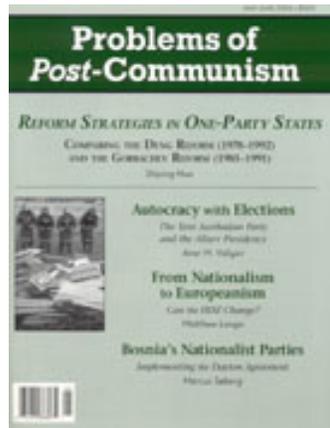


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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Problems of Post-Communism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/mppc20>

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Published online: 07 May 2015.



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To cite this article: Taras Kuzio (2015) Rise and Fall of the Party of Regions Political Machine, Problems of Post-Communism, 62:3, 174-186, DOI: [10.1080/10758216.2015.1020127](https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2015.1020127)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2015.1020127>

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Rise and Fall of the Party of Regions Political Machine

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There is very limited Western scholarship on the Donbas region, despite its being the center of Europe's worst conflict since World War II. The Donbas region did not wish to join Soviet Ukraine in 1918, was not a source for Soviet Ukrainian leaders, and has high levels of Soviet nostalgia, low support for Ukrainian independence, and relatively high levels of support for separatism. The Donbas-based Party of Regions political machine won a plurality in three Ukrainian elections (2006, 2007, and 2012); its leader, Viktor Yanukovich, was the country's prime minister in 2002–4 and 2006–7 and president in 2010–14. Yanukovich provoked two revolutions: one that prevented him from becoming president (2004) and another that ousted him from power (2014). The November 2013–February 2014 Euromaidan crisis, which led to the flight of Yanukovich, Russian annexation of the Crimea, and the Donbas separatist conflict, also led to the disintegration of the Party of Regions in Kyiv and in its two regional strongholds. This article analyzes the factors behind the rise and fall of the Party of Regions and its Donbas-based political machine, and its implications for Ukrainian domestic politics and foreign policy.

The rise and fall of the Party of Regions political machine has not translated into scholarly studies, of which there are only three articles, a single book and regional studies of Soviet Ukraine focused on Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk. Two of the articles on the Donbas analyze the Party of Regions as a new phenomenon that first emerged at the national level in the 2002 parliamentary elections, when Donetsk governor Viktor Yanukovich became prime minister (2002–4), and in the 2004 presidential elections. Ararat L. Osipian and Alexander L. Osipian¹ have analyzed why voters backed the Party of Regions while Kerstin Zimmer² has investigated its strength in mobilizing state administrative resources. Taras Kuzio³ and Hans von Zon⁴ have discussed the neo-Soviet paternalistic and violent political culture that is being witnessed during the Donbas conflict.

Regional branches of the Soviet Ukrainian Communist Party in the Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts*) supported the party's hardline, "imperial" wing; that is, they

were opposed to the republic's national communists such as Petro Shelest, who was removed in 1972 during a widespread "*pohrom*" of dissidents and cultural figures. The conservative Soviet Ukrainian Communist party first secretary Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, who ruled the republic from 1972 to 1989, led the party's "imperial" wing. In the late 1980s the party split into three groups: (1) national or "sovereign" Communists led by then parliamentary chairman Leonid Kravchuk; (2) "imperial" Communists allied to Russian hardliners who were hostile to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev; and (3) the democratic platform within the Komsomol (Communist Youth League), who cooperated with the moderate opposition. The Soviet Ukrainian Communist Party, which until the formation of a RSFSR Communist Party in 1990 had the largest membership of the fourteen republican communist parties in the USSR, was banned in August 1991 for supporting the hardline putsch in Moscow. The post-Soviet Communist party (KPU) launched in Donetsk in 1993 and re-registered that year represented the hardcore, "imperial" wing of the old party. During the second and third decades of Ukrainian independence the KPU, the supposed party of the downtrodden proletariat,

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became a satellite of the Party of Regions, a party of crony oligarchs, and together they commanded over forty percent of the parliamentary vote in Ukraine. The Party of Regions and KPU both disintegrated in 2014, failing to receive representation in the parliament elected in October 2014.

In the USSR, the Donbas held a strong position in the Soviet Ukrainian Communist party and in government ministries such as coal and metallurgy, but it never became a source for Soviet Ukrainian ruling elites, who traditionally came from Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk (e.g., Shcherbytsky, a protégé of Soviet Communist leader Leonid Brezhnev), and Kharkiv (source of national Communists such as Shelest). In the 1970s, six out of sixteen Ukrainian Politburo members began their careers in the Donetsk basin, with another three from Kharkiv and two from Dnipropetrovsk. All-Union ministries controlled half of Ukraine's economy and most of these industries were to be found in the Donbas. Party activists from the heavily Russified Donetsk region, accustomed to thinking in centralist and all-Union terms, were the ultimate Moscow loyalists from World War II to 1991 and remained so in independent Ukraine. This political culture made the Party of Regions more Russophile and Sovietophile than other eastern Ukrainian centrist political parties and placed it closer to the KPU and to Crimean Russian nationalists, with whom it cooperated. Borys Lewytzkyj writes on the Soviet Donbas that "their experiences and mentality have been molded by their subordination to all-Union authority and by the priority of all-Union interests."⁵ Yaroslav Bilinsky adds that the Donetsk faction of the Soviet Ukrainian Communist Party was "eminently acceptable to Moscow" because it was isolated from Ukrainian cultural politics and attuned to thinking in "All-Union" and "centralist" terms.⁶ The Donbas was a cadre school for Communist Party officials, "who as individuals and functionaries personif[ied] the 'integrative' aspects of CPSU domestic policy."⁷

Donetsk regional identity, which has remained stronger than Ukrainian, developed alongside a Soviet Ukrainian territorial patriotism rather than an ethno-cultural identity. Neither Russian nor Ukrainian ethnic nationalism was popular in the region. (This only changed in 2014, when Russian nationalist and neo-Nazi groups such as the Party of Russian National Unity and Aleksandr Dugin's Eurasianists intervened in support of the separatists.⁸) The Donbas was a frontier region that lived between Ukraine and Russia "without a commitment to either,"⁹ as suspicious of Moscow as it was of Kyiv. In the late 1980s, the Donbas had not mobilized against Soviet power but neither did it defend the Soviet Union. In spring 2014, however, counter-revolutionary, armed separatists took control of buildings in the Donbas, and with less success in the two swing regions of Kharkiv and Odesa.

Historical determinism plays an important role in providing the justification for eastern Ukrainians running Ukraine's affairs. This is not unusual; after all the Liberal Party always believed until its crushing defeat in 2011 they

were the 'natural ruling party' of Canada. In both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, Ukraine has been ruled by eastern Ukrainian leaders and political forces and the only exception to this was the western Ukrainian Leonid Kravchuk in 1991–94 (although he was elected by eastern Ukrainian voters). "For the people of Donbass, it is normal that the candidate supported by the industrial east always wins," Osipian and Osipian write, "because heavy industry is concentrated in the east."¹⁰ A common regional myth states that "The Donbas feeds Ukraine." Eastern Ukrainian elites believe they, who represent the industrialized and urbanized regions of Ukraine, have a right to rule Ukraine rather than elites from the rural and less populated western Ukraine. The seven *oblasts* of western Ukraine only account for 12 percent of the country's GDP or less than the city of Kyiv (18 percent). Slovakia and Belarus have similar populations to western Ukraine but six to seven times larger GDPs. In Ukraine, the most successful parties in elections have been the KPU (1994–98) and the Party of Regions (2006–12), both of which had strong regional bases of support in Ukraine's East. National democratic parties received a plurality in two parliamentary (2002, 2014) and two presidential elections (2004, 2014).

