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UKRAINE AFTER MAIDAN

Revisiting Domestic and Regional Security

Western Leverage, Russia's Resistance and the Breakdown of the Yanukovych Regime

My contribution seeks to assess Western and Russian influence on the collapse of Viktor Yanukovych's regime. Drawing on the works of Levitsky and Way and Tolstrup, the chapter explains why during the 2014 crisis Yanukovych was able to withstand Western and domestic pressure much longer than Leonid Kuchma did in 2004, and why he was eventually toppled. I argue that Yanukovych's ability to prolong his stay in power was circumscribed by three specific factors: his concentration of power, Russian backing and miscalculated Western threats to impose sanctions. His downfall, however, was ultimately determined from within the state. This chapter contributes to the theory of hybrid regimes by extending the concept of linkage and leverage to non-democracies; it also offers an empirical measure of Russian anti-democratic influence on Ukraine.

Introduction

Ukraine's 2013/2014 crisis is dissimilar to any other crisis in post-independence Ukrainian history. Unlike in 2004, the 2014 crisis was not resolved through compromise and has grown into a revolution. Being under Western, Russian and domestic pressure, Ukraine's former president Victor Yanukovych had long struggled to keep power, but finally lost it. But why was Yanukovych in 2014 able to withstand these pressures for the first three months of the crisis, unlike Leonid Kuchma in 2004, and why did he finally fall? What was his personal role, and what role did external actors play in this process? In other words, how did the interplay of structural and agency-based factors contribute to the regime's prolonged survival and eventual downfall?

While much has been written about the international confrontation over Ukraine both before and after the 2014 revolution (e.g., Wilson 2014; Menon & Rumer 2015; Charap &

Colton 2017; Götz 2018), much less attention has been paid to the actual amount of leverage the West and Russia possessed in relation to Yanukovich's Ukraine. Both the regime's capacity to withstand this pressure for 90 days of crisis (from 22 November 2013 to 22 February 2014) and its sudden collapse need to be properly accounted for.

This chapter draws on the theory of hybrid regime dynamics developed by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2010). Levitsky and Way advanced an overly structuralist argument in explaining why some regimes democratized while others did not. Way, for instance, has been criticized (Bunce & Wolchic 2009) for neglecting the role of agency in explaining regime outcomes. Another caveat is the role of so-called "black knights" – states capable of thwarting democratizing efforts. The authors only mention this, but they do not discuss it. An interesting attempt to further develop the theory is Jakob Tolstrup's concept of "negative external actor" (2009). Although Tolstrup applies this concept to compare Western and Russian influence on Ukraine (2014), he does not seek to measure it.

Consequently, this chapter aims to contribute to these discussions in three ways. First, by focusing on domestic and international actors, it provides a context for the central theme of this volume – Ukraine's security. Inter alia, it shows how a failure of all involved to resolve the internal crisis peacefully brought about the largest international crisis since the collapse of Yugoslavia. Second, it tests Levitsky and Way's theory of linkage and leverage by applying it to the case of Yanukovich's Ukraine. Specifically, it extends the integral part of the theory – the concepts of linkage and leverage – to non-democracies to compare Ukraine's ties both to the West and Russia. And third, it offers a single measure for the above-mentioned concepts. (Although this is a very approximate measure, a basis is provided for developing it in a more nuanced way.)

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents Levitsky and Way's concepts of linkage, leverage and organizational power and Tolstrup's concept of "negative external

actor.” The second section applies them to assess both Western and Russian influence on Yanukovich’s government in the period from 2010 to 2013. The third section summarizes these findings and demonstrates why the theory was not able to predict the outcome. Instead, it introduces agency–based factors (Yanukovich’s strategic mistakes made under pressure from Russia) to explain why he finally lost power.

Western versus Russian Leverage

Until now the discussion about the reasons for the breakdown and survival of hybrid regimes has not provided definitive answers (Geddes 1999; Gandhi & Przeworski 2007). While agency–centered theories offer insights into past events (Bunce & Wolchik 2011), structural theories seek to predict them. One such account was offered by Levitsky and Way (2010), who built a theory of hybrid regime dynamics by focusing on three variables: the density of ties to the West (linkage), the scope and cohesion of the state and governing party structures (organizational power), and the state’s vulnerability to Western democratizing pressure (leverage). Analyzing these factors across 35 states between 1990–2008, they found that democratization was more likely where linkage to the West was extensive, as in Eastern Europe or the Americas during the post-Cold War period. High linkage pushed autocrats to abandon power instead of keeping it by any means. In contrast, where linkage was low, as in the post-Soviet states, Western democratizing pressure was weaker. In these countries regime outcomes were primarily driven by the organizational power of incumbents. Where the state and governing party were well organized, incumbents were able to overcome opposition and retain power. Meanwhile, where the state and governing party were weak, the survival of the regime was threatened. When the organizational power of a regime was insufficient to prevent elite defection or crack down on protest, it was vulnerable to even weak opposition challenges. In such countries the third factor, incumbents’ vulnerability to Western leverage, was often decisive.

