

**“OUT WITH THE GANG!”:
MASS MOBILIZATION IN UKRAINE’S
EUROMAIDAN**

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Abstract

This thesis scrutinizes regime explanations of protests in competitive authoritarianism by examining the patterns of mobilization and organization of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, also known as the Euromaidan. While literature on competitive authoritarianism usually views successful opposition to an autocrat as a consolidated agent, the present theory-based case study of the Euromaidan demonstrates that the opposition to the government of President Viktor Yanukovich was not consolidated or united. Following the framework of Sidney Tarrow, the organization and mobilization of the Euromaidan is compared to two prototypical models of organizing contentious action: the hierarchical Social Democratic Model and the loose and participatory democratic Anarchist Model. The findings suggest that the competitive aspect of Ukrainian authoritarianism led to popular dissatisfaction, which made elite-led hierarchical mobilization unlikely. In other words, competitive authoritarianism provided an opportunity structure, which the masses successfully used both to challenge the regime and to bypass the opposition elites, organizing their contention in a way that was to a large degree Anarchist. Where previous research often explained the Revolution of Dignity in terms of regime instability, this study aims to suggest that it was an anti-systemic outburst of the masses.

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Introduction

In the new millennium Ukraine has experienced two major political upheavals that came as a surprise in the context of its seemingly apathetic population and rampant corruption. Viktor Yanukovych was prevented from taking power by protests in the Orange Revolution (2004) and then removed from power in the Revolution of Dignity (2014). Theories explaining these two revolutions have focused either on the strength of Ukrainian civil society, which made it possible to mobilize a large number of citizens to protest on the streets (Kuzio 2006; Kuzio 2010; Lutsevych 2013; Khmelko and Pereguda 2014; Puglisi 2015) or on the inherent instability of competitive authoritarian regimes which enables the mobilization of large numbers of citizens without a strong civil society (Levitsky and Way 2010; Way 2015). Both of these approaches, however, view the successful challenge to the regime as coming from an opposition that is internally united and consolidated.

The assumption of a united opposition results in reductionist conclusions on similarities between the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. In regime type literature, the Orange Revolution was explained using competitive authoritarianism, which suggests that the opposition was able to gain public support by appealing to the deep identity cleavage that characterizes Ukrainian society (Way 2005a). By extension, the Euromaidan was also explained as a case of mass revolt driven by an identity split and guided by opposition elites (Way 2015).

However, such an explanation implies that the opposition elites were in charge of mobilization. In order to claim with certainty that the opposition elites indeed used the identity cleavage during the Euromaidan as a mobilizational strategy to successfully challenge the incumbent, one needs to answer the question of whether the mobilization in the Euromaidan was performed by the opposition elites to begin with. This, however, cannot simply be assumed.

In order to assess whether the assumption of elite-driven mass mobilization was justified I pose the following question: *How were the masses mobilized during the Euromaidan and what characterized their interaction with elites?* In other words, my research aims to show how the masses were mobilized during the Euromaidan and whether these patterns of organization were in fact connected to Ukraine's competitive authoritarianism. To approach this question I conduct an in-depth case study analysis of the mobilization patterns during the Euromaidan. I study the opposition to the incumbent not as a single unit but as an interaction between the opposition elites and the opposition masses. This allows me to show that the Euromaidan was not led by the opposition elite, but was a self-organized mass movement, a point the literature on competitive authoritarianism in Ukraine often overlooks.

In the first chapter, I outline the main arguments coming from the literature on competitive authoritarianism in Ukraine. In particular, I focus on Lucan Way's theory of *pluralism by default* that explains the apparent competitiveness of Ukrainian politics in terms of the identity split and weak party/state capacity (2015). I then move on to questioning the identity split thesis in the Ukrainian case, demonstrating several differences between the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan that further reveal that the identity split might not be an unchanging feature of Ukrainian society.

In this chapter, I also outline my theoretical expectations with respect to the organization of the Euromaidan based on the framework offered by Sidney Tarrow (2011). In this theory-centered case study, I compare the two prototypical models of organizing protests – the Social Democratic Model and the Anarchist Model (Tarrow 2011, 124-125) – to the organizational patterns of the Euromaidan. Based on the theories of competitive authoritarianism, in particular *pluralism by default*, opposition elites should have been in charge of mobilizing the masses through their party structure, and therefore, the organization of the Euromaidan should have resembled the hierarchical Social Democratic Model. However, as my study shows, the

organization of the Euromaidan was closer to the loose and participatory democratic Anarchist Model. This runs contrary to my original theoretical expectation.

In the second chapter, I show that opposition parties in Ukraine were weak prior to the Euromaidan. The weakness of the opposition parties and their leaders was expressed not only in their relative position to the ruling party, but also in their low public trust. I provide a description of how the opposition elites in Ukraine evolved into a weak and disorganized entity and conclude that opposition elites were not in a position to mobilize the opposition masses during the Revolution of Dignity.

In the third chapter, I describe the interaction between the opposition masses and the opposition elites during the Euromaidan. I show that the opposition elites were not the agents of the Revolution and that the opposition masses created their own agency. Rather than being compliant to opposition elites, a number of independent organizations from the masses in fact challenged opposition parties. This self-organized revolution was driven by the motivations of ordinary citizens and not by political elites. Their demands were largely anti-systemic and expressed in a succinct way by the slogan “Out with the Gang!” The slogan captured the protesters’ perception of their government as a corrupt group that is capable of using any means, even criminal ones, to gain more power and money. The story of Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity was not the story of an elite-driven change of government. It was the story of mass mobilization from the bottom.

Chapter 1

Mobilization in Competitive Authoritarianism

In this chapter, I first examine the literature on hybrid regimes and conclude that Lucan Way's theory of *pluralism by default* provides the best explanation for the regime type in Ukraine, because it takes into account Ukraine's national identity cleavage as a structural factor and because it can explain non-electoral forms of contention. However, the opposition to the regime in his theory is viewed as a black box that does not account for the possibility of conflict within the opposition itself. Moreover, Way's theory treats the identity split as a constant, an assumption which will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. In addition, I outline several factors that differentiate the Orange Revolution from the Euromaidan. I argue that mobilization in the Euromaidan should be studied as a case of interaction between the opposition masses and the opposition elites. No doubt elites do have the potential to politicize identity differences. However, they are not always in a position to mobilize. To support this claim, I rely on Sidney Tarrow's framework (2011), which is outlined in the third section of this chapter.

1.1 Competitive Authoritarianism in Ukraine

Ukraine became a hybrid regime during the Third Wave of Democratization (Carothers 2002, 5). After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine adopted a formally democratic constitution and has regularly held elections since gaining independence in 1991. The collapse of the USSR, however, resulted in a power vacuum due to the Communist Party's loss of power. This loss opened space for abuse of office and enrichment by public servants in the context of a largely unregulated economy (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 116). This led to the rise of oligarchs. They had a significant influence on the government but were nevertheless divided, competing for power in oligarchic electoral blocs (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 116-117). Ukraine has been

a hybrid regime since the collapse of communism, because the country built formally democratic institutions, which were either bypassed or compromised by corruption and elite interests.

Several theories focus on the emergence of regimes with formally democratic institutions in newly democratizing nations, where elections have been held but civil rights abuses, electoral manipulation and state capture have persisted (Schedler 2013; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Levitsky and Way 2010; Way 2015). Andreas Schedler argues that regime uncertainty is inevitable under what he calls “electoral authoritarianism” (2013). Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik focus on electoral revolutions, explaining successes, such as the Orange Revolution, through the opposition’s strategies (2011). Lucan Way argues for his theory, *pluralism by default*, which suggests that the instability of competitive authoritarianism is a result of state and party weakness, as well as national identity cleavages (2015).

Schedler contends that electoral authoritarian regimes are besieged by electoral uncertainty (2013, 1). Hence, the ruling elite must employ a variety of techniques to win elections, while opposition parties try to “render electoral outcomes less certain” (2013, 1). In such regimes, ruling elites have the upper hand in electoral competition, because they possess greater resources. However, alterations of power may occur, because it is impossible to completely eliminate electoral uncertainty (Schedler 2013, 185). In such cases, the opposition parties often have to mobilize the masses onto the streets to consolidate the electoral victory (Schedler 2013, 185). Therefore, the Orange Revolution is an example of a competition over the electoral outcome and mass mobilization by the opposition elite. In contrast, the Euromaidan is not a case of a competition over an electoral outcome. Here, mass mobilization emerged in response to Yanukovych rejecting the EU Association Agreement.

Bunce and Wolchik also focus on the so-called electoral revolutions, which they prefer to label as “democratizing elections” (2011, 27). They argue that creativity, innovation and,

most importantly, opposition's agency are the ingredients for potential success in removing authoritarian rulers (2011). They cite the Orange Revolution as a success story, in which the opposition backed by Western support was able to win elections by using a variety of techniques against authoritarian rule. The question for them is whether the opposition can employ "an ensemble of sophisticated, intricately planned, and historically unprecedented electoral strategies to win office" or is left divided and passive (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 246). This explanation is more nuanced than that of Schedler, because it takes into consideration the internal cohesion of the opposition. However, this explanation idealizes the opposition and focuses exclusively on elections. Much of the success of the Orange Revolution was possible because of elite defection, since most of the leadership of the opposition coalition before the protests was on the side of previous president Vladimir Kuchma, who endorsed Viktor Yanukovich (Levitsky and Way 2010, 218). Moreover, the theory cannot explain the case of the Euromaidan, which happened outside of the electoral arena.

In addition, the explanation offered by Bunce and Wolchik does not pay due attention to the identity cleavage in Ukraine and the way the elites manipulate it. In other words, the Orange Revolution was not necessarily a successful move towards democracy, but a sign of regime instability that was partially the result of the politicization of identity cleavages in Ukraine. Both democratic and authoritarian consolidation in the country were challenged by this identity split (Riabchuk 2012). Regional division is exemplified by the fact that even after the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yanukovich and his Party of Regions were able to secure a significant percentage of the votes in the country (Way 2008, 260). Yanukovich later gained strength and was elected president in 2010 despite having been ousted from the presidency during the Orange Revolution and despite the circulation of his criminal record in the media.

