

A stylized map of Ukraine composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to represent specific regions or cities.

»Euromaidan« – One Year On

Balance Sheet on an Epochal Ukrainian Year

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February 2015

- 2014 was a »black year« for Ukraine and the European peace order: Principles that were previously considered to be »givens« like the inviolability of borders and the obligation to solve conflicts peacefully were put in question. A new European peace order can only become stable when it encompasses each and every country – including Russia and Ukraine. This presupposes universal acceptance of its fundamental principles by all actors. With a view to this long-term aim, all parties to the conflict need to begin searching for common interests. These could be found in the guise of free movement of goods and persons between the EU, European Economic Union and the countries in the »Eastern Partnership«.
- There is considerable doubt as to whether the process of internal democratisation in Ukraine desired and triggered by large segments of the »Euromaidan« movement is now on the right track and can no longer be rolled back. Pluralism is developing primarily through competition between regional or sectoral oligarchs in the aftermath of »Euromaidan« as well. An affirmation of pro-European loyalty in and of itself will not be enough to bring about a European policy.
- The Ukrainian economy and social structure are in shambles. The usual austerity policy strategy promoted by Western donors does not offer an adequate solution to current problems. It nevertheless continues to be propagated by Western countries and is accepted by the new Ukrainian government largely without question. In view of the disastrous impact of this policy within the EU, the question arises as to why the mistakes made in southern Europe now have to be repeated in Ukraine.
- The conflict with Russia made a major contribution to the formation of a self-aware Ukrainian nation state in 2014. Its future cohesion decisively depends on a process of national reconciliation. This is more important to the integrity of the state over the long haul than the military arms build-up being pushed by the current government at present.

When following the failure of President Viktor Yanukovich to sign the EU-Ukrainian Association Treaty the journalist Mustafa Nayem posted on Facebook on 21 November 2013: »I am going to the Maidan – who is with me?«, neither he nor any other observer of Ukrainian politics was fully aware of what the »Euromaidan« protests unleashed by his call would lead to. One year later, western observers must unfortunately admit that the net balance of the protest movement's impact on regional and overall European foreign and security policy has thus far been more pronounced and direct than any deeper-going effects on Ukrainian policy and society desired by the initiators of the protests.

It is no overstatement to speak of a »black year« for the European peace order following the Cold War, in which old principles taken for granted such as the inviolability of borders and obligation to solve conflicts peacefully were put in question. There is considerable doubt as to whether the process of internal democratisation in Ukraine desired and triggered by large segments of the »Euromaidan« movement is now on the right track and can no longer be rolled back.

Europe Runs Up Against the Limits – New Walls Are Being Built

What was planned to serve as a glowing example of successful EU integration policy – close political and economic links to Ukraine via a *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement* (DCFTA) has in the meantime finally been put in motion in formal terms through the signing and partial ratification of the Agreement.¹ But in view of the desultory economic and social situation of the Ukrainian partner at present, one must pose the question – at what cost?

In spite of the strategic short-sightedness and tactical mistakes made by EU Europeans, the main reason for 2014's appalling developments clearly lie, however, in the decision by Russia to return to the rules of the game of European power politics thought to be long dead. No matter how humiliating, painful or even threatening the

foreign and security policy situation is perceived by Russia – the Western alliance's »nearing« Russian borders is usually cited there both in the academic debate and by Russian policy-makers – this does not justify Russian violations of European agreements and international law. The annexation of the Crimea and actions in eastern Ukraine contradict the principles of the inviolability of borders and the obligation of states to peacefully resolve conflicts set out in the UN Charter. A diametrical volte-face in all this is incidentally that Russian actions have above all violated the CSCE Final Act, whose foreign policy element had been hailed as the power of the »status quo« ever since 1975.

If there was ever indeed a plan within the EU to promote the Eastern Partnership against Putin in a targeted manner, it probably succeeded when the eastern neighbour of Ukraine demonstrated *ex negativo* with its return to 19th century power politics that it was not only taking seriously the possibility of Ukrainian membership in NATO, but also in the EU. If one wants to look at things this way, then this is also the measurable »success« of an at best half-baked EU policy. On the one hand, this made the question of the release of Yulia Tymoshenko citing human rights a key negotiating issue with the Ukrainian government in 2013, without however offering the other side any substantial economic aid in the transitional period or easing visa requirements in any concrete manner. Mention of any prospects of accession was explicitly avoided at the time.