This, however, can be constrained by “black knights” – counter-hegemonic powers whose political and economic potential help to blunt democratizing pressure. Where considerable antidemocratic leverage took place (as in the case of Russian influence upon Belarus), even weak regimes survived. Conversely, where Western leverage was high, such regimes were more likely to fall. The same has happened in Ukraine and Georgia, where “defective democracies” emerged in the wake of the Rose and the Orange revolutions. However, due to the lack of strong connections to the West, new leaders usually resorted to old practices and with the West acting inconsistently, nascent democracies were not able to consolidate. The matrix in table 1 presents regime outcomes resulting from the interaction of Western leverage and organizational power.

Table 1. Explaining regime outcomes

	High leverage	Low leverage
Strong power	Unstable authoritarianism	Stable authoritarianism
Weak power	Regime change (not always democratization)	Regime survives

Adapted from Levitsky & Way (2010)

These three factors are important, but whether or not hybrid regimes survive is influenced by economic, historical and institutional factors as well. That is why some regime outcomes differed from those predicted by the theory, as was the case with “post-orange” Ukraine (Levitsky & Way 2010, 214, 234). Although in 2005–2010 Ukraine was rated a “free” country by Freedom House, democracy was not consolidated under Victor Yushchenko, Ukraine’s democratization being superficial and subject to internal conflicts, such as those between Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko (Harasymiw 2007). Moreover, rent-seeking behavior among Ukrainian elites (Puglisi 2003) prevented them from institutionalizing the rules of the democratic game. This allowed Yushchenko’s successor to quickly expand his authority and

establish control over the legislature and judiciary. Indicative of this, just a year after Yanukovych gained power Freedom House expressed concern over the curtailing of democracy in Ukraine (2011). This trend only accelerated in the coming years, which were marked by such landmark events as the politically motivated trial and imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko (from August 5, 2011 to February 22, 2014), the passage of a package of anti-protest laws (in January 2014), and the killing of more than one hundred protesters in Kyiv in February 2014. Why did the democratically elected president of Ukraine allow this to happen? While many of his decisions require criminal investigation, the role of the “black knight” – meaning Russia – in precipitating these crises deserves closer scrutiny. One such attempt was Jakob Tolstrup’s introduction of the concept of a “negative external actor” (2009; 2014). Tolstrup (2009) advanced a list of 18 indicators to assess the impact of a “negative external actor” on a targeted state, but he did not measure it. However, by quantifying Ukraine’s linkage to the West and to Russia as of 2013, as well as Western versus Russian leverage on Ukraine and Ukraine’s organizational power, we can empirically test Levitsky and Way’s theory and construct a single measure for the above-mentioned concepts. This has the potential to provide much broader insights into the interplay of the external and internal factors that led to the collapse of Yanukovych’s regime.

Measuring Linkage

In Levitsky and Way’s theory linkage refers to the density of the economic, social and communication ties of the country in question to the West (meaning the EU and US). Intergovernmental ties are also subsumed under this rubric. High linkage would point to better chances for democratization. In order to test this theory (i.e., to explain Yanukovych’s prolonged survival and rapid downfall), I apply the same methodology that Levitsky and Way (2010, 374–375) utilized. Specifically, I measure each dimension on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest) based on Ukraine’s ranking relative to all non-Western countries in the

world. These scores will then be summed into a composite score and the result recalibrated on a scale from 0 to 1. Points will be given according to the place occupied in the ranking. From 1 to 15 – 5 points, from 16 to 31 – 4 points, from 32 to 47 – 4 points, from 48 to 63 – 3 points, from 64 to 79 – 2 points, and 80 and above – 1 point.

After estimating the linkage score for Ukraine as of 2013 (the last year for which data are available), I compare it with the score obtained by Levitsky and Way for the period 1990 to 2008. The change in these scores should reveal predictable changes in the dependent variable, namely whether the regime survives or is replaced. Given the actual result, namely the ouster of Yanukovych from power, we can see whether their theory is able to predict this outcome.