The theory that, in my opinion, best captures the regime in Ukraine prior to the Euromaidan is Lucan Way's *pluralism by default* (2015). The term describes a dilemma facing

some countries in the world, where political competition rests more in authoritarian weakness than in the strength of pro-democracy forces (Way 2015, 8). Comparing the cases of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, Way attempts to explain why Ukraine and Moldova evolved into much less closed systems than Belarus. After Soviet collapse, all three countries had open media and powerful legislatures with competitive political systems (Way 2015, 3). However, regime trajectories have been entirely different.

Way suggests that two independent variables are responsible for the difference: state/party weakness and divided national identities (2015, 8). Both of these undermine the ability of the regime to suppress public criticism, crush the opposition, rig elections and create stable alliances (2015, 8). Incumbent party and state weakness are conducive to competitions in elections, legislature and media (Way 2015, 9). The absence of cohesion in a ruling party decreases party loyalty and weakens control over the legislature, while state weakness, as expressed in a weak coercive apparatus and low control over wealth, reduces the capacity to repress the opposition and reward supporters (Way 2015, 9).

In turn, appeals to national identity can serve the interests of opposition elites and help mobilize the masses against incumbents. “By framing regime opposition in terms of national identity, [the] opposition has been able to draw on a committed activist base and stimulate sustained personal sacrifice that may be necessary in order to confront a repressive regime and generate regime crisis” (Way 2015, 19). Due to their emotional salience, identity issues present a useful mobilizational tool for opposition elites and prevent the authoritarian monopolization of power (Way 2015, 19). In this case, it is evident that Way does not confine his analysis of hybrid regimes to the electoral arena. Challenges to the regime can happen outside of electoral competition if the ruling party and/or state are weak, and if a country is divided along national identity cleavages.

Therefore, the Euromaidan seems to fall in line with the theory of *pluralism by default*: the opposition was able to mobilize the people against the President by appealing to the identity cleavage in the country. Still, there is an implicit assumption in this explanation which needs further investigation. Namely, before one can claim that the identity cleavage was used by opposition elites in Ukraine to mobilize the population during the Euromaidan, one needs to first ask whether the masses were really mobilized by elites. It is true that the identity issue in Ukraine is divisive, however, scholars do not even agree on the precise nature of this issue. There are at least two views on the identity problem in Ukraine, which I outline in the next section.

1.2 Two Ukraines?

Two categorizations are common among scholars studying Ukrainian identity. They either point out that the country is divided into two camps, Westernizers and Sovietophiles (Kuzio 2000; Korostelina 2013; Shulman 2005; Riabchuk 2012), or that the identity issue is more complex and fluid (Zaharchenko 2013; Pirie 1996). Most agree, however, that fictional or real identity differences in Ukraine are employed by politicians to further their interests.

1.2.1 Politicized Identity in Ukraine

Theories which categorize national identity in Ukraine as a contestation between two opposing worldviews fall under the loose umbrella of the *Two Ukraines thesis*. Kuzio argues that contemporary preferences in Ukraine are dependent upon two very different understandings of the country's past and future: *Slavophiles/Sovietophiles* – who see the country as an integral part of the larger east Slavonic civilization and who argue for closer ties with Russia in the future citing Soviet heritage; and *Westernizers* – who view the Ukrainian association with Russia/the USSR as oppressive and against their desire to be incorporated into the greater Western civilization (2000, 153). Riabchuk views the dichotomization of national identity in Ukraine as a result of a “pernicious myth” that was invented in the Russian imperial

period about the common heritage of Ukraine and Russia traced back to the medieval entity known as Kyivan Rus (2012, 440-441).

Scholars who disagree with this dichotomization argue for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between national identity, language and demographic factors. Pirie argues there is a mixed ethnic identity in Ukraine that has been influenced by various demographic factors, such as intermarriage, urbanization and linguistic Russification (1996). He characterizes the climate in Eastern and Southern Ukraine as neither entirely pro-Russian nor pro-Ukrainian but oscillating between the two (1996, 1099). Zaharchenko criticizes the binary view of Ukrainian national identity, claiming that differences are not static and homogenous, but fluid and more complex than a mere clash between the West and the East (2013, 241).

Still, Pirie and Zaharchenko recognize that some differences between Ukraine's regions are used for political reasons. Pirie acknowledges that assuaging the desires of citizens from Eastern Ukraine for close ties with Russia is a necessary condition for any political candidate vying for office (1996, 1100). Zaharchenko also concedes that there are differences between Ukraine's regions, and although they are not "inherently divisive," they can be "purposefully misused" (2013, 247).

Examples of Ukrainian elites using the identity cleavage abound. After the Orange Revolution, some groups within the political elites emphasized ethnic differences to attract voters, thus deepening social divisions and exacerbating the national identity crisis (Melnykovska et.al. 2011, 1061). The Yanukovich government used the ethnic and regional cleavages to draw attention away from economic and class issues (Korostelina 2013). Kuzio concludes that Yanukovich's presidency was accompanied by support for Russophile-Sovietophile culture, which heightened ethno-cultural and regional tensions in the country (2015, 184). He suggests that increased support for the radical right Freedom Party (Svoboda) resulted from this tension (2015, 184). Bustikova also investigated the reasons of support for

the Freedom Party, concluding that it was caused by fear of the government favoring the Russian minority (2015, 253). Her findings also draw attention to the existence of polarization in the political system based on identity issues, which intensified the perceived identity threats (2015, 255). The Freedom Party itself used an openly nationalistic discourse that was hostile to the Russophile segments of Ukrainian society. In addition, language has been politicized in Ukraine, with language laws being exploited to widen the gap in policy preferences between Russian and Ukrainian speaking segments of society (Charnysh 2013). Yanukovych deliberately adopted openly pro-Russian rhetoric as part of his electoral strategy in 2010 and presented his opponents as radical nationalists threatening the Russian-speaking Ukrainians in a conflict between the “industrial” East and the “nationalistic” West (Haran’ 2011, 94).

Such techniques helped to consolidate real competition among elites in Ukraine. The identity question in general undermined regime stability in the country (Riabchuk 2012), be it due to real differences or politicized. The identity split increased the competitiveness of the regime by providing competing elites another opportunity to gain public backing. In all four electoral turnovers prior to the Euromaidan, oppositions mobilized regional support, resulting in the oscillation between Ukrainophiles and Russophiles in government (Way 2015, 45). Competition among various elite factions meant that state resources could not be monopolized. In other words, financial and organizational resources were relatively widely dispersed among self-interested opportunists, which allowed oppositions to emerge despite state repression (Way 2005b, 204). In this situation, elites had the incentive to abuse identity issues to increase their base of support among voters.

However, mobilizing citizens by appealing to ethnic grievances for electoral purposes in a regime where the primary transfer of power happens through the electoral channel is different from doing the same thing in a chaotic, spontaneous and violent protest. The Orange Revolution was essentially about rigged elections. Here, the candidates had more time to prepare their

campaign slogans, strategy and could rely on previous electoral experience. Even though the protests in the Orange Revolution were somewhat chaotic, the voters were already mobilized after the elections took place and opposition parties were in the midst of organized electoral campaign. In contrast, the Euromaidan was not about elections and started spontaneously. The opposition elites did not have a chance to prepare for it and, hence, were not ready to utilize the identity cleavage in a non-electoral context right from the beginning.

1.2.2 Contrasting the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan

A constant in the *pluralism by default* theory is the mobilization of masses via strongly divided national identity rather than through civil society. In order to support the claim that civil society was weak in the lead-up to the Orange Revolution, Way points out that it was the oligarchs who funded the protests, and that the youth movement at the vanguard of the protests could not have amassed millions of protesters alone, as its impact was uneven throughout the country (Way 2015, 69). He also cites survey findings of Mark Beissinger, which suggest that the majority of Orange Revolution participants had never been engaged in any civil society organization (2013, 581) and that they were not driven by a democratic ideal, but rather were united by common identity markers (2013, 590). However, Way is curiously silent on the state of civil society in the lead up to the Euromaidan. Perhaps, he simply assumes that it did not change after the Orange Revolution. Yet, this assumption is not justifiable, because it is possible that the civil society in Ukraine was in the process of development and that the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan were its stages or turning points. A number of authors claim that, indeed, Ukrainian civil society exemplified its maturation through these events and that the role of civil society was crucial in the Orange Revolution (Kuzio 2006; Kuzio 2010; Lutsevych 2013, 2) and the Euromaidan (Khmelko and Pereguda 2014; Puglisi 2015).

Skeptics, nevertheless, insist that civil society in Ukraine is weak due to the Soviet legacy. Gatskova and Gatskov posit that this is expressed in such features of *Homo Sovieticus* as

reliance on informal networks, passivity and lack of political identification (2015). Cleary agrees that the Soviet legacy weighs heavily on the purpose and structure of civil society in Ukraine (2016, 15). Even though the Euromaidan showed that people in Ukraine were able to mobilize, it was nevertheless a spontaneous event, without a pre-planned agenda or a single leader to carry the banner of revolution (Cleary 2016, 20; Gatskova and Gatskov 2015, 689). Hence, they claim that the Euromaidan was not rooted in an active and thriving civil society, since that would imply an enduring and intentional effort. In the words of Way: “Overall, Ukrainian civil society has been better at channeling popular discontent once protests start than it has been at bringing people into the streets in the first place” (2014, 36).

However, the impact of Sovietization is different across various regions of Ukraine, which could account for the difference in mobilization. The Western part of Ukraine was attached to the Soviet Union only after the Second World War. Except for the miners’ strike in Donetsk, all major protest movements occurred on the West of the country. On average, Western Ukrainians are more interested in politics than their Eastern counterparts, turn out for elections in larger numbers and place higher importance in NGOs (Kuzio 2010, 289). It is telling that the Yanukovych coalition did not succeed in mobilizing an anti-Orange counter-revolution in Eastern parts of Ukraine (Kuzio 2010, 290).

Different historical experiences even before the Soviet Union are also notable. The Russian Empire banned Ukrainian cultural and especially nationalist organizations in the Eastern regions of modern Ukraine that it controlled (Yekelchuk 2015, 39). In contrast, those regions of Ukraine that belonged to the Austria-Hungarian Empire experienced relative freedom in creating cultural and political organizations, which led to the emergence of political parties, electoral politics and nationalist movements (Yekelchuk 2015, 40). Therefore, it is possible that more protesters in the Euromaidan came from Ukraine’s West rather than East not because their identity had been cleverly used by elites, but rather because participation in

associations and protest constitute a substantively larger part of citizens' historical experience in some regions of Ukraine.

