



Insufficiently diverse: The problem of nonviolent leverage and radicalization of Ukraine's Maidan uprising, 2013–2014

Volodymyr Ishchenko

Abstract

The article explains the violent radicalization of the initially peaceful Maidan uprising in January 2014 as the result of failure to build efficient leverage against Viktor Yanukovich with nonviolent methods. Maidan lacked critical diversity of nonviolent tactics insofar as directly disruptive methods of noncooperation (e.g., strikes and boycott) remained small-scale and inefficient. The Maidan protest coalition primarily lacked social-organizational resources, i.e. authoritative civil society organizations and strong labor movement, for developing nonviolent leverage that was partially connected to gaps in ideological and regional diversity and partially to unfavorable structural conditions. However, radical nationalists actively participating in the protests possessed a unique combination of resources for initiating and diffusing efficient, coordinated, and strategic violence when it became legitimated by intensifying repressions and disillusionment in the incapacity of the oppositional political parties to propose an efficient strategy against the government. Violent radicalization facilitated geographical expansion of disruption via occupations of governmental buildings in western and central Ukrainian regions that the state was ultimately incapable of containing.

Keywords

Extreme right, nonviolent protest, political violence, radicalization, radical nationalism

Submitted Date: 9 January 2019

Acceptance Date: 2 March 2020

Introduction

The peaceful Maidan (or Euromaidan) protests started on November 21, 2013, against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's postponing of signing the Association agreement with the European Union—the decision that was interpreted by many as a betrayal of pro-Western “civilizational choice” in favor of the customs union with Russia. After the brutal crackdown by the *Berkut* riot police of the small protest camp in Kiev on November 30, Maidan turned into a massive anti-governmental nonviolent insurrection, expanding the camps across the country, building barricades, and occupying three buildings nearby Kiev's central square (*Maidan Nezalezhnosti*), including the city administration. Yet, before the middle of January 2014, the work of the city administration and other governmental bodies was not disrupted, nor was the normal functioning of the cities outside of the barricaded center of the capital. For the almost 2 months since the start of the protests, the opposition had

relied predominantly on rallies, marches, and symbolic performances as well as “Automaidan” motorcades, bringing the protest closer to the suburban residences of pro-Yanukovich elites while usually distancing themselves from the violent actions of radical nationalists. Nevertheless, on January 19, the spectacular massive clashes between the protesters and the riot police with use of cobblestones, sticks, and Molotov cocktails erupted in reaction to a set of repressive laws directed against Maidan. On February 18, the street fights escalated into an armed uprising with use of firearms in response to an attempt of the final crackdown of Maidan camp in Kiev. The uprising expanded to a number of western

Technical University of Dresden, Dresden, Germany

Corresponding author:

Volodymyr Ishchenko, Technical University of Dresden, 01062 Dresden, Germany.



and central regions, leading to the toppling of Viktor Yanukovich a few days later. This served as a trigger to Russian annexation of Crimea and Anti-Maidan counter-mobilization in Ukraine's eastern and southern regions, escalating to the war of the new Ukrainian government with pro-Russian separatists in Donbass.

This massive violence that originated from initially non-violent protests looked like an aberration next to the "color," "velvet," "unarmed," "negotiated" revolutions of the recent decades (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Ritter, 2015; Schock, 2004). Moreover, it was also a radical tactical innovation in the context of the earlier overwhelmingly peaceful repertoire of contention in Ukraine. Despite turbulent politics since *perestroika* in the end of the 1980s, severe economic decline after the USSR collapse, rivalry between competing oligarchs who dominated Ukrainian economy and politics, weakened and unreformed post-Soviet state institutions, and intersecting regional, language, historical memory, and geopolitical orientation cleavages, Ukrainian protests remained remarkably nonviolent. Two massive opposition protest campaigns in 1990 (the "Revolution on Granite") and in 2004 (the "Orange Revolution") were completely peaceful and ended in significant governmental concessions. The largest violent protest event before Maidan is an hour-long skirmish between a few hundred primarily radical nationalist activists and police officers in front of the presidential administration in Kiev on March 9, 2001, during the "Ukraine without Kuchma" oppositional campaign.¹ Two consecutive generations of Ukrainians born since the 1950s had never experienced any massive protest violence in their country before the Maidan uprising.

Yet, surprisingly, the question of Maidan's radicalization has received relatively little research attention so far. Moreover, there is a tendency to interpret Maidan violence as relatively unimportant or even as undercutting the success of Yanukovich's overthrow (Kudelia, 2018, p. 501; Zelinska, 2017, p. 5). The major hypotheses concerning Maidan violence explain it as a response to high-intensity yet inconsistent repressions that only mobilized the protesters without defeating them (e.g., Way, 2014), point to the weakness of the rule of law and lack of institutional guarantees for a negotiated compromise (Popova, 2014), or emphasize the incapacity of neither the major opposition parties nor liberal nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to control very diverse movement and sustain nonviolent discipline (Onuch & Sasse, 2016). These hypotheses illuminate certain important structural preconditions for Maidan's turn to violence; however, together or separately they cannot explain why the violence was actually necessary unlike in many other successful unarmed insurrections. Kudelia (2018), in the most extensive account of Maidan violence published so far, explains it as a rational strategy. Its costs for the protesters were reduced by the presence of radical nationalists skilled in violence and committed to a revolutionary ideology, while the costs for the government's repression were increased by the violent

vanguard's embeddedness into the massive and initially nonviolent protest. However, Kudelia does not discuss any alternative strategies and leaves without explanation why nonviolence was not rational for Maidan protesters, or at least less efficient in comparison with violence.

This article contributes to the explanation of Maidan's radicalization and to the study of conditions of success of nonviolent revolutions. I argue that violent radicalization was a strategic solution for Maidan protesters to the inefficiency of nonviolent protests that failed to build sufficient leverage against Yanukovich's government. I start with a discussion of the problem of nonviolent leverage. As studies of nonviolent movements and revolutions show, to build sufficient leverage on the government, nonviolent protesters require crucial tactical diversity, particularly efficient methods of noncooperation (e.g., strikes and boycott). However, recent literature has paid insufficient attention to the question under which conditions such tactical diversity is possible and, moreover, easier to achieve than sufficiently efficient violence. As Maidan case demonstrates, these conditions should not be taken for granted. I show that Maidan lacked critical diversity of nonviolent tactics insofar as directly disruptive methods of noncooperation remained small-scale and inefficient. This happened because the Maidan protest coalition lacked primarily social-organizational resources for developing nonviolent leverage that was partially connected to gaps in ideological and regional diversity and partially to unfavorable structural conditions. At the same time, the Maidan coalition possessed resources for efficient, coordinated, and strategic violence that were uniquely combined by radical nationalists (primarily by the Right Sector). I show that the start of the massive violence in Kiev on January 19, 2014, was directly connected to the incapacity of the opposition party leadership to propose an efficient nonviolent strategy against the intransigent government intensifying repressions. Finally, I explain how exactly the violent radicalization compensated for lack of nonviolent leverage on Yanukovich's government through expanding disruption in western and central regions that the state was ultimately incapable to contain.

Nonviolent leverage

A crucial question for the study of nonviolent revolutions is why they succeed. Violent revolutions rely on force in defeating the state forces and changing the government. What is then the power of nonviolent revolutions if they avoid doing this?

In his classical work *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973), Gene Sharp argues that state power ultimately depends on consent of the governed to obey the authorities. Success of nonviolent revolutions, therefore, depends on withdrawing obedience and cooperation of the citizens as well as of the government's supporters among the elites, state forces, international powers, or institutions of moral authority (e.g., churches). Thus, the leverage of a

nonviolent movement is “the ability of contentious actors to mobilize the withdrawal of support from opponents or invoke against them through the networks upon which opponents depend for their power” (Schock, 2004, pp. 142–143).

How can an opposition movement build a nonviolent leverage? Discussing this question, scholars typically refer to Sharp’s classification of methods of nonviolent action into three categories: methods of protest and persuasion, methods of noncooperation, and methods of nonviolent intervention (Nepstad, 2015, ch. 3; Schock, 2004, pp. 38–40; Sharp, 1973). The major forms of methods of protest and persuasion are rallies, marches, and symbolic performances that communicate the grievances and the scale of their support or dissent against the authorities. Methods of noncooperation are workers’ and student strikes, boycotts, and refusal to pay rent or taxes as well as civil disobedience and other actions that withdraw expected participation or cooperation. Methods of nonviolent intervention disrupt routine in the form of, for example, occupations or obstructions, or may develop alternatives to the power relations by creating parallel institutions to the state. Among these three categories, the methods of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention build leverage directly, diminishing cooperation and disrupting the state order. However, to the extent that governments tolerate peaceful assemblies and at least try to imitate liberal democratic institutions, the methods of protest and persuasion are not directly disruptive—even under “hybrid,” “semi-democracy,” “partly free,” and “competitive authoritarian” regimes as post-Soviet Ukraine’s regime has been usually classified (Katchanovski, 2017; Matsiyevsky, 2018).