Five factors contributed to the failure or success of regional parties of power, the so-called centrist political parties and the Party of Regions, who were prominent in Russian-speaking eastern and southern Ukraine. The first factor was regional capture, specifically whether a region's business elites had successfully united into a clan that could provide a *krysha* ("roof," but here understood as criminal slang for political protection) and a stable voter base. The second was some form of shared beliefs and political culture, and third was the availability of local and national state-administrative resources to win elections. The fourth factor was territorial expansion from the Donbas home base into other Russian-speaking regions of eastern and southern Ukraine and the Crimea, and the fifth was an authoritarian and aggressive operating culture. These five factors are analyzed in the main part of the article.

REGIONAL CAPTURE, UNITY, AND STABLE VOTER BASE

The only centrist party of power in Ukraine to capture a region and mobilize a stable voter base was the Party of Regions. In the 1990s, the two strongholds of the People's Democratic party (NDP) were Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk, the two cities that had ruled Soviet Ukraine. Many of its members were drawn from the Komsomol's democratic platform and it therefore espoused a quasi-liberal ideology. The Inter-Regional Bloc of Reforms (MBR) had similar regional centers and Komsomol origins and also espoused a liberal but more Russian-speaking platform. The two parties merged in 2000. In the late 1990s the NDP suffered

from a major split similar to that which the Soviet-era Communist party underwent, dividing into *nomenklatura* and democratic platform wings. The former supported Prime Minister Valeriy Pustovoytenko and the latter split to launch the Reforms and Order party led for most of its existence by Viktor Pynzenyk. A second factor that worked against the resurgence of the Dnipropetrovsk clan in post-Soviet Ukraine through the NDP was the inability of business elites to merge into a united regional clan. Divisions continued to hamper relations between Viktor Pinchuk, Igor Kolomoysky, Pavlo Lazarenko and Yulia Tymoshenko. Serhiy Tihipko, an ally of Pinchuk's, joined Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov's government and his *Silna Ukrayina* (Strong Ukraine [formerly Labor Ukraine]) party merged with the Party of Regions in 2012 and was revived three years later.

Other centrists such as the Agrarian party had no regional base and little possibility of mobilizing traditionally passive rural voters. The Social Democratic United Party (SDPUo) was dubbed the party of power of the Kyiv clan, but this belied the fact it was unpopular in its home city and therefore sought a regional base in economically poor Transcarpathia. Here the SDPUo survived briefly until national democrats captured the region in the 2004 presidential elections. Without a stable regional base, these centrist parties (NDP, MBR, SDPUo, Agrarians, and *Trudova Ukrayina*) could not nurture and mobilize a stable voter base.

In the 1990s in Donetsk, the Liberal (created by former Komsomol leaders) and Labor (the home of ex-Soviet big plant and new "Red Directors") parties were also unsuccessful. The Liberal Party emerged in Donetsk in October 1991 and was headed by former Komsomol leaders and oligarchs Volodymyr Shcherban and Yevhen Shcherban (unrelated), but was never able to become the local party of power. In 1994–98, the Liberal Party's Social Market Choice parliamentary faction was led by former Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) chairman Yevhen Marchuk. Liberal leader and parliamentary deputy Yevhen Shcherban was assassinated in November 2006 in the Donetsk airport and, although the assassins were never found, accusations centered on then-Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko and clan rivalry between Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk. Yevhen Shcherban planned to support Volodymyr Shcherban or Yevhen Marchuk to run against President Leonid Kuchma in the 1999 presidential elections. The Liberals and the Labor Party joined forces in the *Razom* (Together) bloc in the 1998 elections but failed to enter parliament, receiving only 1.89 percent of the vote. The Donetsk-based Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine (PRVU) obtained even less, only 0.9 percent. The Party of Regions traced its roots to the PRVU. Its founder, then-Donetsk Mayor Volodymyr Rybak, was parliamentary chairman in 2012–14.

In 2000, Donetsk launched a regional party of power through the unification of five parties: the PRVU, Labor

Party, Party of Pensioners, Petro Poroshenko's Party of Ukrainian Solidarity, and former Kyiv Mayor Leonid Chernovetsky's For a Beautiful Ukraine Party. The Party of Regional Revival–Labor Solidarity Ukraine was renamed the Party of Regions in March 2001 and established the Regions of Ukraine parliamentary faction. After merging with (future Prime Minister) Azarov's European Choice faction, the Regions of Ukraine became the second largest parliamentary faction (with Our Ukraine the largest) in 2002–6.

The unification of the Donetsk clan brought about two dividends.

First, the Party of Regions received massive financial support from local oligarchs, such as Rinat Akhmetov, and after 2006 from the "gas lobby" headed by Dmytro Firtash, Yuriy Boyko, and Serhiy Lyovochkin. The gas lobby increased Viktor Yanukovich's autonomy from Donetsk oligarchs, while the merger of the Republican Party of Ukraine, the party of the gas lobby, with the Party of Regions, provided him with an alternative source of funding. In 2010–12, gas lobby leaders Lyovochkin, Boyko, and Kostyantyn Gryshchenko held influential positions as chief of staff (head of the presidential administration), Minister of Energy and Coal Industry, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, respectively. Meanwhile, during Yanukovich's presidency (2010–14), Firtash, Akhmetov and Oleksandr Yanukovich, who led the "Family"—that is, the president's personal clan—were awarded preferential insider privatization deals.

During Yanukovich's four-year kleptocracy, state capture and corporate raiding facilitated the rise of the president's Family. State capture permitted Yanukovich to strive to become the *khoziayin* (master) of Ukraine and, toward this goal, to become financially independent of both the Donetsk oligarchs and the gas lobby through increasing accumulation of assets by the Family. In 2011, Oleksandr Yanukovich, the president's son, after being granted the lion's share of government tenders and corporate raiding, entered the list of Ukraine's top 100 wealthiest people.⁷¹ The Family controlled state finances (Ministry of Finance, including the former State Tax Administration and National Bank of Ukraine), and the *siloviky* (the "forces," that is, the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, and the Security Service [SBU]).

In the 1990s, Donetsk elites sought economic autonomy so that surpluses previously extracted by Moscow and Kyiv remained in the Donetsk region for the enrichment of the emerging oligarchs and elites. The first attempt to extract autonomist concessions from Kyiv took place during the 1993 coal miners' strikes, which led to the appointment of Donetsk "Red Director" Yukhym Zvyahilsky (a long-term Party of Regions deputy, later elected by the Opposition Bloc in 2014). The strikes panicked President Kravchuk into agreeing to pre-term presidential elections a year later, which were won by Leonid Kuchma. The Donetsk elites agreed to drop demands for political autonomy and to no

longer challenge Kyiv politically, as Yevhen Shcherban had intended to do in the 1999 elections. Kyiv and Donetsk negotiated a de facto “non-aggression pact” of which Donetsk Governor Viktor Yanukovich was the intermediary and guarantor. Donetsk benefited from legislation creating Special Economic Zones and insider privatization only open to local elites. Little industrial restructuring and modernization of privatized enterprises or reforms of the coal-mining sector ever took place.