Now, one year later, the question of economic aid arises in a much more pressing situation of impending national insolvency by Ukraine and the buy-out of Ukraine by European taxpayers now needed for past deliveries of Russian gas. The fact that Russian interests are also indirectly present at the negotiating table became evident in the summer of 2013 at the latest. Would it not have made more sense to seek a dialogue with Ukraine that included Moscow from the very beginning? Especially given the fact that the EU and Ukraine resolved jointly with Russia on 12 September 2014 to postpone the economic component of association once again until the end of 2015 in order to possibly render integration projects compatible after all. After years of Brussels rejecting involvement of Russia with the apodictic argument that there cannot be any *droit de regard* for third countries, precisely this dialogue is now to take place in the future!

1. The political part of the DCFTA was signed on 23 April 2014, with the economic part being signed on 27 June. Parallel coordination of ratification by the European Parliament and Verchovna Rada took place on 16 September. All that is needed now is ratification by the majority of national parliaments of the member states.

At the same time, the Ukrainian crisis has demonstrated as a secondary effect that a system of guaranties alongside and outside existing security structures does not work: Ukraine gave up its tactical nuclear weapons in 1994 within the framework of the Budapest Memorandum in exchange for guarantee of its national sovereignty – with the agreement being signed by Russia, the USA and Great Britain. Neither of the latter powers lifted a finger in military terms to come to the aid of Ukraine in 2014 – in stark contrast to the familiar Cold War rhetoric of Washington »hawks«. The Ukrainian crisis is thus even having a ripple effect ranging all the way to the non-proliferation debate: How are future »candidates« supposed to be persuaded of the blessings of nuclear disarmament with this glaring example before their eyes? It would only be logical and consistent if this further fuelled the scramble for nuclear weapons throughout the world – primarily by authoritarian regimes in an effort to buttress their hold on power.

But back to Ukraine: the declared aim and objective of Russian policy in the meantime – even beyond Crimea and eastern Ukraine – is to »protect« Russians and Russian-speaking citizens in other countries. Understandably enough, several neighbouring countries feel threatened by this intention based on recent experience. It must by the same token be noted: Russian-speaking citizens have never been discriminated against either in Crimea or in eastern Ukraine. If Russian leaders were truly interested in putting an end to alleged discrimination, they could have sought to achieve this through negotiations. Moscow has never tried this, however. Many neighbours of Russia therefore view the country as a revisionist power, which is in the meantime giving rise to ideas that would appear crude from a German perspective such as that of the Ukrainian government building a »wall« along the border with Russia. It is obvious that this could at best only provide minor social benefits by creating jobs in the building industry, but makes no military sense whatsoever and that it would be completely counterproductive as a result of the signal it would send out with regard to the normalisation of Ukrainian-Russian relations. It would be desirable to hear a clear word here from Western donor countries – which have remained silent on this to date – that could have a real impact, especially if it came from the German Chancellor. Instead, all that could be heard from there in the autumn of 2014 were words of »understanding«, which in view of the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall being celebrated at the same time is at least surprising.

New Security for Europe?

The negative development of the foreign and security policy situation in Europe made evident by the Ukrainian Crisis only has one bright spot to show at present – and that is the revival of the OSCE. Falling into a slumber after the end of the Cold War, it has been awaked by Vladimir Putin and in the meantime become the most important multilateral actor in the escalating conflict in eastern Ukraine. The reason for this is obvious – it is after all the only organisation bearing relevance to security policy whose members include both parties to the conflict as well as the EU countries, the USA and Canada.