The fluidity of the Ukrainian identity is evident when one compares mobilization patterns during the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan. During the Euromaidan, mobilization did not distinctly reflect the East-West dichotomy. In 2013-2014, protests were more widespread across the entire country and a single leader did not emerge as the symbol of the opposition (Onuch 2014, 46). In contrast, protesters during the Orange Revolution came overwhelmingly from Western regions of Ukraine (Way 2015, 79), who were led by a clear leader, Yushchenko. At the same time, even though the Euromaidan was ethnoculturally Ukrainian, Chuprya claims that it was not nationalistic and exclusivist in character, and therefore, was not inherently conflictual on the basis of language or ethnicity (2015, 89). The emergence of a social movement calling themselves Russian-Speaking Ukrainian Nationalists is a clear indication of this (Chuprya 2015, 91). The Russian-speaking section of the Euromaidan stood for the same democratic preferences as the median protester (Onuch 2014, 49).

The rhetoric in the Euromaidan was not purely ethnocentric either. Anti-state rights and citizenship discourse dominated the messages of journalists and activists during the Euromaidan, whereas anti-Donbas discourse was more prominent during the Orange Revolution (Onuch 2015, 225). Activists and journalists deliberately framed the Euromaidan protests in terms of human and civil rights and even some more radical leaders refrained from using topics that were potentially divisive, such as state language or ethno-linguistic issues (Onuch 2015, 225). A study of demands made by local protests outside of Kyiv in fifty seven Ukrainian cities supports the assertion that claimants were concerned about local governance and were calling for the respect of civil rights and freedoms (Zelinska 2015, 397-398). On social networks, participants framed the Maidan as a "multinational, multilingual, 'civilized,' and most of all, inclusive" European society (Dickinson 2014, 87). When the right-wing Freedom

Party organized a torch-lit march in early January in honor of the controversial figure of Stepan Bandera,¹ liberal intellectuals and activists tried dissociating themselves from the group's message, and many criticized the march as the party's attempt at furthering their partisan agenda at the expense of the larger good (Kulyk 2014, 100). The *Two Ukraines thesis* is not sufficiently helpful in understanding these features of the Euromaidan.

Hence, if the Euromaidan was not a clear case of the *Two Ukraines thesis* where the East was pitted against the West, how could the opposition have used the identity split to further their interests? Moreover, with a much stronger regime under Yanukovych, it is questionable whether opposition parties would have been able to rally a significant mass following to challenge the government. Prior to the Euromaidan Yanukovych was able to consolidate a regime that was "well funded and better organized than any that had existed since independence" (Way 2015, 82). Even during the Euromaidan, members of the ruling party stayed largely loyal to Yanukovych (Kudelia 2014, 29; Pleines 2016, 122). This is in contrast to the situation in 2004, when the success of the opposition rested in part on defections from Kuchma's camp (Way 2015, 67). Therefore, regime strength was much higher in 2014 than 2004 due to greater party cohesion and its stronger hold over the executive.

As I show in the next chapter, opposition elites prior to the Euromaidan were weaker than prior to the Orange Revolution, because Yanukovych's major political rivals were either jailed or widely discredited, the Orange Coalition was completely decimated and the trust in opposition politicians was extremely low. Constant infighting in the opposition camp and consolidation of power by Yanukovych meant that the opposition was more disadvantaged before the start of unrest in 2013 than it was in 2003. Given the weak state of opposition elites and relative strength of the regime, as well as the questionable nature of assumptions about the

¹ The figure of Stepan Bandera is highly controversial because he cooperated with the Nazis while in charge of the Ukrainian nationalist movement for independence.

rigid dichotomization of Ukrainian identity, it is unclear how the opposition elites could have mobilized large-scale protest.

I suggest that the answer may lie in the patterns of mass mobilization during the Maidan. Way's theory is an example of top-down frameworks, where the focus is on the elites and their interaction given the structural conditions of a society. However, the theory does not account for variations in opposition elite strength and framing narratives. Prior to the Euromaidan, opposition elites were in discord and weak relative to the ruling party, while during the Euromaidan the mobilization was more spontaneous than during the Orange Revolution and the frames were more inclusive. Therefore, I argue for evaluating the mass mobilization that occurred during the Euromaidan in the context of the competitive authoritarianism that characterized Ukraine at the start of the crisis. I aim to analyze how bottom-up actions shaped the Euromaidan and examine the role of ordinary citizens, who are seen only as followers in Way's theory.

1.3 Contentious Action From Below

Way's theory in its focus on structural factors accounts for horizontal threats coming from opposition parties and opposition politicians. However, sometimes structures can serve as sources of grievances producing vertical uncertainty (Schedler 2013, 355). It is possible that competitive authoritarianism provides opportunities to challenge the regime not only horizontally, but also vertically. In other words, competitive authoritarianism may give the masses an opportunity structure to challenge the incumbent. In order to examine this question, I study the interaction between the masses and opposition elites during the Euromaidan.

To approach the question I combine the contentious politics literature with the regime type literature. I already outlined the major aspects of Way's *pluralism by default* and will now turn to the discussion of contentious politics theory as offered by Sidney Tarrow. In his comprehensive *Power in Movement* (2011), Tarrow identifies three fundamental components

of all contentious politics: networks and organization, opportunity structure and meaning-making (2011). The first refers to the organization aspect of contention, which includes tactical and strategic leadership and points of interaction for activists (Tarrow 2011, 123). The opportunities of contention encompass the perceived probability of success given the balance of economic and political resources (Goldstone and Tilly in Tarrow 2011, 160). The last aspect of contentious politics concerns the production of the meaning of contentious action by framing, identity construction and emotion work (2011, 142-143).

Applying these dimensions to the theory of *pluralism by default* leads me to the conclusion that it captures only two of them: opportunity structure and meaning-making. Way's regime and party weakness capture the balance of resources between the opposition and the incumbent in power. In turn, the construction of identity is encompassed in the meaning-making aspect of contentious politics. The organizational point is left unexplained. Due to this omission, the role of the masses in the conflict may be ignored. Focusing on this organizational aspect of the Euromaidan allows me to examine the mobilization patterns of the Revolution of Dignity and the relationship between opposition elites and opposition masses.

There are two prototypical forms of organizing contentious action that Tarrow identifies: the Social Democratic Model and the Anarchist Model (2011, 124-125). The Social Democratic Model describes a type of organization in which the relationships between protest participants are rigidly hierarchical, disciplined and planned (Tarrow 2011, 124). The historical inspiration for this type of organization lies with the German Social Democrats, who evolved into a "vast, formal, and hierarchical organization" and were led by intellectuals and politicians striving to win control over the state through elections (Tarrow 2011, 125). Therefore, the existence of strong parties that have the capacity to and experience with mobilizing the masses leads to an expectation that protests they organize will resemble the Social Democratic Model.

The Anarchist Model is an alternative type of organization. In contrast to Social Democrats, the anarchists are organized into a network of associations that are loosely linked and participatory democratic (Tarrow 2011, 125). Historically, anarchists distrusted politics and aimed at creating organizations from below (Tarrow 2011, 125). Therefore, in a society where there are no strong opposition parties that could organize mass protests and/or where politics is generally distrusted, there is a higher chance of Anarchist Model protests.

Applying Tarrow's organizational framework to *pluralism by default* in Ukraine will lead one to expect that the Euromaidan was organized in a way that was closer to the Social Democratic Model than to the Anarchist Model. This is because the regime theory assumes that the opposition was led by opposition parties who were mobilizing the masses. It was to their advantage that a deep identity split divided the country because they could use it as a mobilizational strategy.

I aim to answer whether or not this was indeed the case. To do so, I use in-depth case study analysis of the Euromaidan mobilization patterns, focusing on the actors of contention on the side of the opposition and their interaction. This sheds light on how the events unfolded. In the next section, I explain the empirical strategy of the analysis.

1.4 Tracing contention: Elites and Masses

My research is a theory-based case study with a description of the interaction between opposition elites and opposition masses during the Revolution of Dignity. It is worth noting that the terms "Euromaidan" and "Revolution of Dignity" are often used interchangeably. However, "Revolution of Dignity" is a broader term that encompasses "Euromaidan." The latter refers to the organization of protest, whereas the former also includes the change of government and socio-political transformations in the country following these protests.

Spatially, the boundary of my case is Kyiv, because it was the major stage of contention that included the most violent clashes. The temporal boundary corresponds to the time after the

Orange Revolution until the end of the Euromaidan: January 2005 – February 22, 2014. The first is the date when the Orange Coalition came to power, while the second is the date when Ukrainian Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, dismissed President Yanukovich. The choice of the first boundary is appropriate because I am interested in the historical implications of opposition elite weakness for mass mobilization during the Euromaidan. The institutional boundary of my case is competitive authoritarianism, because I view it as an opportunity structure with its rules of the game, where ruling and opposition elites compete with each other. The substantive boundary of my case is contentious politics.

First, I provide a description of the situation in which the opposition elites found themselves prior to the Revolution of Dignity. After that I describe the mobilization patterns and organization during the Euromaidan with special focus on the interaction between opposition elites and opposition masses. I make this differentiation because opposition parties are viewed as primary actors in the regime type literature, while the masses are implicitly viewed as followers of opposition parties or leaders. Specifically, Way's *pluralism by default* examines structural factors, such as party and state weakness, as well as identity divisions (2015). In the interaction between the incumbent and the opposition, he focuses on opposition leaders and parties who use the identity division and exploit the weakness of the regime to challenge the incumbent. Hence, the opposition parties are implicitly given agency. However, this is possible only if the opposition elites have the capacity to mobilize the population. This is why it is important to study the interaction between the two. Therefore, I view the *opposition* as a two-dimensional concept, which encompasses *opposition elites* and *opposition masses*. I define *opposition elites* as opposition parties and their leaders. In contrast, I define *opposition masses* to encompass any set of actors who challenge the regime that are not affiliated with opposition parties nor dependent on them. Here I refer to grassroots organizations, volunteer groups, activists and ordinary citizens.