Second, the Party of Regions provided defense against what were perceived to be hostile political forces following the rise of Viktor Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine and the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) from 2002 and during Yushchenko’s presidency (2005–10). After Kuchma left office in 2004, the Party of Regions remained the only powerful centrist party, although it had to recover from the defeat of its candidate Yanukovich. Leading members of smaller centrist parties joined the Party of Regions seeking protection from possible criminal charges. The exception to this trend was SDPUo leader Viktor Medvedchuk, whose personal chemistry with Yanukovich was so poor that the Party of Regions resisted Moscow’s pressure to create a joint election bloc for the 2006 elections. Medvedchuk, with close family ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, has remained Russia’s agent of influence in Ukraine. During the Orange Revolution, Yanukovich and regional Donetsk elites felt betrayed by central elites (Leonid Kuchma, Volodymyr Lytvyn, Serhiy Tihipko, and Viktor Medvedchuk) and believed they had been in cahoots with Western governments to deny him power.¹²

Donetsk machine politics rested on clientelism, violent coercion, and efficient use of state administrative resources for election fraud, which had proven successful in local and parliamentary elections. Andrew Wilson writes that the Party of Regions is a “clientelistic and authoritarian organization” that rewards friends and punishes enemies.¹³ Power translates into access to financial resources for patronage and clientelism and the ability to install “order” and defeat one’s *protivnyky* (mortal enemies) or buy off opponents. Fifteen percent of Party of Regions voters believe financial and administrative resources are required to win elections, twice the number of Our Ukraine and BYuT voters. The former head of the Party of Regions parliamentary faction, Rayisa Bohatyryova, explained different attitudes to *vlada* (power) in Ukraine: “A lot view power as an aim in itself; after it has been attained one can relax. But, for us, power is a means to achieve laid out goals.”¹⁴ Bohatyryova was unwittingly explaining the difference between presidents Yushchenko and Yanukovich.

The Party of Regions has acted as an insurance policy for former state officials accused of abuse of office by giving them parliamentary seats and immunity from prosecution. Thus, “the Party of Regions is a kernel for the Kuchma elite.”¹⁵ In 2005–6, the Kuchma elites were fearful that the “Bandits to Prison!” slogan of the Yushchenko election campaign would

be put into practice and Borys Kolesnykov’s arrest in April 2005 was viewed by Donetsk elites as tantamount to a “declaration of war.” When Yushchenko visited Donetsk he “behaved like a conqueror that had come to a subjugated territory.”¹⁶ As a U.S. cable from Kyiv reported, the Party of Regions has brought together “much of the political opposition to President Yushchenko.” Taras Chornovil, who played a leading role in the Party of Regions from 2005 to 2012, does not describe it as a “political party” but as a club of acquaintances who have come together in order to survive and defend their mutual interests.¹⁷

Yanukovich’s 1997–2002 governorship of Donetsk established a “managed democracy” model in Donetsk that he sought to expand to the remainder of Ukraine during his presidency. Kerstin Zimmer writes: “The Party of Regions cannot be viewed as an actor separate from the local and regional authorities. The local officials did not perceive this ‘fundamental’ functional separation either. The resources of the city were used in a targeted and directed manner to fulfill the Party’s ‘mandate.’”¹⁸ In December 1998, Governor Yanukovich established the Unity, Accord, and Revival bloc that brought together seventeen Donetsk-based NGOs and parties to support Kuchma’s re-election, joining the pro-Kuchma national movement *Zlahoda* (Consensus). Governor Yanukovich never concealed the fact that district governors organized the Unity, Accord, and Revival bloc under the aegis of the local state administration.

A stable, disciplined, and authoritarian voter base that prioritizes the economy and stability over democracy facilitated the Donetsk clan in establishing a monolithic party machine and the Party of Regions monopolization of power in eastern and southern Ukraine. The patrimonial political culture perpetuates a paternalistic dependency of the working classes on elites and in so doing elevates collectivism over individualism and personal efficacy. The Party of Regions had a stable base of voters who comprised around a quarter to a third of the electorate and tended to be less educated, working class, pensioners, and veterans. Many of them had voted for the KPU when the Party of Regions did not exist (1994, 1998) or did not stand as an independent party (2002). Similar socio-economic and rural voters have given Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka a stable base of support; in Ukraine, rural voters, of which there are few in highly urbanized Donetsk *oblast*, have traditionally voted for national democratic parties and the Socialist Party.

Party of Regions voters did not support political parties led by Russophone intellectuals, such as the MBR (1994), SLON (Social Liberal Alliance, 1998), and KOP (Winter Crop Generation, 2002). They would not have voted in such large numbers for middle-class oligarchs, such as Tihipko if he had been the authority’s candidate in the 2004 elections. In the 1998 elections, only 12,400 out of 2.4 million voters in Donetsk *oblast* backed SLON. The Party of Regions combined left-wing paternalism, Soviet nostalgia, and big business into a successful political machine.

SHARED IDEOLOGY

The quasi-liberal political parties that emerged from the Komsomol failed to find a large voter base at a time when the middle class had yet to emerge during Ukraine's transition to a market economy. The voter base of the Party of Regions was diametrically different and drew on big business and working-class voters. Meanwhile, Donetsk elites were uninterested in "the ideological, political, and cultural aspects of independence nor [in] the idea of historical justice."¹⁹ Centrist parties, unlike the Party of Regions, had not been Ukrainophobic and were supportive of moderate Ukrainianization and national identity.

A large proportion of former KPU and Progressive Socialist Party voters defected to the Party of Regions and support for the KPU slumped from 20 in 2002 to 3 percent in the 2006 elections, only growing again in 2012, at the expense of the Party of Regions, to 12 percent. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of Party of Regions voters held a socialist and communist orientation.²⁰ The Party of Regions replaced the KPU as the dominant regional political force and the Communists were gradually co-opted, joining Party of Regions-led parliamentary coalitions in 2006–7 and 2010–12. In the 1990s, the KPU and local business elites had closely cooperated when "Donbas businessmen operated in the Communist party's shadows"; after the launch of the Party of Regions, "Donetsk business completely moved out of the shadows of the KPU."²¹ The Party of Regions and Yanukovich remained loyal to Kuchma while he remained in power, only becoming an independent political force from 2005–6 when it signed cooperation agreements with Putin's United Russia party and Crimean Russian nationalist parties.

For Eurasian authoritarian leaders such as Yanukovich and Putin, *stability* represents discipline and the ability to get things done. Ukraine's Ambassador to Belarus, Viktor Tikhonov, a senior Party of Regions leader, praised the Belarusian authoritarian regime for bringing "stability."²² The Party of Regions abhors "chaos" and described the Yushchenko presidency as "orange lawlessness."²³ Donetsk voters favored a strong power structure with a clearly defined hierarchy and a domineering *kerivnyk* (boss) and *khoziayin*.²⁴ Stability is a key element of "democracy," Yanukovich adamantly believes.