The most important diplomatic tool was conceived in May 2014 in the form of the trilateral contact group, in which representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE come together under the chair of the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini. After a long tussle the Permanent Council of the OSCE issued a mandate for a civil observation mission with initially 250 observers as far back as March 2014. The mission is intended to ease tensions and contribute to stabilisation through objective reporting on the situation. Additional OSCE activities have taken place in response to an invitation by Ukraine: a mission to assess human rights in the spring of 2014 as well as election-monitoring commissions during the presidential elections in May and the parliamentary elections in October 2014. On top of this, various military verification missions have been carried out under the 2011 Viennese Document. The OSCE no doubt provided the most important contribution through negotiation of the Minsk Ceasefire Protocol on 5 September 2014 with the parties to the conflict, in which it assumed the future tasks of monitoring and observing the situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border as well as on both sides of the »control line« between the separatists and Ukrainian forces.

The major problems experienced in putting together sufficient manpower for the OSCE monitoring mission, however, show how deeply the OSCE was in slumber. It was not possible to beef up its manpower by doubling it to 500 observers until 2014. The future effectiveness of the overall mission will primarily depend upon whether it will receive enough political backing to make it potent on the ground. It may at the same time turn out to be a stroke of luck that the »OSCE troika« will be composed

of Serbia, a traditionally pro-Russian country, in 2015, Germany, one of the most important countries in Western alliance structures, in 2016, and neutral Switzerland, which chaired the initiative in 2014.

In a larger temporal context which is in principle of a more fundamental nature, the foreign and security policy crisis surrounding Ukraine puts into question our basic (Western-influenced) assumption that with the end of the Cold War the time of conflicts became a thing of the past. If this assumption had not already appeared dubious as a result of the wars that broke out with the unravelling of Yugoslavia and the »frozen conflicts« in eastern Europe, then by last year at the latest it certainly did. The years since 1989 have very obviously only been perceived as successful in one half of Europe, which should provide us in Germany food for thought, located as it is at the geographical centre of Europe. The still-unresolved question is whether Germany, the EU and the West will embark on a new »Great Game«, i. e. the continuation of the Cold War over spheres of influence between Europe and Russia?

In spite of rhetoric to the contrary, particularly from Prime Minister Yatseniuk, whose ambitions are being further fuelled by American rhetoric at present, Ukraine would definitely not emerge as one of the winners, but rather the big loser. This means partition, although we already experienced a partition of parts of the country in 2014. If the West does not take its own values seriously in foreign policy, then it cannot help either Ukraine or the entire region of the »eastern partnership« by playing the geopolitical game of the Russians and agreeing to govern things over the heads of the countries involved. It can only provide true relief by continuing to insist on the principles of containment of power by law, as the 20th century taught all of us.

In concrete terms, this means that the offer extended to all European countries since 1990 of becoming equal partners in the European peace order continues to apply. This is because a European peace order will only become stable over the long term if all countries including Russia and Ukraine are part of it. Anyone that wants to become part of the European peace order, however, must for their part accept the fundamental principles of this order. Although Russia is violating this at present, it is nevertheless no reason to discard these principles. On the contrary, this should serve as motivation to encour-

age Russia to change its policy. Or, to couch it in simple terms: The West must keep the door open, but Russia has to find the door itself!

If in spite of everything the vision of an all-European peace order that includes Russia is to be preserved and maintained, this only describes an exigency whose absence became so bitterly evident to us in 2014. If we had already had this pan-European security structure back then, virtually nothing that subsequently happened in Ukraine would have been possible. This also reflects a certain realism, as Russia remains the most important country to the east of the EU and NATO. The Ukrainian government is perhaps not alone in wishing to pretend that this is not so at times, but this does not make this fact any less real. To avoid discussing illusions, however, it is proposed that the parties not start off with the most difficult problems, but rather begin to grapple with those issues where common interests are discernible. And this is the case with respect to the issues of economics and travel without visa restrictions. Here it is worth recalling the point of departure in the »Euromaidan« movement – failure to sign the association agreement by former President Yanukovych. Would it not be a worthwhile aim (or if it had not only been one a year before or in the era of President Medvedev) to work towards an overarching zone of free traffic in goods and persons, under the auspices of which both the EU and countries associated with it would be conceivable, as well as a Eurasian economic union. In contrast to the situation of one year ago, this presupposes that both sides abandon the current escalation. Viewed in sober terms of their own best interests - new sales markets and legal security on the one hand and the sheer necessity of modernisation on the other – all the parties involved would have to ascribe to this – not only in Ukraine, but in Russia as well.

»New Faces« or Return to the »Old« Elite?