This is why, as multiple scholars agree, the use of *diverse* tactics is a crucial element of nonviolent campaigns’ success as relying only on protest and persuasion does not produce enough leverage against the government (that can simply ignore even large-scale rallies) without methods of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Nepstad, 2015, ch. 3; Schock, 2004, pp. 52–55). There has been, however, surprisingly little discussion in the recent comparative research of nonviolent revolutions into what enables this crucial tactical diversity. For example, in Chenoweth and Stephan’s (2011, ch. 2) influential study, tactical diversity is almost immanent to nonviolent action *per se* as the physical, moral, informational, and commitment barriers for nonviolent mobilization are lower than for violence. This enables larger and more diverse groups of people to join a nonviolent campaign, which increases probability of tactical innovation and diversity. Yet, Chenoweth and Stephan do not discuss why sometimes it evidently does not happen, as I will show in the context of Ukraine’s Maidan case.

The following analysis rests on resource mobilization theory, which posits that efficient collective action requires various material, human, social-organizational, cultural, and moral resources which are distributed unequally among

social groups and collective agents, and that this fact has a major impact on dynamics and outcomes of contentious politics (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). I show below that Maidan protesters failed in efficient methods of noncooperation (particularly, boycott and strikes) because they lacked crucial social-organizational resources—authoritative civil society institutions to mobilize, coordinate, and sustain boycott on a sufficiently large scale, as well as strong and militant labor movement to organize, coordinate, and sustain sufficiently disruptive workers’ strikes. Despite the general expectation that nonviolent action is easier to mobilize, sufficiently *efficient* nonviolent actions were more difficult to organize in Ukrainian case than sufficiently *efficient* violent actions. Violent actions meet higher barriers for participation than nonviolent actions. Overcoming these barriers requires mobilization of certain resources, for example, training in violence skills, providing weapons, and moral resources to sustain commitment to a high-risk activism. Furthermore, coordinated violence is more efficient than chaotic, but it requires a certain level of organization of collective actions. Last but not least, if the challengers’ violence is not only tactic, for example, to overcome local police resistance, but is also intended to be the means to reach major political goals such as changing the government, it should be embedded into a political strategy, usually provided and legitimated by radical ideologies. As I will show below, the radical nationalists within Maidan coalition possessed a combination of the required resources—violence skills, political organizations, and revolutionary ideology—for efficient, strategic, and coordinated violence. As a result, in the context of the specific distribution of resources that Maidan protesters faced and the intransigence of the government, which did not concede but rather escalated repressions, efficient violence was a shortcut solution to the failure of nonviolence that increased leverage on the government via regional dispersion of disruption, extending the state forces’ repressive capacity.

Method and sources

Most of the studies of the Maidan protests so far have been heavily focused on the events in Kiev, usually missing the crucial role of local protests primarily in Western Ukraine for spreading disruption and building leverage against the government. In contrast, the following analysis uses 102 in-depth interviews collected in 10 cities from all Ukrainian macro-regions—Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Rivne, Vinnytsia, Odessa, Krivoi Rog, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, and Kiev (adding several interviews with Donetsk and Lugansk Maidan activists now residing in Kiev)—between November 2016 and May 2017.² Among the interviewees were activists and/or regional leaders from all major opposition parties, leading civic organizations, initiatives self-organized during Maidan protests, and nonaffiliated participants. The sample included some low- and high-ranking law enforcement officers as well.

In most of the cities, the key figures were recruited from among those involved in the organization and coordination of local Maidan protests. Among other questions, we specifically asked the informants about the role and consequences of the violent actions; how and why they were initiated; what exactly the different self-organized initiatives, parties, and NGOs did in Maidan protests in Kiev and in their own city; and their impact on the violence and success of the protests. Despite their inevitable subjectivity, the in-depth interviews are an indispensable source to uncover radicalization processes, particularly details of the events related to violence and, therefore, to information that their participants would likely prefer not to discuss in public sources.

Nevertheless, in the following analysis, the statements by activists about their organizations' role in Maidan uprising are obviously not taken at face value, but rather checked with descriptions by activists of other pro-Maidan parties, organizations, initiatives, regular protesters, and law enforcement. Wherever possible, I triangulate the factual information with the published sources, particularly with the full-text or extensive fragments of the interviews with the top opposition and pro-government politicians, Maidan radical flank leaders, low-rank activists, and regular protest participants published by Ukrainian journalists (Kapranovy Brothers, 2017; Koshkina, 2015), as well as in the large interview collections by Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (Finberh & Holovach, 2016; Kovtunovych & Pryvalko, 2015; Pryvalko, 2017).

Insufficient diversity in Maidan's nonviolent protests

The growing literature on Maidan's mobilization collected plenty of evidence that participation in the protests was massive and diverse, cutting across cleavages within Ukrainian society (e.g., Bekeshkina, 2014; Onuch, 2015). However, contrary to expectations, diverse participation did not produce the crucial tactical diversity necessary for nonviolent leverage. According to systematic protest event data, Maidan's methods of protest and persuasion succeeded on an impressive scale, with regular mobilizations of hundreds of thousands of protesters in Kiev during December 2013 combined with more than 2,500 smaller nondisruptive and nonviolent actions in the country totally (Ishchenko, 2016a, p. 461). Yet, methods of nonviolent intervention had only very limited disruptive effect before they radicalized and expanded to the regions after the violent escalation, as I will show in section "Occupations and regional dispersion of disruption." Crucially, Maidan protesters failed in methods of noncooperation, primarily large-scale and efficient boycotts or strikes, that played a crucial role in the success of multiple nonviolent anti-governmental campaigns, most recently in the Arab revolutions.³ Maidan protesters did try boycott and strikes, but

they lacked critical social-organizational resources under the structural conditions that made development of an efficient alternative for violent radicalization very difficult in the short term.

The initiative for consumer boycott of the businesses owned by the pro-governmental Party of Regions (PoR) politicians and connected oligarchs started in the beginning of December 2013. The protesters compiled a long list of financial, food, retail, household goods, medical, transportation, media, and so on enterprises and product brands owned by the PoR-connected businessmen; created an Android platform application for a quick identification of the boycotted products; distributed leaflets with boycotted brand logos; and picketed and sometimes blocked entrances to the supermarkets and offices. However, only a small minority even among the Maidan protesters actively joined the boycott. By January 31, after almost 2 months of the boycott campaign and even after the violent escalation, the Facebook page of the boycott had only 46,000 subscribers and the Android application was downloaded only 13,000 times (Kostiukhina, 2014). In February, a representative survey commissioned by the boycott organizers showed that less than 9% of Ukrainian citizens were ready to support the boycott fully (yet not necessarily had joined it) and 8% more were ready to support it partially, whereas 73% did not support the boycott.⁴

The Maidan boycott experienced a typical problem of inefficient boycotts lacking institutional support. Within Ukraine's weak and split civil society, there was hardly any strong authoritative institution to support a coordinated boycott campaign on a sufficiently large-scale (e.g., comparable to the role of African American churches in bus boycotts in the segregated states in the 1950s; Jasper, 1997, p. 256). The institutionalized part of Ukraine's civil society was dominated by oligarchic parties and (usually) Western-funded NGOs with small activist membership, little protest mobilization potential, and low trust among the population (Komarova et al., 2013, p. 7; Natsionalnyi instytut stratehichnykh doslidzhen [NISD], 2013, pp. 290, 292). At the same time, a large number of informal "apolitical" local self-organized initiatives existed that typically focused on different issues than the institutionalized civil society and often distrusted the latter (Ishchenko, 2017, pp. 216–218). This split among institutionalized and noninstitutionalized parts of Ukrainian civil society played out in the Maidan protests. Onuch and Sasse (2016, p. 570) report a high level of distrust among regular Maidan protesters toward politicians and parties in general. As a result, the Maidan boycott initiative was driven primarily by informal self-organized groups, some NGOs, and a small liberal "Democratic Alliance" party joined by some organizations of radical nationalist *Svoboda* party (Kapranovy Brothers, 2017, pp. 195–196), but, critically, not by the major moderate opposition parties' leadership or oppositional oligarchs who could support the boycott with sustained television coverage or

even join it with their businesses. Moreover, the structure of Ukraine's economy and Yanukovich's regime made it especially difficult for ordinary Ukrainian consumers to affect them without institutional support. Even a larger and well-coordinated boycott could hardly undermine the main pillars of Yanukovich's regime—the richest oligarchs—most of whose assets were concentrated in the heavy industry and energy sectors, while many of their businesses were export-oriented (Matuszak, 2012). As a result, the only few evidently harmed PoR businesses were medium-size retail of food and household goods primarily in the western regions that felt some significant damage only after the violent radicalization in January (Zanuda, 2014).