The Party of Regions 2006 election program prioritized "stability, well-being, and development perspectives" and Prime Minister Yanukovich promised he would install "order" in the country. Yanukovich said on the ICTV channel in the second voting round of the 2010 elections that "democracy in the first instance is order." The Party of Regions 2007 pre-term election program was titled "Stability and Well Being" and during the campaign, Yanukovich emphasized his party's principles as the "renewal of justice and victory to the political forces which work for stability." A U.S. diplomatic cable from

Kyiv reported, "Yanukovich repeated again and again that the priority for the Party of Regions is stability."²⁵ Pro-Yanukovich parliamentary coalitions have been called Stability and Well Being (2006–7) and Stability and Reforms (2010–12). In the 2012 election campaign, the Party of Regions used billboards with "From Stability to Prosperity," "Stability Has Been Achieved!" and "Chaos Has Been Overcome. Stability Has Been Achieved!"

Party of Regions' election programs emphasized the economy, with little attention paid to the rule of law, media freedom, democracy, free elections, or corruption. Yanukovich's election speeches and programs stressed economic growth and higher standards of living while being conspicuously silent on democratization. The Party of Regions, by virtue of its reliance on former Communist voters and a working-class base, was therefore one of the most populist parties in Ukraine. Yanukovich's 2010 election program, drawn up in an alliance with the Soviet-era Federation of Trade Unions, made extravagant promises of higher social spending and pensions, tax-free breaks for small and medium businesses, and subsidized household utility prices.

Ukrainians who harbor an East Slavic identity that is commonly found in the Crimea and Donbas exhibit greater authoritarian tendencies and prioritize economics and stability over democracy.²⁶ Democratic values are more popular in western and central Ukraine. The highest numbers of Ukrainians who believe an opposition is necessary for a democracy are to be found in western Ukraine (81 percent) and the lowest in eastern Ukraine (46 percent).²⁷ Surveys by the Democratic Initiatives–Razumkov Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies (DF–UCEPS) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) show that a sizeable proportion of Ukrainians believe political stability and the economy are as important as democracy.²⁸

This preference for stability and economic development over democracy corresponds to the greater levels of Soviet nostalgia to be found in regions of eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donbas. More Ukrainians than people in Russia wish the USSR had stayed in place (40 compared to 36 percent) with the highest levels in eastern Ukraine, where 56 percent wish the USSR had remained in place and 48 percent feel fully or mainly closer to the USSR than to Ukraine.²⁹ Voters who prioritize stability and economics over democracy were more likely to vote for the Party of Regions and the KPU and to be from eastern and southern Ukraine, where there are very high levels of support for economic development (50 and 64 percent) over democratic rights (20 and 22 percent).

The opposite is true in "orange" Ukraine, where 41, 48 and 45 percent in western and central Ukraine and the city of Kyiv respectively supported democratic rights over economic development (32, 35 and 36 percent). A very high 55 percent of Ukrainians said authoritarianism was better than

democracy in certain situations (22 percent); it was unimportant if Ukraine was a democracy (17 percent; or difficult to answer, 14 percent). Notably, 35 percent of Ukrainians believe the country needs a strong hand (compared to 43 percent in Russia).³⁰ Support for authoritarianism being better than democracy in certain situations was highest among Party of Regions and KPU voters (23 and 36 percent, respectively) and lowest with *Batkivshchina* (Fatherland) and nationalist *Svoboda* (Freedom) party voters (16 and 20 percent, respectively).

IFES reported that apathy toward democratic development is highest in eastern, southern, and northern Ukraine, where 39 percent were ambivalent. Fewer eastern Ukrainians believe Ukraine is a democracy than western Ukrainians (47 compared to 36 percent). KPU voters (31 percent) gave the lowest support for democracy, with the highest given by *Batkivshchina* voters (59 percent). A greater number of nationalist *Svoboda* voters supported democracy than Ukrainians who voted for the Party of Regions (55 and 51 percent respectively).

The Party of Regions' choice of international allies revealed a great deal about its authoritarian political culture. The Party of Regions signed cooperation agreements with the United Russia party and the Chinese Communist Party. A cooperation agreement with the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (PASD) political group in the European Parliament was curtailed because of growing European criticism of selective use of justice and other anti-democratic policies undertaken during Yanukovich's presidency. The greetings received at the 2012 congress of the Party of Regions came from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the central committees of the Chinese Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the United Russia party, authoritarian ruling parties in Azerbaijan (*Yeni Azərbaycan Partiyası* [New Azerbaijan]) and Kazakhstan (*Nur Otan* [Fatherland's Ray of Light]), and the Prosperous Armenia party led by oligarch Gagik Tsarukian.³¹ Among these greetings the only one sent by a European political party was from the BSP.

STATE ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES

State administrative resources were not provided equally to Ukrainian centrist political parties. The SDPUo barely scraped into parliament in 1998 after reportedly "purchasing" additional votes from the Agrarian party that failed to enter. Although the NDP was Kuchma's party of power, his support was tepid and in this he was similar to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who failed to provide concentrated resources for Russia's Choice or Our Home Is Russia. The NDP therefore barely scraped into parliament in the 1998 elections.

State administrative resources were used in the Donetsk region from the 1999 elections, three years after Yanukovich

was appointed regional governor, and in that year he bragged to Kuchma that his people were in total control of the *oblast*.³² Greater access to state administrative resources facilitated an increase in turnout in Donetsk from an average of 66 percent in the 1994 and 1998 elections, 79 percent in the second round of the 1999 elections, and an incredible 97 percent in the fraudulent second round of the 2004 elections. State administrative resources supported Kuchma's re-election in 1999 and the ZYU (For a United Ukraine) bloc in the 2002 elections. Regional governors under both President Kuchma and President Yanukovich understood that one of their key tasks was to provide state administrative resources for the president. Donetsk Governor Andriy Shyshatskyi promised that Euromaidan protests would be countered in his city, as they had been earlier in Kharkiv by Governor Mykhaylo Dobkin, the Party of Regions' ill-fated candidate in the May 2014 elections.³³

Governor Yanukovich used state-administrative resources on behalf of Kuchma and the pro-presidential ZYU bloc in the 1999 and 2002 elections, respectively. In 1999, state administrative resources increased the vote for Kuchma between the first and second rounds by 21 percent. Kuchma came second to KPU leader Petro Symonenko in the first round of the 1999 elections but, with the use of state administrative resources, his vote jumped by 21 percent in the second round. Tapes made illicitly in the president's office by presidential guard Mykola Melnychenko recorded Governor Yanukovich reporting to President Kuchma, "The boys who were put in place fulfilled what was asked of them. Moreover, in reality Moroz came third. Basically he received 12–13 percent." The official results only gave Moroz half of his real vote in Donetsk *oblast*.³⁴

In the 2002 elections, Donetsk ensured the success of ZYU when it received 37 percent, the only region of Ukraine where the pro-presidential bloc received first-place plurality.³⁵ "Due to technology used in Donetsk, ZYU entered parliament,"³⁶ Marchuk said. Kuchma repaid Donetsk for its loyalty by appointing Yanukovich as prime minister in November 2002 and presidential candidate in 2004. Abuse of state-administrative resources moved to the national level in the 2004 presidential elections, provoking the Orange revolution.