One year on after the events that ultimately led to the toppling of President Yanukovych, it is the right point in time for an assessment of the fundamental upheavals in the foreign policy situation surrounding Ukraine as well as an overview of the domestic political, economic and political situation as it compares to the key demands forwarded by the »Euromaidan activists«. Political actors have themselves in part complied with the call for »new faces« in politics – one of the key demands. It is true

that institutionalisation and consolidation of the »Euro-maidan movement« as such must be seen to have failed in political party terms due to several factors: first of all there is an undeniable lack of party leadership that can capture support throughout the country and its regions. The groups represented in the Maidan were furthermore very capable in terms of self-organisation and improvisation, but their heterogeneity and splintering did not exactly foster the founding of new political parties. Only a few seats were won by tiny parties that had emerged from the Maiden in elections to the Kiev City Council in May 2014. Secondly, party legislation and de facto financial constraints prevented the successful spin-off of a viable competing party or citizens' movement. The time factor with presidential elections moved up to May and elections to the new parliament in October 2014 had an additional negative impact.

Some activists, bloggers, civil rights activists, investigative journalists and well-known representatives of civil society have attained prominent positions on party lists for new elections to the Verchovna Rada, also because the old parties found it opportune to cosy up to them in order to pose as pro-Maidan to the outside world. Examples to be mentioned in this context are Svitlana Salishchuk, the investigative journalist of *Ukrainiska Pravda*, Serhiy Leshchenko, and Mustafa Nayem, mentioned in the foregoing, all of whom were elected to the new parliament on the »Petro Poroschenko Bloc« list. Examples from other lists deserving mention are Tetiana Chornovol, the number two on Yatseniuk's »People's Front list«, or Hanna Hopko, the list leader for the »Self-Help« party. We are thus witnesses to a political field trial taking place at present in which the Kiev elite or active Ukrainian civil society themselves move into the field of active politics instead of merely commenting on such from the sidelines. It remains to be seen whether they will be successful in changing the entrenched rules of the game in Ukrainian politics, which are more based on money and the influence of oligarchical structures on political decision-making processes, or whether the system changes these rules or political actors become resigned to them.

One step in the former direction is at any rate the announcement to form an inter-party alliance relating to topics such as electoral reform, a reform of party financing and plans to amend the Constitution. With regard to the latter issue, the Council of Europe's Venice Com-

mission published its legal expertise on the draft bill submitted by President Poroshenko on the same exact day as the moved-up Ukrainian parliamentary elections took place.² In addition to improvements to be gained through decentralisation, the Venice Commission drew attention to three weak points that were almost completely forgotten in the »lapse of attention« following the elections: first of all the current draft calls for a strengthening of the position of the President compared to the Constitution of 2004, which has been put in effect once again. This clashes sharply with the public debate, which in the wake of experience with Poroshenko's predecessor was clearly in favour of curtailing presidential power. Secondly, a reform of the judiciary overdue for years. Thirdly, the Commission criticised the failure to involve Ukrainian civil society in the drafting process, which in view of the so-called »revolution« by that very same civil society several months previous to this already constitutes a remarkable assessment. Given the fact that the government is being formed with as broad a base as possible while involving all political forces except for the »opposition bloc«, it is foreseeable that the aim is to organise a majority that is capable of amending the Constitution. One can only hope that this will be the last amendment of the Constitution for a long time, as it is definitely not conducive to the stability of a state when practically every new government changes these foundations for all political action – as has been the case in Ukraine so far.³

Contrasting with these trends towards an actual watershed change in the actors in Ukrainian politics, the old structures that have largely called the shots in domestic politics over the last quarter century continue to predominate, even one year after the »Euromaidan«. Although this is no longer the same age cohort if only for biological reasons as the old Soviet political elite, the »red directors« or their counterparts from the western Ukrainian-dominated national movement, powerful oligarchs such as Kolomoiskyi, Lyovochkin, Firtash or Akhmetov (in spite of his stagnating business in the wake of the eastern Ukrainian conflict) on the one hand as well as politicians such as Poroshenko, Yatseniuk, Tymoshenko, Turchynov or Boyko on the other have been familiar faces to the Ukrainian public for some time. Al-

