EU reflects, among other things, hopes for a societal order with better governance and decent life for all. But life is slow and time is running out: as J.M. Keynes said, “In the long run, we are all dead.”<sup>68</sup> ❌

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