Eurasian authoritarian political culture cannot comprehend the very concept of election fraud and this is as true of the authoritarian Party of Regions as it is of United Russia. Yanukovich was a serial election fraudster who presided over election fraud as regional governor in the 1999 and 2002 elections, as prime minister in the 2004 elections, and as president in the 2012 elections. In an interview given to three Ukrainian television channels in February 2012, Yanukovich reiterated his firm belief there had been no election fraud in 2004 and that he had won the second round of the elections.³⁷ The Orange revolution and Euromaidan, in the view of Yanukovich and Putin, were Western-backed coups that deprived a legitimate candidate

of the presidency in the former and orchestrated a “fascist-driven” coup against a legitimate president in the latter.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

In 2005–7, the Party of Regions, now a political force independent of Kuchma’s control, successfully removed competition from other “centrist parties” by marginalizing, merging or co-opting them. The Party of Regions negotiated local alliances with Crimean Russian nationalist parties, in Odesa with Igor Markov’s *Rodina* (Fatherland) party, and in Transcarpathia with Viktor Baloga’s United Center party, because it was weak in those three regions of Ukraine. In March 2012, the merger of the Strong Ukraine party with the Party of Regions removed another threat to the Party of Regions in that year’s parliamentary election and also from its leader Tihipko, who in 2010 received third place to Yanukovych, in the upcoming 2015 presidential elections. Strong Ukraine was the last centrist party in eastern and southern Ukraine that was removed, opening the way for the Party of Regions to establish a monopoly of power in the region. After Yanukovych fled from Ukraine, divisions emerged in the Party of Regions and seven candidates from the party’s parliamentary faction, including Tihipko, stood in the May 2014 pre-term presidential elections.

The Party of Regions began as a merger of “Red Directors” (PRVU, led by Volodymyr Rybak, and Party of Labor, Valentyn Landyk, Yufym Zvyahilskyy), and new Donetsk elites (Rinat Akhmetov, Borys Kolesnykov, Andriy Kluyev). The Party of Regions integrated Donetsk and Crimean pan-Slavists such as Vadym Kolesnychenko and Oleksiy Kostusyev of the Russian-speaking Movement and the Party of Slavic Unity, respectively. In 2006 and 2012, leaders of two Dnipropetrovsk parties of power were absorbed—Labor Ukraine (Volodymyr Sivkovych, Valeriy Konovalyuk, Dmytro Tabachnyk) and its successor, Strong Ukraine—with Serhiy Tihipko becoming deputy leader of the Party of Regions. Another three parties were absorbed by the Party of Regions - New Generation of Ukraine (Yuriy Miroshnychenko), New Democratic party (Yevhen Kushnaryov), and the Republican Party of Ukraine (Levochkin, Boyko, Firtash).

The Party of Regions in addition integrated a wide variety of political forces— Vitaliy Zhuravskyy (Christian Democratic Party), who had close ties to Kyiv Mayor Leonid Chernovetsky’s bloc, Volodymyr Lytvyn (People’s Party of Ukraine [NPU], the former Agrarian party), and Anatolii Kinakh (Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs). Other politicians who have been integrated by the Party of Regions have included former Prosecutor-General Hennadiy Vasylyev (*Derzhava* [Statist] party), Serhiy Kivalov, chairman of the Central Election Commission during the 2004 election fraud and leader of Odesa’s Maritime Party, Anatolii Tolstoukhov (NDP),

Nestor Shufrych (SDPUo), and Inna Bohuslovska (*Viche* [Council] party). Opposition leaders have been integrated from *Rukh* and Our Ukraine (Taras Chornovil, Oleksandr Lavrynovych, Serhiy Holovatyy, Davyd Zhvanyya, Vladislav Kaskiv), the Socialist Party of Ukraine (Andriy Derkach), and BYuT (Vasyl Khmelnytsky, Bohdan Hubskey, Vitaliy Portnov). Many of these co-opted politicians from outside the Donbas were the first to desert the Party of Regions after Yanukovych fled from office.

In the Crimea, the Party of Regions initially sought alliances with local political forces that had been marginalized under Kuchma. President Putin brokered an alliance through political technologist Konstantin Zatulin between the Party of Regions and local Russian nationalists who joined the For Yanukovych! bloc in the 2006 Crimean elections.³⁸ The United States believed that “Regions had given the Russian Bloc undue political prominence in 2006 by forming a single Crimean electoral list, providing them with slots in the Crimean Rada they would not have won on their own.”³⁹ In the 2006–10 Crimean parliament, the Party of Regions cooperated with Russian nationalists (Party *Sojuz*) and the Progressive Socialist party, an alliance that President Kuchma would have never supported. The unholy alliance led to the Crimean parliament adopting in September 2008 the only resolution in the CIS (outside Russia and frozen conflict enclaves) in support of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia; an attempt to adopt a similar resolution in the Ukrainian parliament was supported by the Party of Regions and KPU but failed to receive sufficient votes. These Russian nationalist allies, such as the Russian Unity party led by Sergei Aksyonov, supported Russian’s invasion and annexation of the Crimea.

The Party of Regions therefore represented a wide coalition of interests and groups and all told, a total of fifteen parties, including four of the five parties in President Kuchma’s ZYU, were merged and co-opted. Party of Regions oligarchs also provided financial assistance to opposition political forces such as Vitaliy Klitschko’s UDAR (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms)⁴⁰ through the gas lobby and in the 2010 elections supported Arseniy Yatsenyuk. In both cases, support was given to opposition alternatives to arch-nemesis Tymoshenko who were willing to be more pragmatic and flexible. The gas lobby persuaded Klitschko to drop out of the 2014 elections in favor of Poroshenko whom Firtash, on bail in Vienna after being detained at the request of the US, publicly endorsed.⁴¹ Akhmetov financed the re-named Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (which had been a member of BYuT in the 2002, 2006, and 2007 elections) as Forward Ukraine!, but it failed to enter parliament in the 2012 elections. Natalia Korolevska, a BYuT deputy from Luhansk who was made Forward Ukraine leader, was appointed to the second Azarov government and elected to parliament by the Opposition Bloc in 2014.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND AGGRESSION

The Donetsk model of governance is a “merging of political and economic power with total suppression of dissent and unbridled corruption” and represents an “extension of Soviet civilization.” Zon describes this model as a “semi-feudal oligarchic capitalism with a command-and-control approach to governance in which no dissent is tolerated.”⁴² The Party of Regions is an authoritarian party that emerged from working class Donetsk and the violent transition of the 1990s and its meetings feel like “party congresses from Soviet times” that “take place according to the best canons of CPSU congresses.”⁴³ In parliament the Party of Regions and KPU were highly disciplined and uniform in their voting while Yanukovich still behaved “like a Soviet era party boss.”⁴⁴ When the Party of Regions was in power in 2002, 2006–7, and 2010–14, it bribed, blackmailed, or coerced opposition deputies into defecting to the government coalition. When opponents could not be pressured to switch sides, they were denigrated in the media and subjected to intimidation and repression. From its inception, the Party of Regions dubbed its national democratic political opponents as “extremists” and “fascists;” this was echoed on Russian television, the main source of news in the Donbas, raising the temperature of political confrontation. Dmytro Tabachnyk, who was Education Minister in 2010–2014, jointly wrote a book denouncing his “Orange” opponents as “fascists.”⁴⁵ In May 2013, the Party of Regions organized “anti-fascist” marches throughout Ukraine with slogans such as “To Europe Without Fascists” where the entire opposition, not just *Svoboda*, was denigrated in such a way. Putin and Yanukovich’s “anti-fascism” drew on a long-term Soviet legacy of ideological tirades against Ukrainian “bourgeois nationalists” and “Nazi collaborators.”