Economic ties are measured by the extent of Ukraine's trade with the EU countries (European Commission 2013). Communication ties are measured by the share of the Ukrainian population that uses the Internet and by international voice traffic (commensurate domestic traffic was not taken into consideration as there has been a steady reduction in the number of landline users over the course of the last decade, which has paralleled the expansion of alternative channels of communication [UBR 2012]). As of 2012 Ukraine ranked 68th in the world by Internet users (International Telecommunication Union 2013), and as of 2003 it ranked 36th in international voice traffic (Nation Master 2005). Social ties, meanwhile, are measured by looking at the number of Ukrainians living or working in the West (estimated at between 3 – 3.5 million, or 7–7.2% of the population) (International Organization for Migration 2011). Trade ties are assessed at 4 points, communication ties at 3 points and social ties at 2 points.

Intergovernmental ties (measured by the potential for membership in the EU) are assessed at 2 points (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means the country has little prospect of joining, while 5 means the country is a candidate state). Ukraine is still not on the list of “potential EU members,” as Yanukovych did not sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) and Ukraine does not yet fit the political and economic criteria required to join the EU.

However, on this measure it scores 2 points, as Ukraine shares a border with four EU countries and is covered under the European Neighborhood Policy. These are the “pros” that most of the post-Soviet, as well as some Balkan and most non-European countries, do not possess. After recalibrating the composite score to a scale from 0 to 1, Ukraine’s final score was 0.55, which corresponds to a medium level of linkage as defined by Levitsky and Way. The scores are summarized in table 2.

Table 2. Dynamics of linkage*

Linkage (density of ties)	1990/2008	2012/2013
Economic ties	-	4 points
Communication ties	-	3 points
Social ties	-	2 points
Intergovernmental ties	-	2 points
Recalibrated score (0-1)	0.31 (Low)	0.55 (Medium)

* Linkage scores for 1990–2008 were calculated by Levitsky and Way (2010); scores for 2012–2013 were calculated by the author.

Although the value of the linkage score increased in 2013, Ukraine did not cross the threshold of high linkage states (0.69–0.97). This might happen, however, once Ukraine succeeds in terminating the war in the Donbas, demonstrates progress with reforms, and utilizes in full the AA, ratified by the EU in July 2017. Higher linkage, according to the theory, suggests that Ukraine has a chance to get back on the democratization track.

Measuring Organizational Power

Organizational power refers to the state’s coercive capacity and the strength of the ruling party. Both dimensions are measured by the scope and cohesion of the state and the party. According to Levitsky and Way, “scope refers to the effective reach of the state’s coercive apparatus” (2010, 58) or what other authors call its “infrastructural power” (Slayter & Fenner 2011). This is the extent and the quality of the “internal security sector” that includes the army, police, presidential guards, the security service and their

special units, and other coercive agencies (e.g., the financial police or tax inspectorate).

Meanwhile, “cohesion refers to the level of compliance within the state apparatus” (Levitsky & Way 2010, 58). For compliance to be effective subordinates must follow their superiors’ commands. Similarly, the scope of the party “refers to the size of the party infrastructure, or the degree to which it penetrates the national territory and society” (Levitsky & Way 2010, 64). Cohesion demonstrates the incumbent’s ability to secure the cooperation of partisan allies within the government, the legislature and at the local and/or regional levels. Cohesion is greater when it is rooted in “nonmaterial ties” such as a common ethnic origin, belonging to a common social group or a history of shared struggle. Scores for party scope and cohesion and state scope and cohesion (low = 0; medium = 1; high = 2) are summed by the authors into a single composite score (0–8). Scores between 6 and 8 represent high organizational power, 5–medium high, 4–medium, 3– medium low, and between 0 and 2–low. The scores for organizational power are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Dynamics of organizational power*

Organizational Power	1990/2008	2012/2013
State Scope	High (2 points)	High (2 points)
State Cohesion	Low (0 point)	Medium (1 point)
Party scope	Low(0 points)	High (2 points)
Party cohesion	Low (0 points)	Medium (1 points)
State discretionary control over economy	None	None
Total	Low (2 points)	High (6 points)

*Organizational power scores for 1990–2008 were calculated by Levitsky & Way (2010); scores for 2012–2013 were calculated by the author.