According to *pluralism by default* theory, we would expect opposition elites to have mobilized the masses for contention during the Euromaidan, occupying leadership positions. This means that the organization of the protests and points of contact with the government should resemble the Social Democratic Model. In other words, the opposition parties and their leaders would clearly be in charge of the Euromaidan, creating mostly hierarchical organizations and setting the ground for winning elections.

Nevertheless, this expectation was not fulfilled after examining the causal relationship between competitive authoritarianism in Ukraine and contentious politics of the Euromaidan. Competitive authoritarianism in Ukraine produced the opposition elite that was generally weak and was distrusted by the population. This meant that it was unable to mobilize masses during the Euromaidan. Instead, the opposition masses took the organization of the protests into their own hands. The form of organizations which sprang up at the grassroots level during the Euromaidan and their interaction with opposition elites resembled more the Anarchist Model than the Social Democratic Model.

In essence, I argue that in a competitive authoritarian regime, the opposition masses can use both the weakness of the regime and the opposition leaders. Way conceptualizes state weakness as a weak coercive apparatus and low control over wealth resources, while party weakness refers to low loyalty of party members and weak control over the legislature (2015, 9). However, his theory lacks a proper attention to the weakness of opposition parties. My objective is to close this gap by studying the opposition elites in their interaction with the opposition masses. Hence, I aim to bring back the agency of the masses and attempt to understand the relative roles of opposition elites and masses in times of crises.

Describing the Euromaidan is important because this will lend more precision to theories about contentious politics and competitive authoritarianism. The causal link between the national identity cleavage and regime instability may need to be re-examined if opposition

elites are not always in charge of mobilizing masses. The lack of proper description undermines the explanatory power of theories and can be a result of “scholars’ motivation to uncover a causal relationship” (Gerring 2012, 733). By examining the case of Euromaidan through the lens of contentious politics descriptively, I show that theories on competitive authoritarian regimes should pay more attention to the role of the masses. Therefore, the method chosen is appropriate because without description our understanding of the world “will be less precise, less reliable and perhaps subject to systematic bias” (Gerring 2012, 733).

In the next chapter I descriptively trace the development of the opposition elites in Ukraine prior to the Euromaidan. I show how the competitive authoritarian regime in Ukraine produced weak opposition elites that were unable to mobilize the masses to challenge the incumbent in power. In the third chapter, I show that the organization of the Euromaidan resembled the Anarchist Model. This was because the masses distrusted the opposition elites and self-organized instead. I utilize a variety of sources, including government decrees and laws, official statements of politicians and activists, newspaper articles, documentaries and social media.

Chapter 2

Ukraine before the Euromaidan

Pluralism by default before the Euromaidan prepared the ground for public disillusionment with both the regime and opposition elites. Infighting in the Orange Coalition itself between Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, “rapacious individualism” that characterizes competitive authoritarianism in Ukraine (Way 2005b), and the efforts of Viktor Yanukovych and his Party of Regions (Partiya Rehioniv) led to the weakening of opposition elites and their loss of public trust. On the eve of the Euromaidan, it was not only the regime of Yanukovych that was testing the patience of large sections of the Ukrainian population. Opposition parties and their leaders were also distrusted, discredited and disorganized.

Even though Ukraine became more democratic than ever before under President Viktor Yushchenko after the Orange Revolution (Way 2015, 73), severe infighting between ruling elites greatly undermined the internal cohesion of the Orange Coalition that consisted of relatively equal partners: Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine party (Nasha Ukrayina) and Yulia Tymoshenko’s Fatherland Party (Batkivshchyna). In fact, Tymoshenko agreed to back Yushchenko during the Orange Revolution in exchange for being appointed Prime Minister (Lisova 2005). However, in September 2005, just months after entering government, Yushchenko fired Tymoshenko and dismissed the government (Finn 2005) and later aligned himself with his enemy in the Orange Revolution, Yanukovych, to sideline Tymoshenko (Way 2015, 75).

The conflict between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko ran deep due to ideological differences: Yushchenko represented the pragmatic wing of national democrats, who preferred cooperating with the oligarchs and creating grand coalitions with centrists, whereas Tymoshenko was the face of a more radical wing who stood against cooperation with them (Kuzio 2013, 239). The conflict in the Orange Coalition was so intense that Yushchenko

testified against Tymoshenko in a case which landed her in prison (Associated Press in Kyiv 2011).

As politicians were concerned with fighting each other, the population became increasingly disillusioned with their leaders. Just months after the Orange Revolution, in November 2005, only 1.3% of Ukrainians thought that the promises of the Revolution were being implemented and almost 60% thought that the politicians did not implement them or acted against those promises (Razumkov Centre 2005). Yushchenko's presidency left the country in a severe economic crisis and a serious political deadlock (Feifer 2010). In 2009, when his presidency was coming to an end, his approval rating stood at a mere 7%; Tymoshenko was viewed favorably by only 20%, and a full 69% of respondents disapproved of her (Bikus and Esipova 2014). In comparison, 46% approved of Yanukovich when he assumed office in 2010 (Bikus and Esipova 2014). Yanukovich not only had a higher approval rating, but also a stronger political party.

Already in 2010, there were signs that Yanukovich's Party of Regions was gaining excessive power and internal cohesion that was superior to all other parties in Ukraine (Olszański 2010). Analyzing the three major parties which competed with each other prior to the Euromaidan – Yushchenko's Our Ukraine, Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party and Yanukovich's Party of Regions– Kudelia and Kuzio conclude that the first two parties relied primarily on the charismatic appeal of their leaders, whereas the third relied on a consociational approach to decision-making, which made it more resilient to electoral defeat and defection (2015). Gaining power in 2010, the Party of Regions became the main political force in Ukraine, which exercised an “almost exclusive control” over the executive, with the Prime Minister coming from the same party, and controlling two-thirds of all the cabinet positions and close to nine-tenths of all governor positions (Kudelia 2014, 22).

Yanukovych used the infighting in the Orange Coalition to strengthen his own power. According to Kuzio: “Yushchenko’s battle with Tymoshenko was a major gift for Yanukovych because Tymoshenko represented three threats to Yanukovych’s Party of Regions and the gas lobby² that included (1) territory; (2) votes and (3) financial resources” (2013, 231). Tymoshenko increased her support in the East of Ukraine, which came as a direct threat to Yanukovych’s Party of Regions, as she challenged their territorial and electoral superiority there (Kuzio 2013, 232). She was also a vocal critic of the so-called gas lobby and their opaque operations with intermediaries (Kuzio 2013, 232). When Yanukovych came to power, Tymoshenko was jailed for seven years for allegedly exceeding her powers when signing a 2009 gas deal with Russia (Associated Press in Kyiv 2011). The charges were recognized as politically motivated by the EU, which undermined the aspirations of Ukraine for EU integration (Associated Press in Kyiv 2011; British Broadcasting Corporation 2011). Another prominent political figure of the radical wing of national democrats, Yuri Lutsenko, was jailed in 2012 for abuse of office and embezzlement charges (Public Media 2012b). This trial, too, was recognized by the EU and the US as politically motivated (Public Media 2012a; Public Media 2012b; The Danish Helsinki Committee 2012). The imprisonment of both political figures ensured that the interests of Yanukovych were not threatened by the ideologically-driven sections of the Ukrainian national democrats (Kuzio 2013, 231).

The collapse of the Orange Coalition left an authority vacuum in the opposition forces. Tymoshenko was jailed and had a high disapproval rating. Yushchenko suffered an embarrassing defeat in the 2010 Presidential election, when he gained only 5.45% of votes, and in 2012 parliamentary elections, when his party Our Ukraine gained only 1.11% of votes and no constituencies (Central Election Commission 2010; Central Election Commission 2012).

² The gas lobby is a group of Ukrainian businessmen and oligarchs who control the country’s gas transit system.

Tymoshenko was replaced by Arseniy Yatsenyuk as the leader of the ideological section of the national democrats. However, the public had a hard time trusting him since he previously aligned himself with the pragmatic national democrats (Kuzio 2013, 232). In turn, the place of the pragmatic wing of national democrats was taken by Vitali Klitschko's UDAR (Kuzio 2013, 239). But this was a young party with a leader who was primarily known for his boxing titles.

Unsurprisingly, support for opposition politicians in Ukraine was low. Razumkov Centre, a Ukrainian think tank, traced the support for various politicians' activities across several years (2013a). By March 2013, 82% did not support Yushchenko, 58% did not support Tymoshenko, 54% did not support the leader of the radical Freedom Party (Svoboda) Oleh Tyahnybok, 50% did not support Yatsenyuk, and 39% did not support Klitschko (Razumkov Centre 2013a). Indeed, one important constant in Ukrainian politics seems to be the public distrust of politicians and government institutions. Since 2006 until the Euromaidan, at most 26% of the population had confidence in their national government (Bikus and Esipova 2014). According to the Razumkov Centre, since 2001 at least 60% of all citizens in Ukraine distrusted political parties (2013b). Such high levels of distrust are only natural in the regime that characterized Ukraine before the Revolution of Dignity.

In a competitive authoritarian regime, individual politicians have the incentive to defect and to place opportunistic objectives before party loyalty or the public interest. This is evident in the high level of defections from Our Ukraine and the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko as deputies were running to the side of Yanukovich. Over sixty deputies from these parties had been allegedly offered bribes ranging between \$1–10 million to defect to the Stability and Reform Coalition³ led by Yanukovich (Kuzio 2012, 3). In general, MPs in the parliament showed comparatively low voting discipline between 2010 and 2014 and high levels of party defections in the Ukrainian parliament (Whitmore 2014, 2). In addition, parties in Ukraine were

³ The Coalition included the Party of Regions, Lytvyn Bloc and the Communist Party.

characterized by unclear programmatic orientation and leaders who often changed their policy preferences (Whitmore 2014, 6). The often blurry line between politics and business also resulted in public cynicism. According to a public opinion poll that was published in a report by the Razumkov Centre, around 63% of Ukrainian citizens thought that political parties in Ukraine served the interests of business and financial structures, around 49% thought that they served the interests of these parties' leaders, and close to 19% believed they served the interests of state authorities (Razumkov Centre 2010, 20). Only 9.8% believed that they represented the interests of voters (Razumkov Centre 2010, 20).