2. Venice Commission, Opinion no. 766/2014, CDL-AD(2014)037.

3. The original Constitution of 1996 was subsequently amended on a massive scale in 2004, 2010 and 2014. These changes primarily revolved around shifting power between the president and parliament.

most 95 per cent of these persons with the exception of the President, who has fled the country, his »family« – basically *Mafiosi* – and some close associates, all these actors had similar positions even before the so-called »revolution of dignity«. Suddenly, however, roles on the political stage flip-flopped – whoever was active in the parliamentary opposition before 22 February 2014 now usually holds a government post and vice versa. Ties and the intertwining of business and politics are by the same token of greater importance in Ukraine than in Russia, where President Putin has been successful in stifling the political ambitions of economic magnates in competition with his rule. In Ukraine, pluralism – even after the »Maiden« – has been and is still primarily brought about by competition between regional or sectoral actors and oligarchs staking out their claims, with this ranging both to the political arena and the mass media.

In view of this continuity in persons, it is therefore difficult to understand what the optimism of many Western observers who now see the rise of a »pro-European« era is specifically based on. Pro-Europe affirmations alone are far from being a pro-Europe platform, even if it is of course understandable that the majority of political actors are now distancing themselves from the old Yanukovych government under the banner of »Europe«. Looking at the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections, specific political reform plans do not play a role that is as important as could have been expected after a watershed civil movement. In addition to already traditional populist slogans, the focus is clearly on hostilities in eastern Ukraine. The Prime Minister never tires of climbing onto a tank for the cameras in order to demonstrate strength and resolve. True Europeanisation that accepts values propagated by the EU such as rule of law, equality before the law and the demonisation of corruption would have to go far above and beyond the one single result produced to date, a law on awards of public contracts, for example. Ultimately, effective combating of corruption would not mean anything other than still-dominant elites having to clean up shop at the source of their own dominance for the common weal of the country as a whole. The only way that it appears to even come close to being possible to achieve this is in an alliance of post-Maidan politicians with the EU in its capacity as the biggest donor. Progress will only be possible with a good deal more commitment than in the past in wielding these carrots and sticks while applying the important lever of economic support.

In Ukraine As Well: Countering the Crisis by Saving

In addition to the issue of corruption and the questionability of the will of the still-active political elite to attend to the hopes of the populations for a »normal« and dignified life, the economic development of the country is at the focus. The situation would not be simple even without the conflict in eastern Ukraine, but Ukrainian society is experiencing difficult times at present. According to the Ukrainian Central Bank, the economy contracted by 7.5 per cent in 2014 in comparison to the previous year. That is the sharpest decline since the global economic crisis of 2008–2009, from which Ukraine had not yet really recovered at all. On top of this is the destruction from the war in the eastern part of the country, an estimated 450,000 internal refugees, who will not be able to return to their homes in the foreseeable future, a crisis-in-the-making in the labour market, in which just as many people are competing in a de facto smaller territory, and a government debt that can no longer be refinanced through the treasury bond market, but rather only by means of IMF, EBRD and EU aid packages. In addition, the Ukrainian currency (the Hryvna) took a nosedive in 2014, losing half its value vis-à-vis the US dollar and Euro.

In this abysmal situation, the usual austerity policy strategy advocated by Western donors does not appear to offer an adequate solution if one does not want to drive the population, already under considerable economic pressure, straight into poverty. At the same time, this is the strategy frequently propagated by Western countries and accepted by the new Ukrainian government, usually citing the speed warranted »in view of the Russian threat«, without question. Characteristically enough, the Georgian proponent of libertarian economics, Kakha Bendukidze, who had led ex-President Saakashvili's battle against any regulation of the market whatsoever in that country, was hired on as economic advisor in Ukraine by the transitional government in the spring. He was not successful down until his sudden death on 13 November 2014, however, in achieving the same results. The fact that very few of the reforms proposed by the IMF itself have even begun to be tackled in the three-quarters year of the post-Yanukovych era, is indicative of the stubbornness of the old Ukrainian elite structure. At any rate, on the list of priorities drawn up by IMF department director for Europe Moghadam

from April 2014 work has only moved forward in the area of public tenders and reform of the tax administration.