The organizational power of Ukraine’s regime has grown from low in the 1990s and 2000s to high in 2012/2013. This is a result of the concentration of power and the growth of the *party of power*. After Yanukovich was elected president, he managed to change the

constitution so that he had the same power as Leonid Kuchma had before the “Orange Revolution,” and then he subsequently expanded it even further. The Index of Presidential Authority, which was developed by Johannsen and Nørgaard (2003) and is measured on a scale from 0–100%, registered presidential authority in Ukraine at 46.9% during the period 2005–2010, rising to 52.7% during the period 2010–2014. This growth signifies a shift from “divided presidentialism” to “executive presidentialism.”¹ Such a “blitzkrieg” in the concentration of presidential power was possible due to the devolution of constitutionalism in Ukraine. During the three years of Yanukovych’s rule, Ukraine went from a semi-presidential system to super-presidential system of government (Matsiyevsky 2016, 74–75).

The size of Ukraine’s coercive agencies (its Security Service numbered 33,500 officers, the Ministry of Internal Affairs 357,000 employees [and its 13 special subunits 12–13,000], and the tax inspectorate 55,000 employees) strongly indicates that the state’s coercive power remained high in the period 2010–2013. Moreover, expenditures to maintain this apparatus were growing steadily; for example, beginning in 2010 the Ministry of Internal Affairs received approximately 1 billion additional hryvnias in funding per year, with funding increasing from 13.1 billion in 2010 to 16 billion hryvnias in 2013 (Burlakova 2013). The interference of these coercive agencies in public affairs has been emphasized by Freedom House (2012). However, despite the large size of Ukraine’s coercive apparatus and its Soviet style of management, a lack of incentivization and rampant corruption rendered these agencies unable to coerce effectively. Moreover, frequent changes in their leadership suggest that the President was unsure about the loyalty of his subordinates. Nonetheless, these agencies were used to intimidate opposition leaders, as well as to harass small- to medium-sized businesses, public figures and the media and, eventually, to confront the Euromaidan protesters in Kyiv and other cities (Gazeta UA 2013; Den’ 2013).

1 If the index falls in the range between 60 and 100%, it indicates the maximum concentration of presidential authority (see Matsiyevsky 2016, 67–75).

Although it was extensive in scope, there is little evidence that the state apparatus enjoyed high cohesion. There was no shared ideology or other non-material ties of unity present. Nor was a common ethnic origin or being from the Donbas region (the Russian-speaking portion of Ukraine where Yanukovych's power base was located) a defining factor, as neither ethnicity nor being a Russian speaker constituted the dominant cleavage in the country (*Economist* 2013). The sole element of unity was the fear of being excluded from the extensive network of patronage.

On the other hand, there was no evidence of disobedience among the personnel of the state apparatus. Specifically, there was no wage debt that would point at the low cohesion within the state apparatus. Instead, the number of personnel employed by the state's coercive agencies was growing, as were their wages (TVI 2013). Thus, I estimate the cohesion of the state to be at a "medium" level.

Meanwhile, the scope of Yanukovych's party of power, the Party of Regions (PoR), can be considered high. The governing party was the largest party in Ukraine, with its official membership exceeding 1.4 million (Didushok 2011). During the 2012 parliamentary elections the PoR won more than 50% of electoral districts (115 out of 225), which was an indication of its vast mobilizational capacity. The extensive use of "administrative resources" by the party (local administrations were frequently headed by the leaders of PoR's regional branches, allowing state budgetary funds to be distributed to political clients) (Gazeta.ua 2012) revealed the extent to which it had effectively penetrated society. However, the PoR did not enjoy nonmaterial ties of unity (such as a shared ideology, a shared ethnicity or a history of shared struggle). Some sort of regional loyalty can only be attributed to the "old party bosses" – people like Nikolai Azarov, Volodymyr Rybak or Aleksandr Efremov. Of the nine "Family"² representatives who penetrated the political council (*politsoviet*) of the PoR in September 2013, only five were from the Donetsk region (*Zerkalo Nedeli* 2013b).

2 The "Family" consisted of Victor Yanulovych's closest allies, and was headed by his elder son Oleksandr.

This is a sign that regional loyalty was subverted by patronage and rent-seeking interests. On the other hand, PoR, like most of the Ukrainian parties, was a typical clientelistic party that attracted rent-seekers of all sorts. Having a large number of members in all regions of the state, the party could not maintain the unity of its cadres. As jailed PoR member Ihor Markov has publicly confessed, “the whole faction of the Party of Regions in parliament is controlled exclusively by fear. Someone is threatened of being deprived of his mandate, someone is threatened—by being deprived of business, to others—some other instruments of pressure are applied” (*Zerkalo Nedeli*, 2013a).