Strikes during Maidan were even less efficient than the boycott campaign. Although the protesters used the very word “strike” regularly, it usually meant any protest action at all, not necessarily an organized disruptive stoppage of work. There was not a single industrial workers' strike in support of Maidan and only a marginal presence in the protests of trade unions or any organized worker collectives (predominantly, “white collars”). Students, street vendors, and communal enterprise employees were the most active groups in the “strikes” that in most cases were simply regular rallies and marches supported and facilitated by the university administrations (Junes, 2016, p. 81), small employers, and local authorities in western regions opposed to Yanukovich's government. Usually the “strikes” lasted for only 1 or 2 hr. In some Western Ukrainian cities, the “strikes” initiated by the oppositional local authorities reportedly lasted several days during the first week of December 2013; however, the local media reported smooth working of all state institutions and there was little reaction from the government.⁵ The “warning strike” on February 13 (i.e., after the escalation of violence) that had been prepared by the all-national Strike committee for more than a month looked like another Maidan rally gathering only several thousand participants for 1 or 2 hr in the middle of the day even in the large western cities like Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk (Kuhutiak, 2016, pp. 515, 531–532). The State Labor Inspection did not record any massive stoppage of work on that day.⁶

Like with the consumer boycott, the small-scale, largely communicative rather than disruptive effect and narrow appeal of Maidan political strikes resulted from the lack of social-organizational resources and structural conditions, making this strategy very difficult to pursue. The last mass political strike in Ukraine by coal miners and other Donbass workers happened in 1993, more than 20 years before the Maidan protests (notably featuring a crucial role of employers in the strike organization) (Borisov & Clarke, 1994; Mykhnenko, 2003, p. 102). Since the 1990s, however, the majority of labor protests have degraded into “local, scattered, mostly defensive struggles for local issues” like wage arrears and company closures (Dutchak, 2015, p. 153). The labor repertoire switched from massive politicized strikes to

marches toward Kiev, blocking the roads and railways, acts of despair like fake bomb threats and politicized suicides, and low-scale clashes with police (Mykhnenko, 2003, p. 105). Political strikes played no significant role in the “Orange Revolution” of 2004 or other major opposition campaigns of 2000s. The weakness and lack of militancy of Ukrainian labor unions was the primary reason for this. The organized labor has been dominated by the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU), the direct successor of the Soviet trade unions, whose major function was not organizing of labor in defense of their collective interests but rather distribution of extensive welfare benefits and control over workers' discontent. FPU adjusted these roles to the new post-Soviet realities after 1991, marginalizing alternative unions while becoming a loyal partner of the owners and the government (Gorbach, 2019; Varga, 2014). During Maidan, FPU organizations were divided in support of the protests together with the majorities in respective regions, while the central structure tried to abstain from the “potentially ruinous” political conflict.⁷ Thus, the dominant trade union organization and the largest association in Ukrainian civil society (uniting three quarters of all union organizations in the country and 8,000,000 wage laborers) had neither significant experience in organizing strike actions of the workers nor a unified will to support the protests. The largest among the alternative labor unions was the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), claiming to unite less than 300,000 wage laborers. It originated from the strikes of Donbass workers at the end of the 1980s and used to lean to the opposition parties. Together with some FPU unions (like of educational and medical employees), the KVPU joined the Maidan strike committee in January 2014.⁸ However, it is doubtful that even these more militant unions would have been able to organize an efficient disruptive strike in support of Maidan in a relatively short period. A lion's share of Ukrainian heavy industry and, particularly, of once the most active faction of industrial workers—the coal miners—was concentrated in relatively pro-Russian southern and eastern regions where Maidan lacked majority support (Bekeshkina, 2014, p. 312; Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2014). KVPU leader Mykhailo Volynets recognized the gap between the demands of opposition politicians focused on the constitutional reform and snap elections and the labor union demands for increased wages, raising the living minimum and canceling neoliberal pension reform.⁹ It was unlikely that the political organizations within Maidan protest coalition—uniting the oligarchic moderate opposition parties, (neo)liberal NGOs, and radical nationalists but not any relevant political left organization (Ishchenko, 2016b; 2020)—could articulate a socially redistributive program appealing to the Eastern Ukrainian workers while simultaneously sidelining divisive geopolitical and nationalist issues.

As a result, the methods of noncooperation that Maidan protesters tried to employ ended only in small-scale and

insufficiently disruptive actions. This resulted from the lack of critical social-organizational resources, the gaps in Maidan political and regional representation, and the structural conditions of Ukraine's economy, political regime, and civil society. The next section demonstrates that the start of mass violence in Kiev was directly connected to Maidan's incapacity for an efficient nonviolent strategy against Yanukovich's government.

How did the mass violence start?

By the middle of January, Maidan was in a strategic dead-end: The mass protests in multiple regions involving millions of participants had continued for almost 2 months without any substantial concession from the government and no clear strategy to win them. Instead, on January 16, the government pushed through the parliament the so-called "dictatorship laws," outlawing a large number of protest activities that Maidan relied upon before, introducing administrative punishment for non-permitted tent camps, covering one's face in public, Automaidan motorcades consisting of more than five vehicles, a criminal punishment for blocking work of state institutions, limiting independent media freedom, and increasing taxes for NGOs with foreign financial support. Following the adoption of these repressive laws, Maidan protesters expected the leaders of the opposition to outline an efficient course of action against the government, as the laws were seen as the major obstacle for continuing the protests in the previous format. However, what Arsenii Yatseniuk, Vitalii Klitchko, and Oleh Tiahnybok suggested at this critical moment on a regular large rally on Sunday, January 19 was limited to calls for the snap presidential elections, re-writing the constitution, and forming *Narodna rada* (the People's council) to unite the opposition MPs and activists in a kind of "alternative government" for Ukraine. Yet none of these proposals were supported by any strategy of efficient pressure on the intransigent government. It is no surprise that they were perceived by the protesters as strategic impotence of the party leaders and lack of "real" action when it was so urgently needed:

Why did the events at Hrushevskoho Street take place [the mass riot on January 19]? Because we were standing on Maidan for the third month and there was no one who could take the responsibility to tell what we should do. We could not just stand without any perspectives. We could not just wait for who-knows-what without any perspective. Some actions were needed, the people demanded action. Too bad that the vast majority of the so-called political elite just stated without any perspective some empty phrases.¹⁰

Escalation of repression provoked a feeling of urgency among the protesters. The violent escalation served as a shortcut solution in the situation when they lacked any efficient nonviolent strategy and resources to build leverage on the intransigent government.

There is a controversy about the role of the Right Sector—an umbrella coalition of several extreme-right paramilitary organizations that united at the beginning of Euromaidan protests—in initiating the violence on January 19. After all, it was one of the Automaidan leaders who called the protesters to go from Independence Maidan square to the parliament via Hrushevskoho Street, which was then heavily protected by the riot police and Internal Forces soldiers. It is also probable that the radical nationalists were not the first to initiate the skirmishes. Some authors present the Right Sector as simply quick enough to take public responsibility for the violence turning the ensuing media attention on themselves (Likhachev, 2015, p. 266). However, there was nothing inevitable in turning the initial skirmishes into a mass multi-day riot. The clashes could have been stopped by the opposition leaders who at first denounced and tried to stop violence,¹¹ or by the Self-Defense activists who followed Automaidan to protect, not radicalize, the protesters, or eventually by the *Berkut* riot police. Moreover, the so-called "initiators" from Automaidan leadership immediately distanced from the violence and called it a "provocation" when the march to the parliament turned into the massive clashes.¹² The Right Sector, on the contrary, strategically scaled up the initial skirmishes into a full-scale riot. The leader of Right Sector Dmytro Yarosh in an interview quoted by Kapranovy Brothers (2017, pp. 127–128) says that they perceived the "dictatorship laws" as a "chance to revolutionize the situation" in Maidan and planned escalating violence during the coming regular Sunday rally on January 19 beforehand.¹³ The Right Sector introduced the most spectacular violent elements like pyrotechnics, cobblestones, and Molotov cocktails from the protest repertoire of radical nationalists and far-right football ultras, and they efficiently resisted the counter-attacks of the riot police in the following days. Last but not least, "taking responsibility" was exactly that the protesters at Independence Maidan square demanded from the opposition leaders. When the latter failed to exercise efficient leadership in diversifying and increasing leverage of non-violent protests, the Right Sector was ready to take over leadership of the violent resistance.