With such catastrophic performance, it is not a surprise that new, more radical political parties gained prominence. The rise of support for the radical right-wing nationalist Freedom Party (Svoboda) is closely connected to the “employment of populist anti-establishment strategies” in a country with very high levels of distrust towards politicians and parliament (Shekhovtsov 2011, 221). The first major electoral victory that the party had was in the 2009 Ternopil regional elections, when the party gained nearly 35% of the votes and 50 of 120 seats in the regional council (Shekhovtsov 2011, 206). This is precisely the time when fighting in the Orange Coalition started to intensify and Tymoshenko was accused of colluding with the Party of Regions (Shekhovtsov 2011, 221). One of the major defining characteristics of the Freedom Party since its inception was its anti-elitist attitude and refusal to enter blocs with other parties (Iovenko 2015, 236). The electoral success of the party under the leadership of Oleh Tyahnybok in the 2012 parliamentary elections was connected to the “disillusionment with Batkivshchina [Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party], especially its alliance with Arseniy Yatsenyuk's Front for Change,⁴ which was viewed with suspicion among the national-democratic circles to put it mildly” (Olszański 2012, 3). The Freedom Party won over 10% of votes, a result scholars attributed to various factors, among which are protest voting against Yanukovich, anti-

⁴ A former party of Arseniy Yatsenyuk, which later merged into the Fatherland Party.

establishment appeals, corruption and dissatisfaction with major parties (Bustikova 2015, 239). However, the party with its radical agenda had support only in the Western part of Ukraine (Bustikova 2015, 243). This is not surprising, since the party employed openly anti-Russian rhetoric.

Given such an outlook, on the eve of the Euromaidan, none of the future leaders of the opposition elite in the Euromaidan had support from more than 20% of the population. The Kiev International Institute of Sociology conducted a poll on electoral preferences among Ukrainian citizens between 9 and 20 November, 2013 (2013b). If presidential elections had been held in the middle of November of that year and the ballot did not list Tymoshenko as candidate,⁵ a plurality of Ukrainians would have voted for Yanukovych. Yet, this plurality was slim – 17%. Next came Klitschko with his 16%, Yatsenyuk with 8%, Petro Symonenko (Communist Party) with 6% and Tyahnybok with 4%. The poll also showed that none of the candidates had regional support above 30%, even Yanukovych, whose highest support was 28% in the East of the country. It is also worth noting that according to this poll, 17.8% of the respondents had difficulty choosing among the candidates, 18.2% declared they would not vote and 10.9% said they would not vote for any of the candidates. This adds up to a staggering 46.9% of Ukrainians.

A poll conducted by the same institute on party preferences shows a similar picture (Kiev International Institute of Sociology 2013a). Sixteen percent of Ukrainians would have voted for the Party of Regions, 14% for Klitschko's UDAR, 10% for the Fatherland Party (Batkivshchyna), 7% for the Communist Party of Ukraine and 5% for the radical Freedom Party. It is worth noting that 3.8% of respondents would have voted for other parties, 20.7% were undecided and a whole 21.8% would not have voted at all, which adds to a total of 46.3%.

⁵ Tymoshenko was imprisoned at the time.

It appears that both the parties and their leaders were continuously losing their touch with the population.

Parties and politicians in Ukraine generally had low levels of credibility and had almost completely lost public trust. This dire lack of trust in politicians left people searching for new faces, with some finding it in the Freedom Party. But the Freedom Party could satisfy only a certain section of the population, mostly in the West of the country. This is notable because the West of the country was the support base of the opposition to Yanukovich. When some voters started looking in the direction of the Freedom Party, it meant that the sympathies of the opposition's electorate were being dispersed among a larger number of contenders. This is an indication of increasing dissatisfaction with and protest-voting against the whole establishment. Such sentiments were in part the result of the infighting in the parliamentary opposition itself and its competition with the Party of Regions.

On the eve of the Euromaidan, the population was generally dissatisfied with the opposition and distrusted the politicians. The Orange Coalition was destroyed both by the constant infighting and by attacks coming from their rivals. The Party of Regions made sure it imprisoned major opposition figures and bribed other opposition deputies to defect. Consequently, the opposition elites did not have the necessary reserve of trust and respect of the people to mobilize the masses. The lack of party discipline and of public trust significantly reduced the possibility of opposition elites to organize contentious action that would constitute the Social Democratic Model. Indeed, the patterns of mass mobilization during the Euromaidan and the way opposition leaders and opposition masses interacted with each other during the crisis were closer to those explained by the Anarchist Model, as shown in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Overthrowing Dictators: the Flames of Euromaidan

It all began on a gloomy ordinary fall day. President Yanukovych announced his decision not to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and to renew the dialogue with Russia. The decision was expectedly met with dissatisfaction, but the way the events developed could not have been predicted. Protests that were initially sparked by the decision not to sign the Agreement paved the way for the overthrow of the corrupt and kleptocratic regime of Viktor Yanukovych. In this ousting, the opposition masses organized in a way that was in many respects similar to the Anarchist Model. Living through subfreezing temperatures, braving sniper fire, and sustaining protest for three months, people on the Maidan breached the ordinary rules of the game and carried the momentum of the revolution, bypassing the opposition elites.

In this chapter, I show how opposition masses in the Euromaidan created their own agency and came to dictate the rules of the game to opposition elites. Therefore, I counter the view of the opposition in the Euromaidan as a black box and show that there were two processes happening in parallel: opposition masses forced the opposition elites to negotiate and renegotiate their actions, and simultaneously the opposition masses challenged the regime. After the Orange Revolution, the opposition elites weakened due to internal competition in the Orange Coalition and pressure from Yanukovych and his Party of Regions. The competitive aspect of Ukrainian authoritarianism, therefore, resulted in popular dissatisfaction of the population, which made it unlikely that mass mobilization would happen in a hierarchical fashion, in which the opposition elites held the upper hand. Therefore, competitive authoritarianism provided an opportunity structure, which the masses successfully used both to challenge the regime of Yanukovych and to bypass the opposition elites, organizing their contention in a way that was to a large degree Anarchist.

3.1 Mobilizing Anger

The competitive authoritarian regime in Ukraine has been characterized by constant infighting between elites and oligarchs and meant that elections often serve and reflect interests hardly connected to ordinary citizens. This resulted in mass disillusionment with the establishment. According to the theory of *pluralism by default*, weak opposition elites can successfully use identity cleavages to mobilize support and challenge incumbents (Way 2015, 18). However, as has been shown in the previous section, Ukrainian opposition elites were not only weak with respect to the incumbent in power but also lacked public acknowledgement of their authority. This authority vacuum could potentially be used as a window of opportunity by new actors from the masses to challenge the regime itself and bypass the opposition elites.

In the process of my research, I arrived at the conclusion that this opportunity was used by the masses. Mobilization in the Euromaidan happened in an anarchic fashion, where several self-organized groups cooperated with each other and where no clear leadership emerged. Since the opposition elites lacked public trust and were internally disorganized, they lost the momentum of the protest movement and the masses became the agents of the revolution. In the Revolution of Dignity, mobilization did not happen through the channels controlled by opposition elites. Moreover, the opposition masses often openly defied the opposition elites, sidelining them during key moments of the revolution, and sometimes, were openly hostile towards them. I loosely follow the chronological unfolding of the Euromaidan to demonstrate that the Revolution of Dignity contained all of these characteristics.

In my description, I first focus on the initial days of the Revolution and demonstrate that it was a spontaneous outburst, which the opposition elites saw as an opportunity to win votes. However, as the events unfolded, opposition elites could not dictate the rules of the game to the multitude of actors who emerged, nor counterpose a coherent plan of actions to the protesters' self-organization efforts. With each new round of violence against the protesters, people lost

patience with the opposition leaders who attempted to negotiate a way out of the crisis with President Yanukovich. As the number of murdered protesters mounted, opposition leaders became increasingly unable to control the situation. Self-organization in an anarchic fashion by the masses ensured that the spark of the first protest was transformed into the flames of revolution.

3.1.1 Inception of the Revolution and First Rounds of Repression

The very way the Revolution of Dignity (Revoliutsiya Hidnosti) began reflects the popular nature of the protest. It all began as a spontaneous mass rally, not organized by any opposition parties. Some say it all started with a Facebook post by a journalist, Mustapha Nayem (Kotsyuba 2013). However, he himself stated that “no one person can claim credit for starting this uprising” (Nayem 2014). The journalist urged people to gather at around 10:30pm but when he arrived there were already people on the square (Nayem 2014). People self-organized through social media (UNIAN 2013a) and came to Ukraine’s Independence Square known as Maidan Nezalezhnosti without clear guidance from the opposition politicians (Nayem 2014). Lutsenko and Klitschko arrived at around 10:50pm, (LB.ua 2013). According to Nayem, Klitschko came to the Euromaidan when he already saw that there was a large number of people gathered (2014). After Klitschko came and put up the banner of his party, the people on the square asked him to take it down (Afineevsky 2015, 5m:40s). Activists of the group “My – Evropeitsy” (Facebook, Inc. 2013c) in their program of actions noted that there were no politicians on the square with a clear authority or a coherent program of action (Facebook, Inc. 2013c). The opposition leaders clearly did not have a plan of action, which is evidenced by the Facebook post of one of the Fatherland Party deputies, Andriy Parubiy: “Nine years ago this evening I went to Maidan. And I am going now. There is no concrete plan of action” (Facebook, Inc. 2013a). The situation was different from the Orange Revolution, which was carefully organized by the parliamentary opposition. “This change testified to both the deep-seated

popular discontent that fueled the revolutions and distrust of politicians in general” (Yekelchuk 2015, 87).

In order to kill the momentum of the protests right from the beginning, the authorities tried to prevent demonstrations from happening on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or the Independence Square. It became known that the Kyiv administrative court decided to limit public manifestations on Maidan Nezalezhnosti from November 22 until January 7, 2014 (UNIAN 2013b). As becomes evident later, such bans and limitations preceded the attempts of the regime to disperse the protesters under the pretense of upholding law.