The most important indicator of cohesion within a party is whether it is in power or not. Until its sudden collapse in the end of February 2014, PoR controlled all the executive hierarchy. Although the representatives of the “Family” were not the members of the ruling party, they had the greatest influence in the Cabinet of Ministers (*Podrobnosti* 2012). Even before the split of the faction, PoR did not have a clear majority (it had 208 seats out of the 226 needed to form a majority), and even with the help of the Communists, it could not utilize its coalition status to make decisions effectively. There were several individual defections, precipitated by the first violence against the protesters (on November 30, 2013), but the massive “exodus” took place only after the last attempt to disperse the Maidan failed. In just three days (between February 19–21) the PoR legislative faction lost 78 members, dropping from 208 to 127 (Matsiyevsky 2016, 442–443). Considering all of the above, I classify the cohesion of Yanukovych’s party of power as “medium.” However, due to the concentration of power in the hands of the incumbent, the growth of the security apparatus and the effective penetration of the governing party into society, I consider the regime’s organizational power to be “high” (in keeping with Levitsky and Way’s terminology).

Measuring Leverage

According to Levitsky and Way, Western leverage is measurable through “governments’ vulnerability to external democratizing pressure” (2010, 40–41). The extent to which such leverage is exerted is rooted in the strength of the country’s economy and the presence of counter-powers, whose support may function to blunt democratizing pressure.

Leverage is measured along three dimensions: the size of the economy, oil production and possession, and the capacity to use nuclear weapons. Leverage is considered to be low when the country’s total GDP exceeds \$100 billion USD (1995 figures). Ukraine is neither a major nor a secondary oil producer. Likewise, it does not have nuclear weapons, and until the beginning of the 2013 crisis it was not a direct beneficiary of “black knight” assistance. Thus the only relevant dimension in the case of Ukraine is the size of its economy.

Ukraine’s GDP in 2012 was \$180 billion USD (\$120 billion USD according to the 1995 exchange rate) (IMF, World Economic and Financial Surveys 2012), which exceeds the limit of \$100 billion USD. This makes Ukraine a large economy. However, Ukraine’s economy to a great extent depends on global commodity prices, particularly for steel and chemicals. These two sectors generate about 30% of its GDP and provide for almost 40% of all monetary income to the country (Gerasymowa 2011). The real growth of GDP in 2013 was 0%, which signaled the country was on the verge of a new recession. Furthermore, by the end of 2013 Ukraine’s external debt amounted to 78.8% of its GDP (Macro Economy Meter 2013), while exchange reserves decreased to \$20 billion USD (Trading Economics, Ukraine Foreign Exchange Reserves 2003–2017).

In addition, the imposition of personal sanctions on Ukraine’s elite became a possibility once protests began in late November 2013, making the threat of their imposition a tool of conditional pressure on the country’s ruling group. This tool, however, was not used as it might have been. Personalized sanctions, for instance, might have tipped the balance in favor of the West and precipitated

Yanukovych's downfall. For this lever to be effective—to make Yanukovych abstain from violence and potentially abdicate—at least three conditions would have been necessary. First, personalized sanctions would have had to have been applied when the regime was at its most vulnerable (*timing*). Second, these sanctions would have had to have been extensive, targeting not only the president but also the ruling “Family.” The threat of extending the West’s “black list” to include Ukrainian oligarchs might also have pushed them to defect to the opposition, which, in turn, could have undermined the unity of the regime (*scope*). Three, any imposed sanctions would have had to have been coherent, reflecting a unified position on the part of the United States and EU (*cohesion*).

The first country to introduce personal sanctions was Canada, which did so on January 28, 2014 (Government of Canada 2014). The EU announced personalized sanctions only on February 20, 2014, and they only came into force on March 6, 2014, more than two weeks after the massive bloodshed in Kyiv. Meanwhile, the US announced sanctions against Yanukovych, Viktor Medvedchuk (a Ukrainian politician and oligarch) and eight Russian officials only on March 17, 2014 (Weigel 2014). These late sanctions hardly affected Yanukovych, as he had already fled to Moscow.

The scope of the sanctions was also limited. The Initial EU list targeted 18 individuals of Yanukovych's inner circle (Council Decision 2014/119/CFSP). Coherence was also undermined as strategic calculations entered the game, affecting not only unified coordination between the US and EU, but also within the EU itself. The Baltic states, Poland and some new EU members were concerned about the geopolitical implications of Ukraine slipping into Russia's orbit, while “old” EU members, at least publicly, were more concerned with values. This is what Levitsky and Way have called “competing foreign policy objectives” (2010, 41).