After the mass riot started, the radical nationalists' violence became participatory, involving masses of the protesters who were not previously involved in violence and were skeptical or even against it (Kudelia, 2018, p. 511). As Nazar Sarabun, a Right Sector leader from Ternopil, commented, "Then people massively, really massively, in huge queues [were coming to us] . . . People with different backgrounds—from drivers to nuclear physicists. Everyone, just everyone!"¹⁴ Popova (2014, p. 69) calls this a "chicken-and-egg problem": Perhaps, the radical nationalists did not radicalize the Maidan protests, but the protesters' radicalization strengthened the far-right. Indeed, the Right Sector was trying "to rock the boat and overthrow the regime in a revolutionary way"¹⁵ from the very beginning of Maidan

protests. However, before January 19 the radical nationalists' violent actions usually had not received mass support and had often been criticized as "provocations."¹⁶ Only the combination of extraordinary and intensifying government repressions and disillusionment in the political opposition leadership incapable of proposing a strategy of nonviolent leverage created an opportunity for radicalization of the Maidan protests. Yet one cannot ignore the factor of agency as multiple favorable opportunities are regularly missed in politics. Why, precisely, was the Right Sector able to exploit the opportunity and not any other initiative, party, or organization in the broad and diverse Maidan coalition? This brings us to the question of the necessary resources for efficient, strategic, and coordinated violence and their unequal distribution among Maidan protesters.

Why the Right Sector?

In this section, I compare the Right Sector with other various agents in Maidan protest coalition primarily engaged in violent actions and show that the radical nationalists possessed a unique combination of resources, allowing them to exploit strategically the opportunity for radicalization and to facilitate diffusion of violent tactics widely among Maidan protesters.

In response to the brutal dispersal of the first protest camp by the riot police in Kiev on November 30, 2013, Maidan activists started to form vigilante groups intended to protect the protesters from the attempts to disperse them again as well as from *titushkas*' (the pro-governmental thugs) violence. Maidan Self-Defense (*Samooborona*) units—the so-called *sotni* (a historical name for companies as a military unit)—were not equivalent in their capacity for violence. There was simply not enough time to build a centralized and trained enforcement structure from the heterogeneous vigilante groups. Even by February, on the eve of the victory over Yanukovich, the Self-Defense was still a loosely coordinated network of groups of people with different experience of violent practices. Accounts by Self-Defense militants are expectedly mixed. Some recall a good communication between the *sotni* commanders and trainings together with military professionals and the Right Sector. These accounts come from the *sotni* formed on the basis of Cossack or radical nationalist organizations that did not join the Right Sector (e.g., Oleh Yurchenko and Roman Oryshchenko in Kovtunovych & Pryvalko, 2015, 144–54). Others tell about permanent changes of their commanders, chaos, and lack of the clear chain of command (e.g., Oleksandr Romanchuk in Kovtunovych & Pryvalko, 2015, 246–52). Some of our informants who joined the Self-Defense recall how disorganized the structure was, lacking effective coordination between the various *sotni* and clear division of responsibilities.¹⁷ The decision-making was decentralized and Maidan Self-Defense commander Andrii Parubii had to persuade the *sotni* commanders

at their meetings instead of simply giving orders (Oleh Yurchenko in Kovtunovych & Pryvalko, 2015, 147–48). The Right Sector followed its own strategy, ignoring Parubii, and horizontally coordinated with other Self-Defense *sotni* (Oleksandr Romanchuk and Andrii Bonarenko in Kovtunovych & Pryvalko, 2015, 251, 256). A number of witnesses expressed disappointment about the capacity of the Self-Defense to protect Maidan during the final attempted crackdown on February 18 (Taras Tymo, Ukrainian Catholic University, and Yevhen, Self-Defense in Finberh & Holovach, 2016, 20, 547–48).¹⁸ A Right Sector activist from Ivano-Frankivsk describes how the *sotni* too often showed up with usually 20 to 30 people only, who spontaneously formed the groups and engaged in fights with law enforcement.¹⁹

According to systematic protest event data, the Right Sector and far-right *Svoboda* party were the most active collective agents in the confrontational and violent Maidan protests (Ishchenko, 2016a). In our interviews, the most frequently mentioned collective agents in violent actions from the Maidan side were (in order of declining frequency) the following:

- Radical nationalists (primarily the Right Sector but also other organizations);
- Football ultras—the subculture closely associated in Ukraine with radical nationalists (Andriushchenko, 2015, p. 175; Likhachev, 2013, pp. 67–68);
- Veterans of the Soviet Afghanistan war—before 2014, the Afghanistan war was the most recent war which left a large number of Ukrainian men with military experience and a strong collective identity.

All these groups were small minorities among Maidan protesters, even according to their own inflated self-estimates. The Right Sector had between 300 and 500 members in Kiev (Likhachev, 2015, p. 266), whereas *Svoboda* officially reported between 2,000 and 5,000 activists regularly staying in the Kiev protest camp (*Svoboda* press-service, 2015). Although there were nearly 130,000 Afghanistan war veterans in Ukraine, only between 1,000 and 3,000 (including all veterans of Ukrainian forces and United Nations [UN] peacekeeping operations) could be claimed to have participated in the protests in Kiev (Sklokina, 2015, pp. 134, 154). Participation of football ultras was most likely at the same scale of several thousand at most, considering the size of the largest protest events driven by the ultras on the eve of Maidan.²⁰ Nevertheless, all these groups were *violent specialists* to varying degree: They possessed the skills and experience in violence that are not at all widely distributed in the society and were therefore much better prepared to engage in confrontations with the riot police. According to Tilly (2003), involvement of violent specialists increases the salience of violence and the level of coordination in the violent interactions.

Radical nationalists accumulated a significant experience in violence, including armed combat. All three core organizations of the Right Sector coalition—the Trident named after Stepan Bandera (*Tryzub imeni Stepana Bandery*), the Ukrainian National Assembly–Ukrainian People’s Self-Defense (*UNA-UNSO*), and the Patriot of Ukraine—were formed as paramilitary organizations in the 1990s or evolved from them. *Svoboda* formed a youth organization *Sokil* with a strong paramilitary component. The far-right formed paramilitary organizations with three explicit goals: (a) for defense against possible foreign intervention, (b) for violent taking of power in case of a revolution or civil war, and (c) for confrontation with political opponents (primarily the left, Russian nationalists, and ethnic minority organizations) (Andriushchenko, 2015, p. 93).

The far-right had the largest experience of protest confrontations in Ukraine during previous opposition campaigns, if only on a much smaller scale than what happened in 2014. Particularly, *UNA-UNSO* played the leading role in the most significant violent event before Maidan—the clashes near the presidential administration during “Ukraine without Kuchma” campaign on March 9, 2001. During Yanukovich’s rule, *Svoboda* and the Trident were the initiators of the largest confrontations with dozens of injured people during the protests against prolonging the stay of the Russian fleet in Sevastopol in 2010 and against the law expanding the official use of the Russian language in 2012 (Center for Society Research, 2013).

Relatively large (from 70 to 500 militants) *UNA-UNSO* groups participated in an organized way in the armed conflicts in post-Soviet space—in Transnistria (1992), Abkhazia (1993), and Chechnya (1994)—thereby receiving military combat experience (Andriushchenko, 2015, pp. 97–101). Many of the *UNA-UNSO* veterans of the 1990s were still politically active in 2014, for example, the famous Oleksandr Muzychko (also known as Sashko Bilyi), who was the coordinator of the Right Sector in the western region and played a leading role in Maidan uprising in Rivne.

The paramilitary boot camps (*vyshkoly*) were a regular feature of all major far-right organizations (Andriushchenko, 2015, pp. 94–95). Radical nationalist activists could regularly train in self-defense, and use of hand weapons, as well as how to deploy various protest and military tactics. The trainers were usually retired military officers and veterans of the Afghanistan war and other local conflicts; sometimes the nationalist militants were instructed by sympathizing professional military officers. Specifically, the Trident—the core organization in the Right Sector—put a large share of their efforts in regular training and organizing sports club and summer camps (Likhachev, 2015, p. 261). At Maidan protest camps, the Right Sector organized daily trainings in self-defense not only for themselves but also for other protesters, which were positively evaluated by many informants from different cities,

including a professional trainer of martial arts who joined the “Afghan” Self-Defense *sotnia*.²¹ A liberal civic activist from Ivano-Frankivsk, Tetiana Vasylyk, commented about the Patriot of Ukraine:

They are radicals but without them we would not have coped, it’s for sure. Because we were too liberal. They understood what it could lead to, they predicted aggression from the police. They understood all this stuff and they were prepared for it. We were not. They knew how to organize the tent camp, how to make fire in the barrels . . . how to defend it, how to put on the guards and so on.²²

Before the “Orange Revolution” in 2004, there had been multiple cases of convicting activists of radical nationalist organizations (primarily from *UNA-UNSO* and the Trident) of founding illegal paramilitary groups, illegal possession of weapons and explosives, beatings of political opponents, and the police and hooliganism (Andriushchenko, 2015, p. 130). Due to their violence skills, involvement of some radical nationalists in organized crime was also common (Shekhovtsov, 2015).