At the same time, while being authoritarian, the Party of Regions was more internally democratic than its national democratic opponents as it transcended its three leaders (Azarov, Yanukovich, and Volodymyr Semynozhenko), whereas national democratic parties are closely tied to leaders. Until the Euromaidan there could have been a Party of Regions without Yanukovich,⁴⁶ but there could never be an Our Ukraine, *Batkivshchyna*, Socialist Party or UDAR without Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, Oleksander Moroz, or Klitschko, respectively.⁴⁷

The Party of Regions was more akin to a joint stock company than to a limited liability company with a sole director. The Party of Regions inherited Brezhnev-era collective decision-making by seeking advice, learning from mistakes, and making tactical compromises before pushing for strategic victories and adopted decisions by “consensus” (that is, collegially). The Party of Regions operated as a *komanda* (team), rather than as a one-man show, which is typical among national democratic parties. The Party of Regions “consults one another. Finding out how to undertake a task properly and seeing what approach to take,”

Yanukovich said. This collegial decision-making process has its origins in a second source, that of the Soviet criminal world where prisons are places that one “observes and understands people.”⁴⁸ Valery Chalidze writes that, “Thieves’ artels composed of regulars have an elected leadership and, like other artels, observe a kind of collective responsibility.”⁴⁹ Conferences of *vor v zakonye* resolved disputes and unfulfilled promises and arbitrated conflicts and disputes.

Yanukovich also pointed to another major difference with national democratic parties of understanding the importance of cadres, saying “We will never throw away our people.” Team members who had fallen out with the *khoziayin* were appointed as “advisors” or sent to the National Security and Defense Council where they would await rehabilitation. Team members who fall out with leaders of democratically oriented party’s are expelled or leave of their own accord holding a long-lasting grudge and desire for revenge. Some defected to the Party of Regions (for example, Chornovil and Holovatyy) while others established new political parties (for example, Baloga, Yatsenyuk, and Anatoliy Grytsenko). The Party of Regions was far more adept at resolving disputes and tension within its ranks than national democratic parties.

Sportsmen were routinely used by the Party of Regions and Yanukovich administration as vigilantes for corporate raiding, political intimidation, election fraud and thuggish behavior during the Euromaidan.⁵⁰ Vadim Volkov writes that, “Sportsmen naturally formed the core of the emerging racketeering groups”⁵¹ in the 1990s. The use of vigilante sportsmen had a long tradition in Donetsk and in June 2000, Yanukovich revealed their use to disrupt a rally in support of then-Deputy Prime Minister Tymoshenko.⁵² Vigilantes were brought to Kyiv during the Orange revolution and Euromaidan but they were only used in the latter. During Yanukovich’s presidency the overwhelming majority of violent attacks in the Ukrainian parliament were by Party of Regions deputies with past ties to the criminal and sports worlds.⁵³

The origins of the Party of Regions’ more thuggish approach to politics lie in the working-class, machismo culture of the Donbas as well as the nature of the Soviet settlement in the region after World War II. Postwar reconstruction of the Donbas took place with the assistance of labor transferred from other regions of the USSR (Akhmetov’s family, for example, moved from Tatarstan to work in the coalmines) and there is Tatar rayon of Donetsk city with a large mosque and Islamic educational center opened in honor of the assassinated mafia boss Akhat Bragin (“Alek the Greek”).⁵⁴ Some were “criminals and adventurers” and “street waifs,” Hiroaki Kuromiya writes.⁵⁵

In postwar Donetsk, one in ten of its residents were imprisoned in prisons and colonies and the region held three times the number of inmates as these institutions had been constructed to hold. The largest numbers of criminal trials in

Soviet Ukraine were in Stalino (the name of Donetsk from 1924 to 1961) and Luhansk (Voroshilovohrad) *oblasts*, accounting for a third of all criminal prosecutions in Soviet Ukraine. In the Donbas, “Everyone was said to participate in robbery” and, “every night people were terrorized by the sound of incessant shots from automatic rifles.”⁵⁶ Former Zionist dissident Yosyf Zisels was imprisoned in a camp with a large number of Donetsk criminals.⁵⁷

Donetsk voters viewed Yanukovich’s twice imprisonment for theft and violence⁵⁸ as a *neschastya* (misfortune) rather than making him morally unfit to be Ukrainian president, a view that was common among western and central Ukrainian voters. Osipian and Osipian write: “In many parts of Ukraine, imprisonment carries a stigma and is an embarrassment for an individual. In Donbass, however, it is not taboo and people tend to consider spending time in prison an opportunity to enrich one’s personal experience, especially in one’s youth. Moreover, in Donbass, serving a prison sentence is considered the equivalent of serving in the military.”⁵⁹

Yanukovich was convicted in 1967 with the charge of theft and in 1970 he was sentenced to two years for “infliction of bodily injuries of medium seriousness.” In prison he was reputedly a *pakhan*, rather than a *vor z zakone* (organized crime gang member), who ruled prisons with the consent of prison guards and exercised total dominance over their territory and subordinates after dark.⁶⁰ As a *pakhan*, Yanukovich’s cooperation with the Soviet authorities in prison facilitated his progress after he was released from captivity, with his two first convictions overturned by the Donetsk *oblast* court in 1978. Serhiy Leshchenko writes that the KGB recruited Yanukovich to spy on organized crime in Donetsk during his second imprisonment and this *kompromat*, according to a number of sources including former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radek Sikorski, was used by Putin to pressure him to turn away from European integration and adopt a more repressive policy toward the Euromaidan.⁶¹

Rinat Akhmetov was a low-level member of criminal groups in the second half of the 1980s and in the first half of the 1990s became the “right-hand man of Akhat Bragin,” a Donetsk crime boss assassinated in 1995.⁶² Akhmetov, Bragin, and Yevhen Shcherban headed a “Tatar⁶³ mafia” group, one of the many ethnic criminal groups in the Donbas. Photographic and video footage leaked by the Ministry of Interior showed Akhmetov and Bragin at the funeral of Aleksandr Krantz, a major Donetsk organized crime boss who was murdered in 1992, and at other events.⁶⁴

Ties to criminal groups and leaders have existed in the Party of Regions from its inception. The first deputy head of parliament’s Committee on Fighting Organizing Crime and Corruption, Hennadiy Moskal, revealed there were eighteen members or leaders of organized crime who were parliamentary deputies in Party of Regions.⁶⁵ Akhmetov lobbied for Yanukovich’s appointment as Donetsk governor and from

1997 until 2014 they had a close political and “business” relationship, with political protection provided in exchange for a 50 percent cut⁶⁶ and their alliance remained unchallenged through to Yanukovich fleeing from Ukraine.⁶⁷

The Party of Regions’ authoritarian and thuggish political culture was evident from its greater willingness to use violence in physical attacks inside parliament and outside, such as during the Euromaidan, and in its imprisonment of opponents.⁶⁸ A political culture of seeking revenge and using aggression was already evident in 2006–7 when Yanukovich unexpectedly became prime minister. President Yushchenko complained that the Yanukovich government was “attempting to seek revenge, seeing everyone as defeated.”⁶⁹ In April 2007, growing conflict between the prime minister and president led President Yushchenko to issue a controversial decree that disbanded parliament, culminating in pre-term elections in September.