But why have both the United States and the EU abstained for so long from sanctioning corrupt Ukrainian officials? Apparently, Brussels and Washington had their reasons. While in the EU the “positive incentive” and conditionality were a dominant line of

thinking, for the Obama administration Ukraine barely registered on the radar. Both, however, sought to resolve the crisis through compromise, as they had done in 2004.

In the US there were two views regarding sanctions – policy experts and leaders of international organizations such as David Kramer (president of Freedom House) and Steven Pifer (who served as the US ambassador to Ukraine between 1997 and 2000) championed sanctions (UNIAN 2012). In contrast, government officials instead promoted “engagement,” seeing it as preferable to isolating Ukraine, the idea being that maintaining dialogue could prevent Ukraine from slipping into authoritarianism and, subsequently into Russia’s orbit.

Both the US and the EU understood that even targeted sanctions were a risky bet, and that they could have easily brought about the opposite effect of what was desired. Furthermore, the EU’s decision to impose sanctions was not so much complicated by procedural difficulties as by political calculations. The EU’s “Open Door” policy towards Ukraine relied on using positive incentives rather than exerting overt pressure. The reactions of the US and EU to the Ukrainian crisis suggest that it was not the sanctions themselves, but rather the threat of imposing them, that was viewed as the West’s means of applying “soft pressure” on Ukrainian authorities (Matsiyevsky 2013, 155–56). However, a late and inconsistent response by the West rendered this tool ineffective.

If personalized sanctions (such as a ban on entering the US and the EU, the freezing of bank accounts and launching of financial investigations) had been applied right after the first acts of violence occurred on the Maidan (November 30, 2013), or at least after the Ukrainian parliament passed a package of “dictatorship laws,”³ they might have encouraged elite defections, preventing the escalation of violence and, potentially, Putin’s aggression against Ukraine. In short, if sanctions had been timely, coherent and extensive, they could have prevented the biggest international

3 A package of ten anti-protest laws, pushed through the parliament by the PoR on January 16, 2014.

crisis in Europe since the breakup of Yugoslavia. As Michael McFaul asserts, a credible threat of applying sanctions against Kuchma in 2004 prevented him from using violence against protesters and opened the road to the peaceful transfer of power (2007, 71-72). If the policy of engagement reasonably prevailed until the failed Vilnius summit, why did the West retain it for almost 90 days during the crisis? There are at least three factors that can shed some light on this issue.

First, as the crisis deteriorated, the West exhibited no consistent policy towards either Ukraine or Russia. In the EU the dominant belief was that the AA would be signed, as EU officials saw the fate of AA as primarily if not solely dependent on their own will. This overconfidence was reflected in not having a “plan B” regarding the AA. Second, the competing foreign policy objectives of the EU and the US made it difficult to arrive at reasonable strategies to confront Putin. Sanctioning Yanukovich after the failed Vilnius summit would not provide the means to deter Putin in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the West preferred to react as if Yanukovich was a sovereign player. An inability (or unwillingness) to envision Putin’s aggressive intentions resulted in Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Third, as the EU and US both had “strategic” concerns that sanctions could provoke a spiral of internal violence, they became preoccupied with decreasing Ukraine’s “systemic vulnerability” (Doner, Ritchie & Slater 2005). Sanctions could have potentially weakened the organizational power of the regime, but could also have increased anti-governmental protest, leading to internal conflict and the breakup of the state. As sanctions imposed on undemocratic leaders have rarely had a curative effect (Escribà-Folch 2012), the West preferred an evolutionary scenario to a chaotic and unpredictable “people’s revolution.”

Likewise, the reaction of the former Ukrainian president proved that the threat of imposing sanctions was not credible. The West expected Yanukovich to act rationally, that is, to abandon power after holding of early elections (the central issue of the compromise reached on February 21, 2014) and thereby secure his

physical and political survival until then. The President, however, relying on a different logic, made several grave mistakes and finally lost power. The West likewise made at least three strategic mistakes: hesitating to sanction Yanukovych and his close allies; not deterring Putin from interfering in Ukraine; and intervening too late in the crisis. The EU's diplomatic mission to "channel" the crisis through compromise was also futile for several reasons. First, EU officials missed the moment when the crisis turned into a revolution,⁴ as they were still trying to negotiate a deal. Revolution, however, could hardly be tempered by compromise. Second, the EU miscalculated the players. While EU diplomats routinely sought to bring "the ruling elite" and "the opposition" to the table, the real player was not the opposition, but the people protesting in Kyiv and throughout Ukraine. This explains the third mistake – the EU's unacceptable offer⁵. For protesters, agreeing to such a compromise was unacceptable, as it would mean they would have to forgive Yanukovych for more than one hundred deaths and tolerate him as a president for another year.