However, not only the violence skills but also the willingness and capacity to use them efficiently and strategically mattered for radicalization—and in this way the far-right organizations stood out, compared with other violent specialists like Afghanistan veterans and football ultras, who, unlike radical nationalists, lacked political organizations and revolutionary ideology.

As mentioned above, only a small minority of the Afghanistan veterans (*afhantsi*) in the country joined Maidan protests, and when they did so, it was primarily as individuals and not as members of any specific veteran organization. As Sklokina (2015) shows in her insightful analysis, “protecting the children” (meaning the beaten students on November 30 who were usually indeed of the same age cohort as the veterans’ own children) or “protecting the people” (in line with the idealized military ethos) was the major motivation among *afhantsi* to join the Maidan protests. At the same time, they also often felt sympathy to the young Internal Forces soldiers keeping the line during the protests and directly connected with their own experience as conscripted soldiers forced to follow orders in the unpopular war. As a result, *afhantsi* often understood their role not as a radical vanguard of the Maidan movement but as “conciliators” or a “live shield” between both sides, especially in the earlier stages of the campaign. Yet, with intensification of repressions, the rank-and-file veterans were radicalizing together with the Maidan protesters’ mass (Sklokina, 2015, pp. 150–157). Nevertheless, the leadership of the Ukrainian Union of Afghanistan Veterans emphasized that they did not support any political force. Like the trade union organizations discussed above, the veterans were diverse in their attitudes toward Maidan and usually followed the regional majorities. For example, in Eastern Ukraine the local *afhantsi* mobilized against and

even joined pro-governmental *titushki* in attacks against Maidan protesters (Sklokina, 2015, pp. 155–56; see also the hostile positions of Crimean and Lugansk *afhantsi* organizations in Pryvalko, 2017, p. 34, 390). As a result, although Afghanistan veterans were among the most experienced violent specialists in Maidan protests (and partially precisely because of this), their participation was mostly limited to protective and even deradicalizing activities and lacked organizational coordination.

The football ultras, unlike *afhantsi* organizations, were not split in their support of Maidan. Fans of almost every major Ukrainian club even in the eastern and southern regions supported the protests. In February, fans of 43 clubs signed a truce to scale down the confrontation in Ukrainian society for which they explicitly blamed the government.²³ The motives of such a unified position for ultras despite animosity between the fans of different clubs were their shared hostility toward law enforcement and their dominant leaning to radical nationalist organizations (Likhachev, 2016, pp. 129–130). Unlike Afghanistan veterans, the football ultras not only possessed violence skills, but they also enjoyed employing them. Denys Kotov, a radical activist from Vinnytsia, called it an “ejection of marginal aggression,” “a part of subculture, a part of fun and thrill,” “hardly pursuing any political ideas.”²⁴ Unlike the far-right political organizations, the fluid ultras networks could hardly conduct violence strategically, and as a result, they usually followed the Right Sector in violent performances. The very name “Right Sector” for a coalition of radical nationalist organizations had a purposeful football connotation appealing to the ultras (Andrii Bondarenko, a Right Sector activist, in Kovtunovych & Pryvalko, 2015, p. 255).

In contrast to other violent specialists in Maidan, radical nationalists possessed not only violence skills but also political organizations and revolutionary ideology that made their use of violence more coordinated and strategic. Unlike the split Afghanistan veteran organizations and football ultras networks, the far-right paramilitary organizations were very centralized with top-down decision-making. They strived to reproduce military hierarchy and discipline, and used military ranks and uniforms (Andriushchenko, 2015, pp. 93–94). Moreover, the radical nationalists were unified in a commitment to an ideology weaving violent tactics into revolutionary strategy. Ideologically, most of them oriented toward the Ukrainian “integral” revolutionary nationalism of the interbellum and World War II (WWII) period, modeling their organizations after the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army. After 1991, the radical nationalists quickly went into the opposition to the independent Ukrainian state, often criticizing it as “not Ukrainian” and “not independent” enough (Andriushchenko, 2015, p. 119). The opposition attitudes were hardened by confrontational relations and repressions against radical nationalists during the presidents Kuchma’s and Yanukovych’s rule, with a break during moderate nationalist Viktor Yushchenko’s

presidency after the “Orange revolution” in 2004. The “national revolution” was supposed to overthrow the whole post-Soviet system of corrupt oligarchic rule which was also perceived as “anti-Ukrainian”—the “regime of internal occupation” that allegedly succeeded the Soviet “external occupation.”²⁵ There was a popular belief among radical nationalists that it was precisely because Ukrainian independence was gained without bloodshed and the “Orange revolution” in 2004 was peaceful, they did not constitute a truly revolutionary, radical break with the older regimes.²⁶

There was, however, an important difference between the Right Sector and another major organization on the far-right—*Svoboda* party—that since 2012 entered the parliament. Our informants often criticized *Svoboda* as being not sufficiently radical. They usually referred to the indecisiveness of the party leadership and Oleh Tiahnybok personally during the critical moments for the movement, particularly on January 19, when his behavior was not different from the one of moderate opposition party leaders. *Svoboda* leaders explain their lack of radicalism with the restrictions put on them by the internal agreements between the opposition leaders and their involvement into negotiations between the opposition parties and the government facilitated by U.S. and European Union (EU) diplomats (Kuzmenko, 2017). Western officials pushed for a political compromise condemning not only the governmental repressions but also (if less intensely) the protesters’ violence,²⁷ and they were particularly worried about *Svoboda*’s radical nationalist ideology (Kapranovy Brothers, 2017, pp. 96–98). Because the Western “[moral and political] support for Maidan was very important at that moment,”²⁸ *Svoboda* leaders refrained from open support for violence, unlike the Right Sector informal coalition of extreme groups, which stayed out from the negotiations. Nevertheless, even very critical statements about *Svoboda* by our informants were usually combined with comments that, despite disappointing leadership, there were many dedicated people among *Svoboda* activists who contributed significantly to the revolution. In fact, many *Svoboda* activists joined the Right Sector fighting with the law enforcement at Hrushevskoho Street in Kiev’s city center despite it being explicitly forbidden by the party leadership.²⁹ The party officially claimed 19 members killed in the Maidan events (the most of any organization) and around 100 wounded (*Svoboda* press-service, 2015). Party activists and members of local authorities played the leading roles in polarizing attacks on Lenin monuments, occupations of the state and public buildings in Kiev and in the regions in January, and in the actual taking of power in the western regions in February 2014 (Katchanovski, 2020).

In summary, among all other groups within Maidan coalition, the radical nationalists possessed a unique combination of resources conducive to efficient, strategic, and coordinated violence: violence skills, revolutionary ideology, and political organizations. In addition, the

extra-parliamentary far-right organizations that formed the Right Sector were not constrained, unlike *Svoboda*, by the negotiations between the opposition and the government. This is why the Right Sector played the key role in initiating radicalization of the Maidan protests on January 19 and scaling up the violence. The Right Sector's unique combination of resources was also conducive to diffusion of the violent tactical innovations among previously non-violent protesters. Soule (2004, pp. 302–303) identifies the major factors increasing the rate of adoption of innovations within social movements beyond small groups of innovators, that is, reducing *complexity* of innovations, their *triability*, *observability* of their results along with relative advantages (*efficiency*), and compatibility with experience, beliefs, and values (*legitimacy*). While previously nonviolent protesters gave the radical nationalists' violence a participatory momentum, the Right Sector was diffusing their violence skills among the protesters via everyday trainings and giving them the strategic leadership that directed protesters' efforts into efficient violent actions, producing short-term observable results like holding back the riot police, forcing the government to negotiate with the opposition, and occupying governmental buildings. They also reduced the psychological barriers for the nonviolent protesters to join violent actions in a collective of experienced violent specialists, as violence had been legitimated by intensifying extraordinary repression and inefficiency of nonviolent alternatives.