Political repression of opposition leaders who could not be co-opted was aimed at removing them from Ukrainian politics. Yulia Tymoshenko was a *protyvnyk* rather than an *opponent* with whom one could negotiate, offer a position or come to an understanding. Yushchenko understood the need to play by the new rules of the game, giving evidence against Tymoshenko at her 2011 trial and never condemning Yanukovich’s anti-democratic policies.⁷⁰ Yanukovich, comparing her to politicians such as Yushchenko who were more amenable to being co-opted, described Tymoshenko as “standing for political confrontation.”⁷¹ For Yanukovich, she represented the instability and chaos he so abhorred.

The election of Yanukovich in 2010 permitted the Donetsk clan and the Party of Regions to extract revenge for what it believed was betrayal in the 2004 elections and for subsequent humiliations, such as the brief imprisonment of Kolesnikov in 2005,⁷² and the disbanding of parliament and removal of the Yanukovich government in 2007. Selective use of justice that targeted former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko and Tymoshenko attempted to remove her as a threat to Yanukovich’s indefinite monopolization of power. Tymoshenko’s sentence of seven years of imprisonment and a three-year ban from public office would, if Yanukovich had not been removed from power, have prevented her participation in three parliamentary (2012, 2016, 2020) and two presidential elections (2015, 2020). In February 2014, she was released from prison after Yanukovich fled from power.

In May 2012, a presidential decree “On steps towards intensifying the struggle against terrorism in Ukraine”⁷³ listed “extremism” alongside “terrorism,”⁷⁴ and a government resolution five months later outlined steps to combat “terrorism.”⁷⁵ This legislation was used to support the use of live rounds during the Euromaidan that murdered over 100 and wounded thousands of protesters in January and February 2014.

EUROMAIDAN AND DISINTEGRATION OF THE PARTY OF REGIONS

Yanukovich fled from office on February 20–21, 2014, after he lost support from within the Party of Regions parliamentary faction and from the security forces. The Ukrainian military, as during the Orange revolution, had refused to back the repression of protesters while there were insufficient police special forces to overwhelm the protesters. The regime disintegrated because of its unwillingness to compromise during the Euromaidan crisis, such as by replacing Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov in December 2013 (this only happened in late January 2014) and never removing Minister of Interior Vitaliy Zakharchenko; in addition there were numerous provocations such as the adoption on January 16, 2014 of anti-democratic legislation and the widespread use of vigilante thugs who abducted, tortured, and killed protesters. The murder and wounding of protesters raised the political temperature and deepened the conflict. The heavy-handed use of the Berkut riot police on November 30, 2013, and throughout the Euromaidan crisis, increased the numbers of protesters and made them more determined to stay until they had achieved victory, understood as Yanukovich's removal from power.

The Party of Regions distanced itself from Yanukovich on February 23, 2014, after he fled from Kyiv,⁷⁶ two days after parliament had voted for a resolution calling for an end to bloodshed. The Party of Regions had denounced Yanukovich in a strongly worded statement after he fled from Kyiv, blaming him for the murder of protesters, and parliament had voted to remove him from power.⁷⁷ The first to leave the large Party of Regions faction were those who had been co-opted and bribed to join—deputies who were from regions other than Donetsk, Luhansk, and the Crimea, the party's three regional strongholds. In the course of the next nine months, the Party of Regions faction shrunk to half its size (206 to 105 deputies),⁷⁸ while its popularity slumped in eastern and southern Ukraine.

Divisions within the Party of Regions undermined party discipline, and it did not put forward a united candidate in the May 2014 pre-term elections. Of the 24 candidates, ten had ties to the former Yanukovich regime, of which seven were from or had close ties to the Party of Regions.⁷⁹ The popularity of the Party of Regions was further damaged by its backing of Mykhaylo Dobkin's candidacy in the 2014 elections.⁸⁰ Support for the Party of Regions further declined after Russia annexed the Crimea, where 82 out of 100 deputies in the autonomous republic's parliament had been from the Party of Regions. United Russia elected a majority in the September 2014 Crimean elections, with many Party of Regions deputies rebranding themselves.

Initially, Party of Regions leaders had hoped to use public protests in Donetsk to exert pressure on Kyiv in a similar manner to pressure exerted by the Severodonetsk November 2004 congress. Party of Regions supporters of

federalism and hostile opponents of the Euromaidan such as Dobkin, and backers of the “New Russia” project such as Oleh Tsaryov, hoped to ride the wave of regional discontent, but were soon sidelined by hitherto marginal local and imported Russian nationalists and covert Russian intervention.⁸¹ The “New Russia” project gained support in the Donbas, where support for Ukrainian independence was low and a third of the population supported separatism, either in the form of union with Russia or the Donbas becoming an independent state. But the “New Russia” project failed to gain support in the Russian-speaking regions of Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, and Mykolayiv while pro-Ukrainian forces eventually gained the upper hand in the swing regions of Kharkiv and Odesa.

The collapse of the Party of Regions was evident during the two pre-term elections held in 2014. In May, Dobkin received a paltry 3 percent, coming in sixth place, which was a far cry from the 44 and 48 per cent received by Yanukovich in December 2004 and February 2010 respectively. Meanwhile in October, the Party of Regions took a wise decision to not participate in the elections, but leading members were elected in the Opposition Bloc that came in fourth with 9.43 percent, which again was a far cry from the 30–34 percent the Party of Regions received in the 2006, 2007, and 2012 elections. The Party of Regions had collapsed as a consequence of revelations about the scale of the corruption under Yanukovich's kleptocracy, described as an organized crime mafia enterprise by former Prosecutor-General Vitaliy Yarema, the murders of protesters on the Euromaidan, and suspicion of instigation of separatism. The forty-strong Opposition Bloc could not attract deputies elected in single-mandate districts and its faction is therefore a fifth of the size of that of the Party of Regions on the eve of Yanukovich fleeing from power.

CONCLUSIONS

In Ukraine, the creation of a united political machine was only successful in the Donbas. In Dnipropetrovsk, local clans divided into three warring groups led by Pinchuk (Interpipe) and Tihipko, Kolomoyskyy (Pryvat), and Lazarenko and Tymoshenko. The SDPUo could never establish its dominance in Kyiv, which has traditionally backed national democratic and “Orange” parties, and after Kuchma left office became a marginal political force. The Agrarian party failed to mobilize rural peasants and farmers. In the 1990s, centrist parties formed by former Komsomol leaders and targeting middle class, liberal voters failed to gain support in eastern and southern Ukraine, a region where the leftist populist and oligarchic Party of Regions proved to be more successful.

Yanukovich and the Party of Regions successfully integrated “Red Director” elites, budding oligarchs, and criminal elements into an organization that defended their

interests from outside threats and provided extensive patronage to its members. Soviet historical myths and nostalgia, stable voter base, aggressive and authoritarian operating culture, and access to large amounts of finances and state administrative resources transformed the Party of Regions into a formidable disciplined and united political machine that established a monopoly of power in eastern and southern Ukraine between the Orange and Euromaidan revolutions. The Party of Regions was the only centrist political party that survived the post-Kuchma era, because it had two strong regional bases in the populous Donbas and was allied with Russian nationalist elements in the Crimea. The KPU as a satellite party added 5–12 percent support to the 30–34 percent support received by the Party of Regions.