To sum up, two observations may be made. First, poor economic performance and the capacity to apply sanctions increased Ukraine's vulnerability to the Western pressure. Though the nominal leverage was low, the above factors suggest that potential leverage was at a "medium" level.

Second, though potential Western leverage was actually greater than might have been expected, it was not applied in a timely, extensive and coherent manner. The late and inconsistent response to Ukraine's crisis made sanctions an incredible threat.

Table 4 summarizes the values of linkage, leverage and organizational power prior to the 2013 crisis in comparison to 1990–2008 (as measured by Levitsky & Way).

4 Unlike in 2004, in 2014 the author detected 7 out of 11 analytically defined attributes of a revolution, allowing the latter to be defined as a political, but not a social, revolution (Matsiyevsky 2016. 444-449).

5 An agreement on February 21, 2014, facilitated by the EU representatives – Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Radoslaw Sikorski and Eric Fournier – assumed that Yanukovych would stay in power until at least the end of 2014 in exchange for limiting his prerogatives by restoring the constitution of 2004.

Table 4. The dynamics of linkage, leverage and organizational power scores

Dimension	1990-2008	2012-2013
Linkage	0.31 (Low)	0.55 (Medium)
Economic ties	-	4
Social ties	-	2
Communication ties	-	3
Governmental ties	-	2
Leverage	High	Low/Medium
GDP (in billion USD).	137	180
Organizational Power	2 (Low)	6 (High)
State scope	2	2
State cohesion	0	1
Party scope	0	2
Party cohesion	0	1

How do these empirical findings relate to the theory? The theory predicts that under conditions of low/medium linkage and leverage but high organizational power, the regime will be unstable, but will survive. In 2014 as in 2004 the actual outcome – regime change – differed from the predicted outcome. Why is this? With regard to 2004, Levitsky and Way admit that this outcome was rooted more in domestic processes – limited organizational power, elite defection and a strong opposition – rather than external pressure (2010, 213–214, 219). In contrast to Leonid Kuchma, however, Victor Yanukovych managed to stay in power for the first three months of the crisis before finally fleeing to Russia (Wilson 2014, chap. 4; Aslund 2015, 101–109; Dragneva & Wolczuk 2015, 83–99). I argue that Yanukovych’s prolonged survival can be explained by three factors: the growth of Ukraine’s organizational power, the West’s miscalculated approach to sanctions, and Russia’s “black knight” support. Two of these three factors have been discussed above. Now I turn to the role of Russia to describe how Putin’s policy towards Yanukovych prolonged his stay in power, but ultimately brought about massive anti-regime mobilization, resulting in his eventual toppling.

Turning to the Other Side: Russia's Influence on Ukraine

Clearly, Russia has interests in Ukraine. But how did these interests translate into an ability to influence Ukraine's political process? In terms of Levitsky and Way, what was the role of the "black knight" in affecting the fate of Yanukovich's regime? More precisely, what was the extent of Ukraine's linkage to Russia and what leverage did Russia exercise over Ukraine under Yanukovich? Considering Yanukovich's impulsive decision to not sign the AA in Vilnius (Wood, Pomeranz, Wayne Merry & Trudolyubov 2015, 6-63), the presence of Russian "consultants" (including Putin's aide Vladislav Surkov) in Ukraine for the entirety of the crisis (Wilson 2014, 108-110), the alleged involvement of Russian snipers in the Maidan shootings (Wilson 2014, 89), and Yanukovich's appeal to Putin to send troops to Crimea (Lederer & Spielmann 2014) after he had fled to Russia all indicate that Putin was able to capitalize on Ukraine's linkage to Russia and turn it into leverage (Hughes & Sasse 2016). On the other hand, this leverage was only capable of influencing Ukraine's corrupt elites and part of the population in Crimea and the Donbas; it proved largely ineffective in spreading the "Russian spring" further across Ukraine.

Levitsky and Way acknowledge the role of "black knights" in supporting authoritarian leaders, but they do not develop it theoretically. By extending the concept of linkage and leverage to encompass non-democracies, we may gain valuable insights not only into Yanukovich's extended struggle for power (and his downfall), but also the broader dynamics of post-Soviet hybrid regimes and what may be termed "autocracy promotion."