Occupations and regional dispersion of disruption

How exactly did violence help to increase the protesters' leverage on the government compensating for the lack of nonviolent leverage? Kudelia (2018) points to a crucial moment in the evening of February 18 and the following night when the final attempt to crack down the protest camp in Kiev failed, not because of the civil disobedience of the masses of protesters but because of their armed resistance (pp. 513–515). By the next day, at least 20 protesters and civilians as well as 8 law enforcement officers were dead as a result of the fights, not counting the many wounded. On February 19, Viktor Yanukovich was ready to negotiate a compromise with the opposition on the snap elections and the constitutional change. The infamous "snipers' massacre" on the next day which left 46 more protesters dead as well as 4 law enforcement officers made the deal impossible to sustain in front of the outraged masses. The following police and elite defections, which were also pushed by international sanctions, turned the revolutionary situation into a revolutionary outcome after Yanukovich's escape from Kiev. The crucial question remains, however, why Yanukovich did not simply employ more forces to crush the uprising in Kiev. In this section, I explain that his fate had been already decided in

western Ukrainian regions. The violent radicalization led to the regional expansion of disruption via occupations of state administration and law enforcement buildings, capturing arms by Maidan protesters, and defection of the local police and parts of the military a few days before Yanukovich lost control in Kiev. Geographical expansion of disruption extended the repressive capacity of the state, which was no longer able to control order in Kiev and the regions simultaneously anymore.

The first occupations that followed the notorious crackdown on the first Euromaidan camp in Kiev on November 30, 2013, had only limited disruptive effect. The buildings were important primarily as an extension of the Maidan camp infrastructure to the heated spaces (Tyshchenko & Shlipchenko, 2016, pp. 98–100). Only one building was in the communal property—the Kiev city state administration—which continued to function despite the occupation by primarily radical nationalist activists. Some of the same buildings had been occupied before during the peaceful "Orange revolution" in 2004. The erected barricades around Independence Maidan square were more disruptive and innovative in the Ukrainian context defending the occupied public space and symbolizing direct challenge to the state order.

The violent radicalization on January 19 and the first lethal casualties among Maidan protesters provoked the second wave of occupations in the following days. By January 29 when the parliament agreed on the amnesty for the arrested activists in exchange for vacating all the occupied governmental buildings and opening the barricaded streets for traffic, Maidan controlled the state administrations in 10 western and central regions.³⁰ Coordinated and simultaneous occupations in multiple regions did not allow the concentration of law enforcement to stop the protesters (Interview B-17 with Mykhailo Korolyk, *Svoboda* leader, Ivano-Frankivsk; Kapranovy Brothers, 2017, pp. 133–135; Oleksandr Turchynov in Koshkina, 2015, p. 189). However, the protesters almost nowhere replaced the local authorities, the local administrations continued to function, and the newly formed "People's councils" did not subordinate the state apparatus. However, the occupations showed that the local law enforcement was not able to defend the regional centers of power, when most of the riot police was mobilized to Kiev.

Although the occupied buildings were vacated in the beginning of February to comply with the conditions of the release of more than 200 arrested protesters, the occupations were repeated soon in response to the attempt of the final crackdown in Kiev on February 18 on an even larger scale and much more violently. In the next 2 days, the violent attempts to break in, assault, and occupy government buildings spilled over into almost all other western and central Ukrainian regions. In western regions, particularly, the protesters attacked local police departments, security service headquarters, prosecutor offices, *Berkut* riot police

bases, and courts. These locations held both weapons and important documents, particularly against the protesters and their leaders. At least 1,500 handguns, rifles, machine guns, hand grenades, and other weapons were captured in western regions. In parallel with emotional violence of the people outraged with the events in Kiev damaging and burning the interiors of the seized buildings, there were strategic actions by radical nationalists and Self-Defense vigilante groups. Vladyslav Yakushev from Afghan *sotnia* explains that they effectively took power in Lviv together with the Right Sector, “Autonomous Resistance,” and other vigilante groups in anticipation of potential counter-insurgency operation if Maidan in Kiev was defeated.³¹ Roman Koval, the leader of Rivne Right Sector, describes their planned and systematic process of taking control over the law enforcement buildings one by one because “if no explosion around Ukraine happens, no seizing of the regional state administrations, Maidan in Kiev will be doomed.”³²

Law enforcement’s resistance, although sometimes violent, was always short and insufficient. The interviewed law enforcement officers confirm that they had the right to open fire but did not do this.³³ Some of the top law enforcement officers in the regions quickly resigned.³⁴ Although most of the riot police were concentrated in the capital to overcome the violent resistance in Kiev city center, the government lost effective control over most of the regions in Western Ukraine. A successful crackdown of the Maidan camp in Kiev would subsequently require a full-scale counter-insurgency operation in western regions. Maidan Self-Defense commander Andrii Parubii publicly recognized that the opposition leaders planned for starting resistance in Western Ukraine in case of their defeat in Kiev (Rudenko et al., 2018). The Right Sector leaders were preparing to start a guerrilla war against the government (Kapranov Brothers, 2017, p. 234; Interview Z-12 with Artem Skoropadskii, the Right Sector press-secretary). Involvement of the army could have potentially defeated the poorly armed insurgency. However, Yanukovich did not have solid support from the systematically underfunded military, as is evident from the earlier discussions with the top law enforcement commanders about possible introduction of a state of emergency after the mass riot started in Kiev (Koshkina, 2015, pp. 195–197), the abrupt change of the Chief of the General Staff on February 19,³⁵ and the memoirs of the former Minister of Interior Vitalii Zakharchenko (2016, pp. 179–183). Violent radicalization pushed forward at first largely nonviolent occupations, which in the final spiral of escalation had turned ever more violent, and expanded disruption of the state order over repressive capacity of the government. Unlike Leonid Kuchma in 2004, who conceded rather quickly to completely nonviolent “Orange revolution,” Yanukovich had built a relatively strong ruling party (PoR) that helped him to withstand predominantly peaceful protests of roughly the same large scale, ensuring ruling elite cohesiveness until

the very last days (Way, 2015). However, he had not ensured cohesiveness of the state repression apparatus to withstand an armed uprising.

Conclusion

The violent radicalization of Maidan uprising was a short-cut solution compensating for lack of nonviolent disruption. Maidan’s nonviolent protests lacked crucial tactical diversity to build efficient leverage against the government. Methods of noncooperation employed by Maidan protesters—primarily strikes and boycotts—were small-scale, insufficiently disruptive, and ultimately inefficient. This happened because of the lack of authoritative civil society organizations and strong labor movement under the structural conditions of Ukrainian economy, political regime, and civil society, as well as ideological and regional gaps of the Maidan protest coalition. Instead of expanding regional and political diversity of the Maidan protest coalition, building trust in civil society organizations, and strengthening and radicalizing the labor movement, the violent radicalization appeared to be a faster way to topple the government that was declining to concede. Unlike the necessary resources for disruptive nonviolent tactics, the resources for efficient, strategic, and coordinated violence were already extant, uniquely combined by the actively participating radical nationalist groups that possessed violence skills, political organizations, and revolutionary ideology. This is why precisely the Right Sector was capable of exploiting the opening opportunity for violent radicalization of Maidan protesters, legitimated by intensifying repressions and disillusionment in the incapacity of the opposition leaders to propose an efficient nonviolent strategy against the intransigent government. Occupations of the governmental buildings in western and central regions that followed radicalization demonstrated incapacity of the local police to contain the protesters, whilst the special riot police was mobilized to Kiev against the violent protesters. At the final stage of the violent escalation, geographical expansion of disruption triggered a defection of state forces that deprived Yanukovich of the capacity to repress the armed uprising.

Undoubtedly, this is only a partial explanation for Maidan’s violent radicalization and its efficiency in toppling the government. Structural factors like weakening state and, particularly, repressive institutions under hybrid undemocratic regime (e.g., Chenoweth, 2013; Tilly, 2003) contributed to the success of violence. Relational processes of outbidding between the protesters and state forces, mutual threat attribution between the opposition and the government, and competition within Maidan coalition were conducive to the violent escalation (Alimi et al., 2015). Analysis of Maidan discourse may point to the othering of the opponents as enemies of progress and nation and help to explain the legitimation of violence against them (Baysha,

2019). This article contributes to understanding why “there was no other way out” (Goodwin, 2001) for Maidan except for the violent radicalization.

As Ukraine’s case shows, even if nonviolent campaigns tend to be more successful, especially in recent decades (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Ritter, 2015), this is still hardly a universal recipe against undemocratic governments. The relative ease of joining nonviolent protests, compared with violent actions, allowing for a larger number of more diverse participants does not automatically lead to the tactical diversity necessary to build leverage against the government. More attention should be paid to specific structural conditions and available resources that are required for efficiency of nonviolent campaigns. One should particularly question the chances for a bottom-up nonviolent revolution in countries with strong authoritarian regimes, and weak civil societies and labor movements, such as Russia.