In violation of the law, the demonstrations continued. Notably, it was the civic activists who kept the spark of the protests by coming to Maidan Nezalezhnosti continuously, every day, while the opposition leaders organized their own rally and a tent city in a different location – the European Square⁶ – on November 25 (Censor.NET 2013a). This separation of the two camps is notable because all the opposition parties organized their speeches and activities on the European Square. A politician, Oleksandr Turchynov, then declared that opposition rallies would happen every day at European Square at 7pm (Ped’ko 2013). Yet, this never happened, because the next day, leaders of the opposition marched from the European Square to the Euromaidan, thus uniting the two camps (Ukrainian Pravda 2013a; Ukrainian Pravda 2013b). The same day, the leaders of the opposition parties signed the Joint Statement declaring unity together with the organizers of the protests on Maidan (Ukrainian Pravda 2013c). Had the opposition captured the momentum of the event, one would have expected them to stay on the European Square without needing to sign an agreement with the Maidan representatives. Tymoshenko recognized right from the beginning that involving the masses was important. She wrote a letter from prison urging the parties to remove their party symbols, to work together

⁶ Not to be confused with the term “Euromaidan” that denotes the mobilization and organization of the protest movement itself.

with the students and to unite the two camps (Gazeta.ua 2013). Hers was a direct response to the march of 15,000 students on November 27 to the Administration of the President with demands of signing the Association Agreement (TSN.ua 2013a). The students emphasized that they self-organized and were not prompted by politicians or the administrations of their universities (TSN.ua 2013a).

On November 29, Yanukovich did not sign the Association Agreement in Vilnius, a move that was met with outcry in Ukraine. At around 4am on November 30, the Berkut special police violently cleared the 400 protesters left on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, using batons and smoke-puff charges (EuromaidanSOS 2016). Most of the dispersed were sleepy students, some of whom escaped the violence in the nearby St. Michael's Cathedral (EuromaidanSOS 2016). In response, an opposition politician, Yuri Lutsenko, who was previously jailed, called on protesters to gather near the statue of Taras Shevchenko (Ukrainian Pravda 2013d). However, a spontaneous inflow of people occurred on the Mikhailovska Square in front of the Cathedral, where the students hid from the Berkut police (Ukrainian Pravda 2013e). The same day people started organizing into Self-defense units to protect against the Berkut police in case of attack (Ukrainian Pravda 2013f). Opposition leaders arrived on Mikhailovska Square only in the second half of the day after the consultations with the EU ambassadors (UNIAN 2013f). By that time the square was already filled with thousands of protesters (UNIAN 2013f). The pattern of events in this case resembled the first day of protests, when opposition leaders arrived with a delay and had to adapt to the fast-changing environment around them.

When the news spread across the world in the morning on November 30, the first minor cracks started appearing in the Party of Regions, signaling the weakness of the regime. The Head of the Administration of the President Serhiy Lyovochkin declared his intention to resign (UNIAN 2013e), while the Party of Regions deputies Inna Bohoslovskaya and David Zhvaniya declared their wish to leave the party (UNIAN 2013c; UNIAN 2013d).

Meanwhile, groups of volunteers continued organizing for the efforts of the Euromaidan. One of the first such groups was AutoMaidan, a movement of drivers who were willing to help with transportation and defense of protesters (TSN.ua 2013b). The group ended up playing a key role in the revolutionary events, acting as cavalry on the outer circle of the protests (Afineevsky 2015, 25m:50s). Many of its activists faced direct threats or violence. Their leader Dmytro Bulatov was kidnapped and tortured for more than a week. In spite of harassment and physical threats, one of the many notable actions undertaken by the AutoMaidan was the blocking of three Berkut buses on January 10, which purportedly were transporting troops responsible for the beating of protesters earlier that day (UNIAN 2014b). Several hundred protesters later joined them in blocking the buses, puncturing the tires of the buses and demanding the troops show their faces (UNIAN 2014a). Letting the Berkut police go only under condition they reveal their identity, the protesters were able to establish that the Berkut unit they blocked was the same as the one which cleared the students on November 30 (Censor.NET 2014a).

Identifying the policemen responsible for beatings, abductions and killings of protesters has been one of the ways in which the Euromaidan activists pressured the state's coercive apparatus. Activists also launched a website, where they identified the policemen that in their opinion broke the law (Censor.NET 2013e). The existence of such a website attests to the high degree of trust among the activists and a considerable level of involvement, since this happened in a country where corruption among law enforcement officials was endemic. The sharing of photos and videos of abuse by the Berkut police has been one of the factors that secured the sympathies of Western media on the side of the protesters. It also hindered the ability of the regime to justify its crackdown on the protesters and to appease the population.

On December 1, the first major gathering on Maidan Nezalezhnosti occurred. These gatherings were called People's Veche (Council). According to various estimates, somewhere

between 500,000 and 1,000,000 protesters came to the streets. Later that day, a group of more radical protesters clashed with the police on Bankova Street, where the Administration of the President is located. Notably, none of the opposition leaders were present at the scene. This was why the Chief Editor of a Ukrainian newspaper, Censor.Net, urged opposition leaders to arrive on the spot to prevent further clashes (Censor.NET 2013b). This was the first major standoff between the protesters and the police in which none of the opposition politicians were initially present.

These protests were violently dispersed that night, so the protesters on Maidan constructed barricades against further police attacks (Afineevsky 2015, 24m:10s). An officer from the military reserve, Andrey Yanchenko, who came to Maidan Nezalezhnosti that night said the following about the preparations for police attacks: “What was good about this Maidan was self-organization. Everyone knew what they were doing, and they did it on their own, nobody needed to be told what to do” (Afineevsky 2015, 24m:30s). Meanwhile, the opposition hurriedly announced that they were not involved in the storming of the Presidential Administration (UNIAN 2013g). This had been the line that the opposition leaders followed throughout the protests: they wanted to find a solution to the crisis through negotiations. As the protests dragged on, however, negotiations were leading nowhere and people were becoming impatient. This attested to a growing gap between the goals of the opposition elites, who wanted to transfer the public discontent into the ballot box, and the goals of some protesters, many of them radically oriented, who wanted to see an immediate change of government.

The dragging on of the protests was probably something that Yanukovych wanted to use to his advantage. Some explained that Yanukovych was not persistent in his violence against protesters, because he hoped that the “protests will simply fizzle out over Christmas,” a scenario made more likely by the weakness of the opposition leaders (The Economist Newspaper Limited 2013). Indeed, the next round of violence happened more than a week later,

on the night of December 10-11, when the Berkut forces attempted to clear the Square once again. However, Yanukovych underestimated the people on the streets. The protesters' coordinated efforts that night stopped the Berkut, allowing the Euromaidan to continue (Afineevsky 2015, 31m:40s). In an interview to TBi, one of the activists of the Euromaidan Yehor Sobolev said that the main achievement of the Euromaidan was people's growing realization of their power (Yakovenko 2013). He added that the opposition politicians did not coordinate the Maidan but were there only to support the protests (Yakovenko 2013). Leader of the Fatherland Party Arseniy Yatsenyuk, commenting on the success of protesters that night, said that in order to hold any future negotiations the politicians now had to obtain a mandate from the people (Censor.NET 2013d).

The anti-systemic nature of the protest was also reflected in the polling results. It is staggering that 92% of all Euromaidan participants as of 7-8 December did not belong to any party, civil society organization or movement and only 4% belonged to parties (The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2013). In fact, people on the Maidan had the option of joining parties if they wished, but this option was not popular because they were motivated by other reasons (Nedelia s Mariannoi Maksimovskoi 2013).

There was an increasing acknowledgement of the Euromaidan activists as an independent actor. A singer, Ruslana Lyzhychko, was appointed as the coordinator of the presidium of the All-Ukrainian Union "Maidan," which included representatives of political parties and civil society organizations (Censor.NET 2013f). Ruslana Lyzhychko represented the activists of Maidan and her appointment as coordinator was a symbolic tribute to the ordinary people working for the effort of the Euromaidan. According to one poll, 72% of all protesters said that they were ready to stand on Maidan as long as needed (The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2013). The reaction of the ruling party with regard to the opposition is worth noting as well. A deputy from the Party of Regions, Vladimir Oliynyk, said

at a press conference that the way out of the crisis was to sit down for negotiations, where the government would be “ready to hear both the Maidan and the opposition forces” (National Information Systems 2014).

The word “Maidan” itself came to be synonymous with people’s power. A call to Maidan became a call for public protest (Cybriwsky 2015, 270). A symbolic gesture to signify this growing realization of people’s power was made on New Year’s Eve. A New Year’s Address to the President Yanukovich was prepared, which involved a compilation of phrases said by ordinary citizens (Kraplya InOcean 2013). The message was a reversal of roles between him and the people, in which they pointed out all the wrongs and corruption that they had endured under his regime and what they wished for in the New Year. No opposition leaders or politicians were involved in the video.

Hence, the first weeks of the Euromaidan saw the spontaneous mobilization of thousands of protesters, creation of self-organized groups, which worked independently of each other but cooperated for the common cause, and the emergence of more radical elements who were willing to clash with the police. The opposition parties did not organize the Euromaidan protests and were not responsible for the multitude of self-sustaining organizations that sprang up during the protests. The opposition leaders tried dissociating themselves from the violence and assumed a moderate position, aiming to gain the support of the masses for future elections. These features of the Euromaidan do not resemble the Social Democratic Model. As the protests went on and protesters gained experience, their organization further departed from this model.

3.1.2 The Regime Starts Killing

On January 16, the government showed that it did not wish to fulfill the demands of the protesters and instead introduced a series of decrees that were labeled “dictatorship laws” by the Euromaidan protesters. The developments that came with the new round of violence following the introduction of the dictatorship laws showed several things: the inability of

opposition leaders to control the situation; the increasing agency of various opposition groups from the masses; and the weakness of the regime when Party of Regions deputies either left it or did not vote for the introduction of the state of emergency.

The new laws were first voted upon in a caricature way by the deputies of the Party of Regions and the Communist Party by a show of hands, instead of using the electronic system, and then signed by the President. According to the new law (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2014), citizens in Ukraine would be penalized for moving in columns of more than five cars and for wearing scarves, hats, helmets or masks while participating in meetings and street marches (which make it harder to identify a person). It also allowed authorities to control Internet access and extended prison terms for blocking administrative buildings and gathering information about judges and law enforcement agents. Moreover, a new article introduced into the Criminal Code of Ukraine contained a deliberately loose definition of the term “defamation,” allowing the authorities to jail anyone critical of the government.