In view of the disastrous impact of austerity policy within the EU, the question arises, however, as to why the mistakes made in southern Europe (Greece, Portugal and Spain) now have to be repeated in Ukraine, which will become an associated state in the near future. Will the EU, which has fallen in line behind the economic policy laid down by Germany, produce another »lost generation« like in the southern member countries of the Union on its eastern borders as well? Or should in view of the shortage of skilled labour in northern and central Europe the hope of Ukrainians for a better life be leveraged to profit from the expected brain drain of highly educated persons? In this context, it should be recalled that around six million Ukrainians have seen leaving their country to be the only way out of their desolation since national independence.

The Ukrainian trade unions, which suffered real material losses as a result of the events in Kiev in February and in Odessa in May, when two of their buildings went up in flame, have lost up to 40 per cent of their internal budget and had to lay off staff due to the loss of income sources through the operation of holiday homes in Crimea. In addition to traditional problems caused by shrinking membership as a result of creeping age, marginalisation of once predominant industrial sectors in Ukraine (which accelerated once again due to the situation in *Donbas*) as well as internal conflicts between competing trade union federations do not put the trade unions in the most advantageous position to face the upcoming socio-economic reform process. While the old government »Party of the Regions« produced (labour) legislation in a paternalistic-populist manner at times, it has become ever more evident that the trade unions have not been able to forge any comparable ties with the new government. Legislative bills curtailing the traditional veto rights of trade unions in the case of redundancies, the de facto elimination of the government labour inspectorate, which had only continued to exist on paper anyway, and the abolition of trade unions' right to a say in the administration of social funds (for the obvious reason that the government has attempted to seize these) have been put in motion since the summer of 2014 and only failed to be adopted due to the discontinuity of parliamentary sessions.

Activists in the »Euromaidan« have characteristically not been able thus far to come up with their own models for reform of the Ukrainian economy. Their economic policy demands have amounted almost exclusively to calls for an end to corruption, with the exception of a few candidates on the *Samopomich* (self-help) party list who surprisingly made it into the Ukrainian parliament. Otherwise the »Maidan mainstream« has swallowed the neo-liberal line setting the pace in Europe lock, stock and barrel, and looks upon the EU as a »watchdog« over the adjustment processes required by the association agreement – once again due to the lack of trust and confidence in Ukrainian politics. Both social partners as well as NGOs are to be involved in the implementation of the DCFTA along the 15 sub-chapters by means of accompanying »platforms«. With all the fundamental criticism levied at the involvement of civil society actors in the closed shop of the social dialogue, in view of the condition of the trade union movement in the special case of Ukraine, one may at least hope for the later formation of an alliance between elements of NGOs and the trade unions to lobby for the interests of the working population. On top of this, on the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is the partner institution in charge of implementation of the CDFTA, which in this construction constitutes a novelty. As a result, there is at least a chance to »leverage« the employee side of the EESC to critically monitor and influence the implementation process in the future. At the internal Ukrainian level, however, there is hope to be found in the activation of already existing regional trilateral councils of the social dialogue along the lines of a sort of neo-corporatism as a creature of necessity within the framework of the endeavoured decentralisation of the country. This is because it is obvious (ultimately as part of the further learning process) that socially cushioned reforms along the lines of »Rhineland capitalism« and the frequently touted »European economic and social model« are preferable to shock therapy moulded on the Russian model of the 1990s, as otherwise the internal cohesion of the society will simply be at stake or there will be a danger of fanning the flames of a new protest movement driven by social issues.

One question that remains unresolved is whether and when the new Ukrainian power-holders will finally redouble their efforts to find the money that was siphoned off by the Yanukovich »family«, which was also cited as a reason for the outrage expressed in

the »Euromaidan«. According to notices sent out into the world by the transitional government at the end of April 2014, the allegedly misappropriated or stolen sums amounted to a scarcely conceivable 100 billion US dollars. By way of comparison: the original government budget for 2014 provided for expenditures of 471 billion Hryvnas (approximately 30 billion US dollars); Yanukovich and his associates thus must have been able to pocket three complete Ukrainian government budgets without being noticed or impeded in almost exactly four years of government. Since the initial agitation in spring, excitement over the issue has died down except for the fact that the »family« was subsequently linked to the financing of separatism in eastern Ukraine. If these amounts of money were really misappropriated, however, then it must be possible to freeze these funds and channel them into the flagging budget for 2015. But the latest findings give rise to doubt: The *Basel Institute on Governance*, a Swiss NGO, is now helping track down the money. Thus far there has been scant success. Switzerland has only frozen 185 million Swiss francs (around 192.5 million US dollars) in 29 accounts held by Ukrainian citizens.