The fact that violence may be a more efficient strategy against governments in the short term does not negate typical negative consequences in the long-term perspective, as the Ukrainian case also illustrates well. Maidan violence and prominence of radical nationalists in the most spectacular and televised actions were among the major factors provoking smaller but significant Anti-Maidan counter-mobilization in southern and eastern Ukrainian regions, which later turned into pro-Russian armed insurrection and full-scale war in Donbass (Kudelia, 2016). At the same time, proliferation of vigilante paramilitary groups, which started with the violent radicalization of the Maidan uprising and greatly expanded in response to the separatist insurrection in Donbass combined with Ukrainian army and law enforcement failure to suppress it, continues to undermine Ukrainian state capacity and fuels the anti-democratic tendencies of the post-Maidan political regime (Ishchenko, 2018a; 2018b).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Andrii Gladun, Oleksii Viedrov, and Mykhailo Slukvin with whom we intensely discussed the arguments laid out in this article as well as to the anonymous reviewers whose comments helped to improve the paper. I am especially thankful to Georgi Derluigan for his incredible support.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This article has been produced as part of the research project “Comparing protest actions in Soviet and post-Soviet spaces,” which is organized by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen with financial support from the Volkswagen Foundation.

Notes

1. *Ukrainska pravda*, March 9, 2001, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2001/03/9/2982081/>.
2. See description of the data collection and the informants’ profile in the Appendix B of the Supplementary material for Zhuravlev & Ishchenko (2020).
3. One may consult case descriptions in, for example, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), Ritter (2015) and Schock (2004).
4. *Tvoie misto*, February 18, 2014, http://tvoemisto.tv/news/kozhen_tretiy_lvivyanyn_gotovyy_boykotuvaty_tovary_pr_infografika_62272.html.
5. *Shchodennyi Lviv*, December 4, 2013, <https://dailylviv.com/news/polityka/na-lvivshchyni-formuyut-straikovi-komitety-2505>.
6. *Ukrainska pravda*, February 13, 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/13/7013755/> and <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/13/7013804/>.
7. Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) statement on December 9, 2013, <http://www.fpsu.org.ua/nasha-borotba/2862-prezidiya-fpu-dolenosni-dlya-narodu-ukrajini-pitannya-mayut-virishuvatisya-u-ramkakh-dialogu-vladi-politichnikh-sil-i-gromadyanskogo-suspilstva>.
8. *Ukrainska pravda*, 21 January 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/01/21/7010444/>.
9. *Konfederatsiia vilnykh profspilok Ukrainy*, February 13, 2014, <http://kvpu.org.ua/uk/news/7/368-vimogi-strajjkovogo-komitetu-majjdanu>.
10. Interview B-35 with Sofiia Fedyna, Lviv’s Maidan stage moderator.
11. *Ukrainska pravda*, January 19, 2004, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/01/19/7009942/>.
12. *Ukrainska pravda*, January 19, 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/01/19/7009935/>.
13. Also confirmed by Artem Skoropadskii, the Right Sector press-secretary (Interview Z-12). Yarosh alleges that Andrii Parubii, the commander of Maidan Self-Defense, motivated some of the activists to support the planned violent escalation by the Right Sector.
14. Interview B-4.
15. Interview Z-12 with Artem Skoropadskii, the Right Sector press-secretary, Kiev.
16. Most notably, the assault on the presidential administration on December 1 after Kiev protest camp dispersal (Kapranovy Brothers, 2017, pp. 58–62; Katchanovski, 2020, p. 12; Likhachev, 2015, pp. 264–265).
17. Interview B-5 with Vitalii Zabava, a student and civic activist in Ternopil.
18. Interview Z-17, a *Svoboda* youth organization leader in Kiev.
19. Interview B-16.
20. See, for example, *Ukrainska pravda*, November 25, 2012, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2012/11/25/6978121/>.
21. Interview B-21 with Vladyslav Yakushev, Lviv.
22. Interview B-13.
23. *Ukrainskyi ultras portal*, February 22, 2014, <http://ultras.org.ua/01372.html>.
24. Interview Shv-4.
25. See, for example, “Ukrainian revolution: XXI century” by Dmytro Yarosh (2009), the leader of the Trident. See also Kudelia (2018, pp. 508–509).

26. For example, Interview A-8 with a Patriot of Ukraine/East Corps activist, Kharkiv.
27. For example, *US Department of State*, January 22, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/01/220510.htm>.
28. Interview Z-15 with Artur Shevtsov, the leader of *Svoboda* organization in Donetsk.
29. Interview Se-15 with Kyrylo Dorolenko, the leader of *Svoboda* organization in Dnipropetrovsk and his interview for Kapranovy Brothers (2017, p. 212); Interview Z-12 with Artem Skoropadskii, the Right Sector press-secretary.
30. *Ukrainska pravda*, January 27, 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/01/27/7011426/>.
31. Interview B-21.
32. Interview B-24.
33. Interview B-10 with a top law enforcement officer, Ternopil; Interview B-19 with Roman Danyliv, Public Order Control Department, the Ministry of Interior, Ivano-Frankivsk.
34. *Ukrainska pravda*, February 19, 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/19/7014717/>.
35. *Ukrainska pravda*, February 19, 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/19/7014913/>.

References

- Alimi, E. Y., Demetriou, C., & Bosi, L. (2015). *The dynamics of radicalization: A relational and comparative perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Andriushchenko, E. (2015). *Ukrainski pravoradykalni orhanizatsii v konteksti suspilno-politychnykh protsesiv (kinets 1980-kh - 2015 rr)* [Ukrainian radical right organizations in the context of socio-political processes (end of 1980s – 2015)] [Doctoral dissertation]. Zaporizhzhia National University.
- Baysha, O. (2019). *Miscommunicating social change: Lessons from Russia and Ukraine*. Lexington Books.
- Bekeshkina, I. (2014). Maidan: khto, chomu i navishcho? [Maidan: who, why and what for?] *Sotsialni Vymiry Suspilstva*, 6(17), 304–313.
- Borisov, V., & Clarke, S. (1994). Reform and revolution in the Communist National Park. *Capital & Class*, 18(2), 9–13.
- Center for Society Research. (2013). 1 hrudnia sutychny pravych radikaliv ta “Berkutu” pryzvely do naikryvavishoho vulychnoho protystoiannia v istorii nezaleznoi Ukrainy [On December 1, the clashes between the radical right and Berkut led to the bloodiest street confrontation in the history of independent Ukraine]. <https://csrl.org.ua/1-grudnya-sutichki-pravich-radikaliv-ta-berkutu-prizveli-do-naykrivavishoho-vulichnogo-protystoiannya-v-istoriyi-nezalezhoi-ukrainy-2/>
- Chenoweth, E. (2013). Terrorism and democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16, 355–378.
- Chenoweth, E., & Stephan, M. J. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press.
- Dutchak, O. (2015). Unite or fall: Labor protests in Ukraine in the face of the crises. *Intersections East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 3(1), 140–157.
- Edwards, B., & McCarthy, J. D. (2004). Resources and social movement mobilization. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 116–152). Blackwell Publishing.
- Finberh, L., & Holovach, U. (Eds.). (2016). *Maidan. Svidchennia. Kyiv 2013-2014 roky* [Maidan. Testimonies. Kiev 2013–2014]. Dukh i Litera.
- Goodwin, J. (2001). *No other way out: States and revolutionary movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gorbach, D. (2019). Underground waterlines: Explaining political quiescence of Ukrainian labor unions. *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 84, 33–46.
- Ishchenko, V. (2016a). Far right participation in the Ukrainian Maidan protests: An attempt of systematic estimation. *European Politics and Society*, 17(4), 453–472.
- Ishchenko, V. (2016b). *The Ukrainian left during and after the Maidan protests*. https://www.academia.edu/20445056/The_Ukrainian_Left_during_and_after_the_Maidan_Protests
- Ishchenko, V. (2017). The Ukrainian new left and student protests: A thorny way to hegemony. In M. Wennerhag, C. Fröhlich, & G. Piotrowski (Eds.), *Radical left movements in Europe* (pp. 211–229). Routledge.
- Ishchenko, V. (2018a). Denial of the obvious: Far right in Maidan protests and their danger today. *Vox Ukraine*. <https://vox-ukraine.org/en/denial-of-the-obvious-far-right-in-maidan-protests-and-their-danger-today/>
- Ishchenko, V. (2018b). *Nationalist radicalization trends in post-Euromaidan Ukraine* (PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 529). <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/nationalist-radicalization-trends-post-euromaidan-ukraine>
- Ishchenko, V. (2020). Left divergence, right convergence: Anarchists, Marxists, and nationalist polarization in the Ukrainian conflict, 2013–2014. *Globalizations*, 17(5), 820–839.
- Jasper, J. M. (1997). *The art of moral protest: Culture, biography, and creativity in social movements*. University of Chicago Press.
- Junes, T. (2016). Euromaidan and the revolution of dignity: A case study of a student protest as a catalyst for political upheaval. *Critique & Humanism*, 46(2), 73–96.
- Kapranovy Brothers. (2017). *Maidan. Taiemni faily: Zhurnalistske rozsliduvannia* [Maidan. X-files. A journalist investigation]. Nora-Druk. https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=meY_DwAAQBAJ
- Katchanovski, I. (2020). The far right, the Euromaidan, and the Maidan massacre in Ukraine. *Journal of Labor and Society*, 23(1), 5–29.
- Katchanovski, I. (2017). *Democracy in Ukraine and its current struggles*. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3158014>
- Kiev International Institute of Sociology. (2014, February 28). *Stavlennya v Ukraini ta Rosii do aksii protestu v Ukraini* [Attitudes in Ukraine and Russia towards protest actions in Ukraine]. <http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=231&page=1&y=2014&m=2>
- Komarova, N., Lutsevych, O., & Palyvoda, L. (2013). *Otsinka stanu rozvytku hromadianskoho suspilstva ta suspilnoi aktyvnosti hromadian Ukrainy* [Evaluation of the civil society development and citizens’ public activity]. Ukrainskyi fond demokratii “Spochatku liudy.”
- Koshkina, S. (2015). *Maidan. Nerasskazannaia istoriia* [Maidan. An untold story]. Bright Star Publishing.
- Kostiukhina, I. (2014, January 31). *Boikot biznesa PR: ne tak strashen bunt, kak ego maliuut* [Boycott of the PoR businesses. The revolt is not as scary as presented]. *UBR*. <https://>