The protesters were outraged, while the reaction of the opposition elites reflected their electoral hopes and desires. On January 17, from the stage on Maidan, Klitschko announced that he would not be prevented from running for President in 2015 and that the primary goal of the Euromaidan was the change of government (UNIAN 2014c). At the same time, the opposition did not propose other more substantial plans for achieving this change of government. They said that they would be “doing what they did” and continue mass gatherings on Euromaidan (LB.ua 2014b). Klitschko also announced that he would travel to the regions to “raise the people” (LB.ua 2014a), which resembled a pre-election tour to secure votes in 2015.

Meanwhile, the mood among the protesters was not conducive to waiting for another year for elections. It was almost two months after the beginning of the first protests, but the opposition did not propose a concrete plan of action. The organizer of AutoMaidan Dmitro Bulatov called on the opposition to find a single leader of resistance, because the people had

“no more time to wait” for the opposition to “agree on the distribution of [political] posts” (Censor.NET 2014b). He also clarified that before the introduction of dictatorship laws AutoMaidan was looking for a single presidential candidate from the opposition, but it was no longer meaningful, because the hopes of fair elections in 2015 had been dashed (Censor.NET 2014b). Doctor Alexander Pyvovarov, who was hurt in the second round of violence, recalls the events of January 19: “On Sunday, the opposition leaders came out to the stage, but hadn’t said anything worthwhile again” (Afineevsky 2014, 42m:10s). The crowds shouted “Shame!” at the opposition on the stage (Afineevsky 2014, 42m:08s). Famous cultural figures addressed the leaders of three opposition parties Yatsenyuk, Klitschko, Tyahnybok and the oligarch Petro Poroshenko to find a single leader of resistance and put it bluntly: “Leaders of the opposition, in these circumstances the continuation of an undeclared election campaign with an eye on 2015 – is a crime” (LB.ua 2014d). In response, Yatsenyuk declared on the stage of the Euromaidan that the leader of resistance was the people of Ukraine (UNIAN 2014e). In other words, instead of finding a leader of resistance, the opposition elites had assigned the entire responsibility to the masses.

On January 19, around 500 protesters decided to march towards the Verkhovna Rada building, which resulted in clashes between the protesters and the police (UNIAN 2014d). Klitschko arrived at the scene and tried to calm the protesters but in response was sprayed with foam from a fire extinguisher (LB.ua 2014c). Oksana Zinovijeva, the press secretary of Klitschko wrote on Facebook later that day that he was allowed to enter Yanukovych’s opulent residence Mezhyhirya for talks with the President (Facebook, Inc. 2014b). Meanwhile, protests near the Verkhovna Rada continued. The next day there were reports about the start of negotiations between the opposition and the government (Censor.NET 2014c). But the Right Sector, an extreme right-wing organization whose members were very active in the skirmishes with the police, warned the opposition that they should not enter into negotiations with “the

usurper,” because they were already a “great disappointment” for the people (Banderovets 2014).

On January 22, the reports came out about the first protester deaths at the hands of the police. This was the first time in the history of independent Ukraine that the government had fired at protesters. The figure of Serhiy Nigoyan, who was killed that day, was particularly prominent, as his Armenian-Ukrainian origin did not fit the portrait of a nationalist. People in Kyiv started buying up military equipment and gun stores began closing (Pokatis 2014). The opposition leaders returning after negotiations with the government on January 24 were met with booing by those protesters who took part in the clashes near the parliament (LigaBusinessInform 2014). At the same time, the people on the Maidan voted against a truce with the government and in favor of the expansion of the protest area until the detained protesters were released (LigaBusinessInform 2014). In spite of this reaction, the opposition leaders held negotiations with Yanukovych already the next day (Censor.NET 2014e).

In the meantime, the regime of Yanukovych was suffering a severe split with some deputies of the Party of Regions going for a rally in Kharkiv, where they created the so-called “Ukrainian Front,” chaired by the mayor of the city Mikhail Dobkin (UBT 2014). The Ukrainian Front declared its readiness to negotiate with the opposition, in an apparent move to sideline Yanukovych. Meanwhile, the Communist Party, which up until now usually acted in tandem with the Party of Regions proposed abolishing the institute of the presidency in Ukraine, introducing bicameralism and federalism (Ukrainian Pravda 2014a). At the same time, Lviv faction of the Party of Regions called for the resignation of the government of Prime Minister Mykola Azarov and early parliamentary and presidential elections (Censor.NET 2014d). A few days later the faction dissolved itself, because the policies of the leaders of the Party were “dividing the country” (Censor.NET 2014h). Moreover, the Party of Regions could not gather enough votes to declare a state of emergency, because many deputies in the party were against

it (Censor.NET 2014f). One of the party deputies believed this would have led directly to civil war (Glukhovsky 2014). Two deputies of the party Mykola Rud'kovsky and Vladislav Artoshenko registered motions in the Rada for cancelling the dictatorship laws (Censor.NET 2014g). At the same time, the Party of Regions deputies connected to oligarch, Rinat Akhmetov,⁷ reportedly declared they would not vote against the procedure, as it happened during the voting on dictatorship laws (Censor.NET 2014i). As a result, Prime Minister Azarov had to resign and the dictatorship laws were cancelled by the Rada on 28 January. The protesters utilized the weakness of the regime and obtained the desired cancellation of the dictatorial laws. Opposition elites at best played only the role of intermediaries in the negotiation process. The regime was more attuned to the expanding number of paramilitary groups organized on the Maidan.

After the cancellation of the dictatorship laws, the release of the detained protesters became the key point of contention between the regime and the self-organized defense units and paramilitary formations on the Maidan. These units were not controlled by the opposition parties, so the government had to take into consideration the possibility of direct confrontation with them. The leader of the Right Sector, Dmytro Yarosh, promised to do everything possible to release the protesters (Censor.NET 2014j). The growing ambitions of the Right Sector were clear when one of the leaders of the Right Sector said that the movement needed “not only to fight for Ukraine, but also to rule it” (Bik 2014). It is telling that the Maidan Self-defense was in direct negotiations with the Security Service and the Interior Ministry about the release of the activists (LB.ua 2014e). Continuing to expand, hundreds of Afghan veterans from across Ukraine arrived to protect the Maidan (Piter-Piter.ru 2013). By February 2, Self-defense units numbered 10,000 men (Ukrainian Media Systems 2014). This was twice as many men as

⁷ Rinat Akhmetov is the richest man in Ukraine, an oligarch whose business stronghold lies in the Eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk

Ukraine's special police had at the time. The Berkut police had about 4,000 men, while judicial security police called Gryphon had 1,000 men (ZN.UA 2014). Given this situation, it was reported that the Cabinet of Ministers intended to increase the number of men in the Berkut and the Gryphon to 30,000 (ZN.UA 2014).

The weight of paramilitary formations on the Maidan was so large that the General Prosecutor's Office declared them illegal in the middle of February (Obozrevatel 2014). Allegations of attempts to bribe the Self-defense captains also support the assertion that the Self-defense units were increasing their influence (Censor.NET 2014o). Deputy of the Party of Regions, Vladimir Olyinik, in an interview said that it was necessary to include the radical wings of the protest movement, such as those involved in the standoff near the parliament and the Afghan veterans in the negotiation process (Censor.NET 2014n). In other words, the Party of Regions attempted to use traditional tactics in dealing with their opponents: bribes and negotiations.

This was nevertheless not easy, because the Self-defense units proclaimed their independence from the parties and had other objectives. The head of the Self-defense Parubiy made an explicit statement that the structure was a non-party organization and any attempts to subordinate it to a party would be stopped (Censor.NET 2014p). A retired military serviceman, Aleksandr Starodub, said that the Self-defense units constituted a "people's army," whom he gladly volunteered to train to defend Maidan against "monsters in uniforms" (Afineevsky 2015, 35m:00s). The order of the Euromaidan was their primary goal. It was so clean on the Square that "there was not a single bottle of beer," said another retired soldier, Valery Dovgiy (Afineevsky 2015, 35m:45s). This was hardly possible had not the people themselves made a conscious effort to preserve order and unity. Self-defense units were also responsible for preventing possible provocations that could lead to the escalation of violence (Censor.NET 2013c).

At the same time, the Euromaidan continued to be a well-oiled self-organized machine. It survived through subfreezing temperatures, largely thanks to the work of around 5,000 volunteers who rotated hourly (Censor.NET 2014m). Doctors who volunteered on the Maidan also showed a high degree of self-organization, creating improvised first-aid centers in buildings close to clashes (Afineevsky 2015, 52:30). Daily donations to the Maidan ranged between \$21,400 and \$41,700, and 90% of these donations were obtained through the boxes for donations installed in various places on the Square (Censor.NET 2014l). Leading Ukrainian IT-specialists offered their help, either in the form of donations or providing services on the ground, such as organizing a Wi-Fi hotspot and a charging station (INSIDER 2013).

As if oblivious to all of this, the opposition leaders continued talking about elections. Klitschko said that the crisis would be resolved in “elections under the control of the international community, which will put an end to the regime of Yanukovich” (Censor.NET 2014k). Two months into the protests, Yuri Lutsenko said that there was a need to unite the “streets” and the “politics” (Piatyi Kanal 2014). He explained that the streets without politics was only a revolt, whereas politicians without the protesters were “just a minority” (Piatyi Kanal 2014). This call evidently was made because of the growing gap between the opposition politicians and the protesters, not their growing unity. As the protests dragged on, the people on the Maidan were becoming increasingly independent of the politicians. This independence was later prominent in the final clashes with the police.

These clashes were sparked on February 18, when protesters marched to block the parliament, because their demands to introduce a decree on the return to the Constitution of 2004 were not met. On the way, they met police cordons and violent clashes began. At around 3pm that day, a deputy of Fatherland Party reported the first three deaths in the clashes (UNIAN 2014f). The police then chased all protesters to Maidan, readying itself for the final clearing of the Square.