Common Identity

Even if it may still be wishful thinking at present: especially a government tending towards a »pro-European« line will in the future not be able to ignore the fact that it is necessary in order to preserve the unity of the »remaining« (unoccupied) Ukraine to find a »narrative« acceptable to all citizens. One of the original Ukrainian problems since national independence has been that political actors do not attach any value to nation-building, and have instead first and foremost devoted their efforts to the production and capture of rents for their own benefit. Last year saw an ambivalent development in this regard: although the »Euromaidan« was supported by significantly more western and central Ukrainians⁴ in geographic terms, the new power constellations in Kiev was rejected by inhabitants of the *Donbas*. This support was on the other hand so low after February 2014 that only a few people were willing to take up arms in favour of separatism. The leaders of the separatist movement even complained about this publicly. Originally around

one-third of the citizens of the *Donbas* were in favour of maintaining the status quo and another one-third still in favour of merely greater autonomy within the Ukrainian state federation.

In view of this evidence that does not exactly prove that there has always been a semi-»natural« splintering of the country underway, it would have had a decisive impact in the early spring of 2014 if an effort had been made to reach out to people in the southern and eastern Ukraine early on in order to demonstrate that no »hostile takeover« by the government was impending. The fact that the transition government at the time was not able to produce such symbolic policies in its »pro-European« rhetoric must in retrospect be adjudged to be its biggest failure, even if one takes into account the difficult situation and the great pressure it was under to act. The unwillingness and inability to compromise characterising this country as well as the »winner-take-all« euphoria prevented both the new-old »returnees« in the political elite and Maidan activists from adopting an integrative strategy. In sum total, the cabinet of the Yatseniuk transitional government did not have one single minister from the geographic southeast of Ukraine, in contrast to the »compromise« negotiated by the *ancien régime* and the former opposition on the eve of Yanukovich's flight. The fact that already on the second day after Yanukovich's flight the Verchovna Rada did not have anything more urgent to do than (on Sunday!) abolish the old Language Act, which recognised the use of Russian in regions in which it is the mother tongue of at least ten per cent of the population, assigning it the status of a regional language, must have been seen as an affront in the 13 regions of Ukraine affected. Nor did it help matters that the veto by transitional President Turchynov prevented the new law from entering into force. It is in this series of consistently unwise signals that the latest development has taken place in which a presidential decree put a stop to all government benefits in territories occupied by the separatists beginning on 15 November 2014. This means that schools, hospitals and cultural institutions in the zones affected are no longer receiving any money and commercial banks are furthermore cut off from the flow of funds from the Ukrainian national bank. It is highly questionable how compatible this move is with the Ukrainian government's self-proclaimed responsibility for people in the occupied territories. With this step Kiev is practically driving the remaining population into the arms of the separatists.

4. S. Ukraine-Analysen Nr. 126 from 28 January 2014, pp. 13 f., at: <http://www.laender-analysen.de/ukraine/pdf/UkraineAnalysen126.pdf>



Nevertheless, on the other hand something like an all-Ukrainian patriotism that is not only based on regional »narratives« developed within the population over the summer as a result of Russian intervention. Vladimir Putin is thus in the process – no doubt unintentionally – of bringing about what he has occasionally questioned: a self-aware Ukrainian national state. For this cohesion to become stronger, the essential factor will be whether an internal process of reconciliation takes place. In view of the lack of willingness to address this on the part of the official government, even though one of its original tasks is to preserve and protect the integrity of the state and it would be more important over the long term than the military build-up it is currently pursuing, hope must once again be placed in civil society. But whether the »victors« develop this willingness one year after the »Euromaidan« is an unresolved question whose answer depends to a significant degree on Ukraine's new start.



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