- ubr.ua/business-practice/own-business/boikot-biznesa-pr-ne-tak-strashen-bunt-kak-ego-maluut-276962
- Kovtunovych, T., & Pryvalko, T. (Eds.). (2015). *Maidan vid pershoi osoby. 45 istorii Revoliutsii hidnosti* [Maidan told in the first person. 45 histories of the Revolution of Dignity]. K.I.S.
- Kudelia, S. (2016). The Donbas Rift. *Russian Politics & Law*, 54(1), 5–27.
- Kudelia, S. (2018). When numbers are not enough: The strategic use of violence in Ukraine's 2014 revolution. *Comparative Politics*, 50(4), 501–521.
- Kuhutiak, M. (Ed.). (2016). *Ukrainskyi Yevromaidan. Prykarpatskyi vymir* [Ukrainian Euromaidan. Precarpathian dimension]. Manuskrpt-Lviv.
- Kuzmenko, Y. (2017, July 27). Oleh Tiahnybok: “Yak mozna ne sprymaty rosiiske—i pry tomu ne sprymaty Banderu?” [Oleh Tiahnybok: “How can one discern Russian—and discern Banderu at the same time?”] *Censor.net*. <http://bit.ly/2zwSHdr>
- Likhachev, V. (2013). Right-wing extremism on the rise in Ukraine. *Russian Politics & Law*, 51(5), 59–74.
- Likhachev, V. (2015). The “right sector” and others: The behavior and role of radical nationalists in the Ukrainian political crisis of late 2013—Early 2014. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 48(2–3), 257–271.
- Likhachev, V. (2016). Ukrainskie natsional-radikaly protiv prorossiiskikh “separatistov”: ulichnaia voina perioda fevral-mai 2014 g [Ukrainian national-radicals against pro-Russian “separatists”: the street war in February-May, 2014]. *Forum Noveishei Vostochnoevropeiskoi Istorii i Kultury (Russian Edition)*, 1, 128–140.
- Matsiyevsky, Y. (2018). Revolution without regime change: The evidence from the post-Euromaidan Ukraine. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 51(4), 349–359.
- Matuszak, S. (2012). *The oligarchic democracy. The influence of business groups in Ukrainian politics* (OSW Studies No. 42). Center for Eastern Studies.
- Mykhnenko, V. (2003). State, society and protest under post-communism: Ukrainian miners and their defeat. In P. Kopecky & C. Mudde (Eds.), *Uncivil society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe* (pp. 93–113). Routledge.
- Nepstad, S. E. (2015). *Nonviolent struggle: Theories, strategies, and dynamics*. Oxford University Press.
- Natsionalnyi instytut stratehichnykh doslidzhen. (2013). *Pro vnutrishnie ta zovnishnie stanovyshche Ukrainy v 2013 rotsi: Shchorichne poslannia Prezydenta Ukrainy do Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy*. [On the internal and external state of Ukraine in 2013. An annual report by the President of Ukraine to the Supreme Council]
- Onuch, O. (2015). EuroMaidan protests in Ukraine: Social media versus social networks. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 62(4), 217–235.
- Onuch, O., & Sasse, G. (2016). The Maidan in movement: Diversity and the cycles of protest. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(4), 556–587.
- Popova, M. (2014). Why the Orange Revolution was short and peaceful and Euromaidan long and violent. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61(6), 64–70.
- Pryvalko, T. (Ed.). (2017). *Maidan vid pershoi osoby. Rehionalnyi vymir. Yyp. 3.: u 2 ch. Ch. 1. AR Krym—Luhanska oblast. [Maidan told in the first person. Regional dimension. Vol. 3 in 2 parts. Part 1. AR Crimea—Lugansk region]* Ukrainian Institute of National Memory.
- Ritter, D. (2015). *The Iron cage of liberalism: International politics and unarmed revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Rudenko, Y., Kravets, R., & Sarakhman, E. (2018, October 2). “Mozok” Maidanu. Onovlenyi Budynok profspilok ochyma Andriia Parubiiia [Maidan's “brain”. The renovated Trade-Union House through the eyes of Andrii Parubii]. *Ukrainska pravda*. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2018/10/2/7193766/>
- Schock, K. (2004). *Unarmed insurrections: People power movements in nondemocracies*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Sharp, G. (1973). *The politics of nonviolent action*. P. Sargent Publisher.
- Shekhovtsov, A. (2015). The Ukrainian far right and the Ukrainian revolution. In New Europe College (Ed.), *New Europe College Black Sea Link Program yearbook 2014-2015* (pp. 215–237). New Europe College.
- Sklokina, I. (2015). Veterans of the Soviet–Afghan War and the Ukrainian Nation-Building Project: From Perestroika to the Maidan and the War in the Donbas. *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 1(2), 133–167.
- Soule, S. A. (2004). Diffusion processes within and across movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 294–310). Blackwell Publishing.
- Svoboda Press-Service. (2015, February 7). XXX Zizd VO “Svoboda.” [XXX Congress of VO Svoboda] <http://bit.ly/2A3PFdD>
- Tilly, C. (2003). *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tyshchenko, I., & Shlipchenko, S. (2016). Maidan: vid “prostoru protestu” do “urbanistychnoho spilnoho”. Yak tvorylas urbanistychna evtopiia. [Maidan: From the “space of protests” to “urban commons.” Urban E/Utopia in the making]. In I. Tyshchenko & S. Shlipchenko (Eds.), *Urbanistychni studii* (Vol. 3, pp. 94–107). Vsesvit.
- Varga, M. (2014). *Worker protests in post-communist Romania and Ukraine: Striking with tied hands*. Manchester University Press.
- Way, L. A. (2014, February 26). Why Ukraine's Yanukovich fell but so many analysts (including me) predicted he would survive. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/26/why-ukraines-yanukovich-fell-but-so-many-analysts-including-me-predicted-he-would-survive/>
- Way, L. A. (2015). *Pluralism by default: Weak autocrats and the rise of competitive politics*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Yarosh, D. (2009). *Ukrainska revoliutsiia: XXI stolittia. [Ukrainian revolution. XXI century]* <http://banderivets.org.ua/ukrayinska-revolutsiia-xxi-stolittia.html>
- Zakharchenko, V. (2016). *Krovavyi evromaidan—prestuplenie veka. [Bloody Euromaidan—a crime of the century]* Piter.
- Zanuda, A. (2014, February 12). Spozhyvatskyi boikot: moralne zadovolennia chy finansovy rezultat? [The consumer boycott: moral satisfaction or any financial effect?] *BBC Ukraine*. https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/business/2014/02/140211_boycott_az
- Zelinska, O. (2017). Ukrainian Euromaidan protest: Dynamics, causes, and aftermath. *Sociology Compass*, 11(9), 1–12.
- Zhuravlev, O., & Ishchenko, V. (2020). Exclusiveness of civic nationalism: Euromaidan eventful nationalism in Ukraine. *Post-Soviet Affairs*. doi: 10.1080/1060586X.2020.1753460