In the clashes over the next three days, while the opposition leaders were trying to negotiate with the government, protesters were fighting with the police on the streets. By this time, some fifteen deputies of the Party of Regions said they would leave the party (LB.ua 2014h), continuing to weaken the regime from within. Moreover, the mayor of Kharkiv, Mikhail Dobkin urged transferring some of the state institutions to Kharkiv (LB.ua 2014f). In addition, some of the Party of Regions deputies showed up on February 20 in the Parliament and participated in the banning of the Anti-Terrorist Operation that was announced a day before to crack down on the protesters (LB.ua 2014i).

Sixty seven protesters had been killed by this time in the clashes (LB.ua 2014g) and the Ministry of the Interior placed the number of law enforcement officers who died at sixteen (UNIAN 2014h). A crucial moment came when people risked their lives under sniper fire to take a strategic position on the hill above the Maidan Square that led to the government quarter (Afineevsky 2015, 1h:17m:16s). The Internal Troops had already retreated by that time (Afineevsky 2015, 1h:16m:30s). However, there were still armed men firing at protesters on the hill. The number of casualties among protesters was steadily climbing.

The growing number of deaths prompted the Rada to finally convene and adopt a number of laws. It secured the release of Tymoshenko and adopted the law on the return of some provisions of the Constitution of 2004, the amnesty law, and the law on the resignation of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vitalyi Zakharchenko (UNIAN 2014j). One member of the Party of Regions, Serhiy Tihipko, blamed the government and the opposition leaders for the crisis in the country that was the result of their irresponsibility (Facebook, Inc. 2014c).

At the same time, after long negotiations with the opposition leaders and foreign diplomats, Yanukovych declared that he was ready to call early elections and return to the

Constitution of 2004⁸ (UNIAN 2014k). However, many people on the streets did not want the opposition leaders to engage in negotiations with Yanukovych. Even some members of the opposition parties said they were against agreements with Yanukovych, in part because the armed people on the streets would take this as a betrayal (LB.ua 2014j; LB.ua 2014k). The Council of the Euromaidan first rejected the offer of signing the agreement with Yanukovych and demanded his immediate resignation (LB.ua 2014m). However, they were later persuaded by foreign diplomats. Polish Foreign Minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, who participated in the negotiations, attested that he personally had to convince the representatives of Maidan Council to concede to an agreement (UNIAN 2014l). Even after that, he said, Klitschko would have had to convince masses on the Maidan to accept the agreement (UNIAN 2014l).

When Klitschko came onto the stage of Maidan to announce the agreement between the opposition leaders and Yanukovych, he was booed by the crowd who, instead, greeted one of the Self-defense captains (UNIAN 2014i). Interrupting Klitschko, the captain said that he did not belong to any political organization or party and declared that Yanukovych had to resign by 10am the next day (22 February) or the people would continue the offensive (UNIAN 2014i; LB.ua 2014l). The crowd welcomed his words. During the speech, a coffin with a body of one of the protesters was carried through the crowds (LB.ua 2014l). After that Klitschko apologized to Maidan for shaking Yanukovych's hand (UNIAN 2014g). From the stage of the Maidan, the leader of the Right Sector, Yarosh, also said that they would not give up their weapons until Yanukovych resigned. AutoMaidan likewise declared they did not accept anything but the resignation of Yanukovych (Facebook Inc. 2014a). As is well known, Yanukovych ended up fleeing to Russia.

⁸ The Constitution of 2004 had provisions on limiting the power of the president and divided the power between the executive and the legislative branches more evenly.

The revolution ended with the people controlling the Square and the capital. On the evening of February 22, the commandant of Maidan Andrey Parubiy said that the Self-defense controlled all of Kyiv (Ukrainian Pravda 2014b). An interesting anecdote that attests to this new agency of the masses involves a group of Self-defense protesters, who had stopped the car with Yatsenyuk on his way out of the Kyiv International Airport on 23 February (Censor.NET 2014q). In their conversation, they scolded Yatsenyuk for elevating himself above the protesters and riding in a cortege, to which Yatsenyuk agreed and said he “will mend [his] ways.” He continued that changes were coming because “We stood, we fought.” “Not you, but us!” was a reply. “Yes, you,” Yatsenyuk conceded. The next car they stopped was that of Tymoshenko. “Don’t forget who made the revolution,” they said to her.

3.2 People’s Power

The Revolution of Dignity began as a spontaneous event, which was sustained through three months of protest thanks to the efforts of thousands of volunteers. People on the Euromaidan created their own multifunctional organizations, such as Self-defense units, transportation and the AutoMaidan, kitchen and medical centers, donation collection points and organizations for disseminating information. These were not led by the opposition elites. Rather, they were driven by the high levels of self-organization of the opposition masses. Self-defense units protected the Maidan from attempts to disperse the protests and later were involved in bloody confrontations with the police. They also exerted considerable pressure on the government, which was evident in their negotiations with the Interior Ministry and the sheer number of people who joined them. The efforts of doctors in improvised medical centers saved hundreds of lives. AutoMaidan activities put pressure on the police and the authorities and provided logistical services for the Revolution. Pressure was also exerted by various organizations collecting and disseminating information about the beatings, tortures and killings.

The more peaceful days of the protests were sustained by thousands of volunteers who came to the Independence Square and maintained the day-to-day operations of the Euromaidan.

Throughout the Euromaidan, protesters were either suspicious of the politicians or openly against them. The opposition elites did not establish their hierarchy on the Maidan and were not able to control the flow of events. No clear leadership emerged to coordinate the operation of the multitude of opposition groups from the masses that emerged. Instead, they all had a high degree of independence from each other and cooperated to achieve their common goal. The opposition elites did not organize or manage the protests early on and lost control over the situation in later more violent episodes of contention. This was because the opposition elites were largely discredited before the start of the protests, were internally disorganized and weak. They simply could not perform the task of mobilizing the population. Instead, the masses took this task upon themselves and drove the momentum of the revolution forward. This was clearly a far cry from the Social Democratic Model. Self-organization by the variety of groups that came together without a clear leadership to work for the effort of the Euromaidan resembled the Anarchist Model. Indeed, the people were the agents of the Revolution of Dignity.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity was a self-organized effort directed by the opposition masses and not opposition elites. In contrast to the assumptions found in the literature on competitive authoritarianism, this study has shown that the opposition to the government in the case of the Euromaidan did not operate as a united coalition with a clear hierarchy. The organization of the protests was spontaneous and led to the emergence of various self-sustaining organizations that functioned independently of each other and were not directed by opposition elites. This is a major deviation from the literature on competitive authoritarianism, because the protests in this case were anti-systemic rather than anti-governmental.

This study sought to answer how the masses were mobilized during the Euromaidan and what characterized their interaction with the elites. Keeping in mind the two prototypical models for organizing contentious action – the Social Democratic Model and the Anarchist Model (Tarrow 2011) – the description of the Euromaidan revealed organizational patterns that resembled the Anarchist Model. The theoretical expectation from the literature on competitive authoritarianism, therefore, was not fulfilled as the weak opposition elites could not organize the protests under their leadership.

Competitive authoritarianism in Ukraine produced the environment, in which the masses were distrustful not only of the ruling elite but also of the opposition leaders. Constant infighting within the ranks of the opposition itself and the attacks from Yanukovich and his Party of Regions severely weakened the positions of the opposition elite on two flanks: their relative strength to the ruling elite and their credibility in the eyes of the population. In this situation, the opposition masses captured the agency in the Revolution and acted to bypass the opposition elites. I loosely followed the chronological unfolding of the Euromaidan to demonstrate that the mobilization did not happen through the channels controlled by the opposition elites but

rather through self-sufficient organizations created by the protesters. The opposition masses often challenged the opposition elites, sidelined them in key events of the revolution, and at times were openly hostile to them.

Several limitations of my analysis should be mentioned. The depth of my research was somewhat reduced due to time constraints. This limitation, however, is generally inevitable. In addition, this is a single case study, which means that its findings cannot be generalized to a larger population of cases. Nevertheless, this case study revealed a gap in the theory on competitive authoritarianism and showed the necessity of studying the implications of potential discord between opposition masses and opposition elites for regime stability.

The findings of this research suggest that the theories on competitive authoritarianism should pay more attention to the interaction between opposition elites and opposition masses in contentious action. Particular attention should be paid to those protests that happen outside of the electoral process. Bunce and Wolchik (2011) study “democratizing elections,” which are possible only if the opposition forces are united, that is, civil society groups, citizens and opposition elites cooperate with each other. However, what happens if contentious actions occur outside of the electoral arena? As has been shown in this study, the opposition masses and the opposition elites in the Euromaidan were not acting in accord. Rather, the opposition masses used the opening provided by the regime in Ukraine to challenge both the ruling elite and the opposition elite.

Future studies should compare electoral revolutions to other forms of contentious actions directed against governments in competitive authoritarian regimes. In the case of Ukraine’s revolutions in the new millennium, one can hypothesize that the conditions in the country on the eve of the Euromaidan were such that an electoral revolution in the manner of the Orange Revolution was no longer possible. It is plausible that when the elites change primarily through the electoral mechanism or through the so-called electoral revolutions, the opposition masses

are not likely to be the drivers of such change. Business as usual is likely to follow, as ruling and opposition elites simply change places, unless opposition elites have strong democratic predilections. On the other hand, if opposition elites are unable to capture the momentum of contentious action and the masses are angry with both the regime and the opposition elites, then there is a possibility that the regime will be challenged by the masses in an anti-systemic way. In this case, the masses will bypass the opposition elites and create their own organizations to challenge the government.

Since such organizations were the agents of the Revolution of Dignity, further research is needed to study the role of the identity cleavage in the Euromaidan. In this case, the opposition masses were creating their own meaning of the revolution. In large part, this meaning was probably driven by the anti-systemic outburst, in which the masses were simply tired of both the regime and the opposition parties. The common goal of overthrowing “the Gang” had the potential of uniting people with a variety of beliefs and identity markers. Moreover, the Euromaidan could have provided the opportunity for the masses to forge new identities that either amplified the existing identity markers or blended them in new ways.

This is because competitive authoritarian regimes can provide openings not only for opposition elites to challenge governments, but also to the masses. Such regimes may serve to fuel popular anger and disillusionment with both opposition elites and the regime, leading to mass mobilization from the bottom. In other words, opposition masses have the potential of using regime weaknesses to create their own agency. As I show in this research, such was the story of the Revolution of Dignity. This may well be the story of other mass protests yet to come in competitive authoritarian regimes.

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