The Yanukovich presidency negatively affected Ukraine's democratization path and national integration in five ways. First, support for Russophile and neo-Soviet culture and Ukrainophobia heightened regional and ethno-cultural tension, one example of which was the growth of support for the nationalist Svoboda party in the 2012 elections. Inter-regional tension had been inflamed in the Orange revolution and Euromaidan with Russian television and diplomatic propaganda painting revolutionaries and opposition leaders as "fascists" and "agents of the West." The Donbas conflict began as a counter-revolution to the perceived illegitimate removal of an elected leader (Yanukovich) who had been elected by a majority in the Donbas. But it rapidly evolved into defense of Russian speakers from the alleged "fascist" Kyiv "junta" put into power by a Western-backed putsch. Donetsk separatists, Russian soldiers, and Russian nationalist volunteers believed they were fighting (in Putin's view) not the Ukrainian military but a "NATO Legion," the "Americans," and "fascists."

Second, the Yanukovich team never countenanced giving up power and this made bloodshed during the Euromaidan highly likely; in 2004, Kuchma was leaving office after two terms and he had an interest in not leaving power with blood on his hands.⁸² Violence in the Euromaidan heightened tensions in the Crimea and Donbas and helped to provoke an escalation into conflict and an insurgency. Third, a culture of playing with the rules, rather than by the rules, impacted negatively on parliament and branches of the judiciary, both of which were co-opted and corrupted.⁸³

Fourth, a penchant for monopolization of economic and political power increased corruption, worsened the business climate, reduced foreign investment, and left many non-Donetsk elites feeling ostracised; not surprisingly, they defected during the Euromaidan and after Yanukovich fled from Kyiv. Finally, President Yanukovich and Prime Minister Azarov left behind a country economically in crisis and financially bankrupt that required billions of dollars in Western assistance to stave off the country's default.

President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk face the challenge of domestic economic-financial crisis and Russian-backed separatism seeking to "Bosnianize" Ukraine. Yanukovich, who provoked two revolutions against him and created a successful political machine that deserted him, has a historical legacy of treachery, murder, and criminal enterprise.

NOTES

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 57. Interview with World Jewish Congress Vice President Yosyf Zisels, Kyiv, December 1, 2014.
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 59. Osipian and Osipian, “Why Donbass Votes for Yanukovich,” 498.
 60. Fournier, *Forging Rights in a New Democracy*, 121.
 61. Serhiy Leshchenko, *Mezhyhirskyi Syndrom. Diahnoz vladi Viktora Yanukovycha* (Mezhyhirya Syndrome: Diagnosis of Viktor Yanukovich’s Time in Office) (Kyiv: Bright Star Publishing, 2014), 57, 210–15, 218. This is analyzed in Taras Kuzio, *Democratization, Corruption and the New Russian Imperialism* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2015).
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 63. Here referring to Tatars from Russia’s Tatarstan, not the Crimea, where they have been traditionally anti-Russian. A Muslim Party of Ukraine was established in Donetsk in 1998 led by Bragin’s brother and aligned with the Party of Regions, but it was disbanded in 2011 due to inactivity.
 64. The photograph has been published in many publications and a copy can be viewed at <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/chornovol/5106584eed6da/>. Slawomir Matuszak writes that “Links between Akhmetov and Bragin were documented in the operational evidence

- of the Ministry of Internal Affairs” and he provides a link to a video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA29BDRfCEA>. Cited from Slawomir Matuszak, *The Oligarchic Democracy: The Influence of Business Groups on Ukrainian Politics*, 42 (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, October 16, 2012), 88. <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2012-10-16/oligarchic-democracy-influence-business-groups-ukrainian-politics>.
65. <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2013/03/21/6986155/>. These included Party of Regions deputies Nurulislam Arkallayev, Yuriy Ivanyushchenko, Elbrus Tedeyev, and Yuriy Chertkov.
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 67. “Ukraine: IUD’s Taruta on Regions, Elections, and Gas Deals,” U.S. Embassy Kyiv, September 13, 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/09/07KYIV2286.html#>
 68. From 2002 to 2014, Ukraine’s prosecutor-generals were Party of Regions deputies or from Donetsk: Svyatoslav Piskun, Hennadiy Vasylyev, Oleksandr Medvedko, and Viktor Pshonka.
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 70. Taras Kuzio, “Yushchenko Afraid to Show His Face,” *Kyiv Post*, March 14, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/yushchenko-afraid-to-show-his-face-339290.html>.
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 74. “On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of May 25, 2012 ‘On steps towards strengthening steps in the struggle against terrorism in Ukraine.’” Ukrainian Security and Defense Council Decree 388/2012. <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/14822.html>.
 75. “On information and explanatory measures in the fight against terrorism,” Cabinet of Ministers Resolution, September 12, 2012. <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/newspnd>. During the 2004 elections, NGOs were accused of “extremism” and “terrorism” and this tactic resurfaced in summer 2013 with accusations against the Femen gender movement, whose offices were raided in a search for “weapons and explosives” (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2013/08/27/6996736/>). Taras Kuzio, “Ukrainian Officials Increasingly Denounce Opposition as ‘Extremists’ and ‘Terrorists,’” *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 1, 96 (September 30, 2004) and “Ukrainian Authorities Target Student and Youth Election-Monitoring Groups,” *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 1, 104 (October 13, 2004). [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=26923#.Uhyh8BB0ySo](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=26923#.Uhyh8BB0ySo) and [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=26981#Uhyh8BB0ySo](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=26981#Uhyh8BB0ySo).
 76. <http://partyofregions.ua/news/5306776bf620d2320c00000c>.
 77. Party of Regions statement, February 23, 2014. <http://partyofregions.ua/en/news/5309df9f620d2f70b000031>.
 78. http://zn.ua/POLITICS/frakciyu-partii-regionov-pokinuli-esche-dva-deputata-143022_.html.
 79. The seven candidates included Dobkin, Tsaryov, Boyko, Natalia Korolevska (who dropped out), former First Deputy Prosecutor-General Renat Kuzmin, Tihipko, and Valeriy Konovalyuk. The other three candidates included KPU leader Symonenko, Socialist Party leading member and disgraced former Interior Minister Vasyly Tsushko, and Jewish-Ukrainian oligarch Vadym Rabinovich. <http://www.cvkc.gov.ua/pls/vp2014/WP001>.
 80. <http://static.partyofregions.ua/uploads/presentation.pdf>.
 81. Tsaryov offered to head the separatists (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/04/11/7022153/>). Akhmetov has ties with Donetsk People’s Republic Prime Minister Aleksandr Zakharchenko (Kazansky Denys, “The Comic Wars of Rinat Akhmetov,” *The Ukrainian Week*, August 19, 2014. <http://ukrainianweek.com/Society/117206> and Harriet Salem, “Ukraine’s Oligarchs: A Who’s Who Guide,” *Vice News*, October 13, 2014. <https://news.vice.com/article/ukraines-oligarchs-a-whos-who-guide>). Separatist leader Pavel Gabarev told a Russian newspaper they had received funding from Akhmetov, which he denied. Tetyana Chornovol (then head of the government’s Anti-Corruption Bureau), accused Ivanyushchenko of funding the separatists. “Terorysty Donbasu (poimeno),” *Ukrayinska Pravda blog*, April 22, 2014. <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/chornovol/5356b7e3e741d/>.
 82. Taras Kuzio, “Yanukovich Awaits a Third Term or a Third Sentence,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9, 25 (February 6, 2012). [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=38977#Uhu1yRB0ySo](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38977#Uhu1yRB0ySo).
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