Let us take a cursory glance at Ukraine's linkage to Russia. Like the linkage to the West, it may be measured along four dimensions: economic ties, social ties, intergovernmental ties, and communication ties. As previously, each dimension below is assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, with the resulting scores summed and recalibrated into a range from 0 to 1. However, while Levitsky and Way ascribe points based on a country's position relative to all

non-Western countries in the world, I ascribe points based on Ukraine's ranking relative to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

As of 2013, Ukraine's economic ties to Russia were greater than just one component (trade) would reflect. Prior to independence, Ukraine was an integral part of the Soviet military-industrial complex. And while Ukraine's share of trade with Russia declined gradually after independence, in 2013 Russia was still its largest trade partner (trade with Russia that year amounted to 38.2 billion USD), while Ukraine was the fourth largest trading partner of Russia (for which trade with Ukraine accounted for 35.5 billion USD). Moreover, Ukraine's negative balance-in-trade with Russia in 2013 was 1.9 billion USD, which made Ukraine's economy highly dependent on the Russian market (Embassy of Ukraine in Russian Federation, n.d.).

As with economic ties, social ties to Russia are greater than just the number of Ukrainians living or working in Russia. However, just along this dimension, Ukrainians in Russia make up the largest single diaspora group. The official Russian census in 2010 reported that 1.9 million ethnic Ukrainians were living in Russia, representing over 1.4% of the total population and making Ukrainians the third most numerous ethnic group in the country after ethnic Russians and Tatars (2010 National Census in Russia). Similarly, until the annexation of Crimea, Russians comprised the largest ethnic minority in Ukraine at 8.3 million individuals, or 17.3% of the overall population of Ukraine (Russians in Ukraine, n.d.). And while the Russian ethnic minority is decreasing in Ukraine, Russia remains the largest external job market for Ukrainians (Malinovska 2014).

With regard to intergovernmental ties, Ukraine was neither a full member of the CIS nor a member of any other economic, political or security organization together with Russia. Russia's effort to make Ukraine a member of the Customs Union (CU), along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, failed largely due to the Euromaidan protest and Yanukovich's escape to Russia.

Finally, communication ties between Ukraine and Russia are not less extensive than economic or social ties, although this dimension is significantly harder to measure. As of 2009 Ukraine had the largest share (32%) of the voice traffic going out of Russia. (Zolotova 2010). Consequently, economic, social and communication ties are assessed at 5 points, and governmental ties at 2 points. After recalibrating their sum to fit a range from 0 to 1, the obtained linkage score was 0.85. Although this is a very approximate measure, Ukraine's linkage to Russia under Yanukovych appeared to be higher than its linkage to the West (0.53).

Strong linkage to Russia explains not just Ukraine's impasse with reforms and democratization; it also explains why for the greater number of elites and many ordinary Ukrainians Russia remained a model state. Little wonder then that even after three years of warfare in the Donbas, some 40% of Ukrainians retain a positive image of Russia (UNIAN 2017). This extensive spider-web of ties to Russia, which extend beyond linguistic, religious and cultural affinities, allowed Putin to turn linkage into strong leverage. But how comparable was Russia's leverage to the West's leverage when it came to Yanukovych's Ukraine? To apply Levitsky and Way's concept of leverage to Russia is problematic, as it was designed to measure Western democratizing pressure. However, one potential way to measure undemocratic leverage is to apply Tolstrup's concept of "negative external actor." In his work, Tolstrup sought to develop an analytical framework to explain Russia's policies of "managed stability" and "managed instability" on neighboring states. By summarizing previous works he selected 18 levers and combined them into three groupings: military, political and economic.⁶ Tolstrup, however, does not offer

6 The 18 levers are: military interventions; military threats; military bases abroad; military support to secessionist republics; peacekeeping forces; military alliances dominated by Russia; support for anti-Western groups; opposition to pro-Western groups; multilateral organizations dominated by Russia; support for secessionist republics; control of the CIS Election Monitoring Organization; Russian state TV; the Russian diaspora; trade embargos; subsidies; Russia's energy monopoly; credits; and debt payments (Tolstrup 2009, 929).

any quantitative measure for assessing these levers, which makes it difficult to apply them in a comparative case study. As the first step in developing a quantitative measure for the concept of “negative external actor,” I ascribe 1 point to each lever that is present/active at the time of Yanukovich’s presidency. The resultant scores will be summed into a composite score (range: 0–18). Scores from 1 to 6 would represent low leverage, while 7 to 13 would represent medium leverage, and 14 to 18 would represent high leverage. Acknowledging that not all 18 levers are of the same weight (and that there exist some other potential levers, such as informal ties, bribes and various forms of blackmail), let me call the former “nominal” leverage. This would allow for making a comparison (albeit very rough) between Russian and Western leverage in the case of Yanukovich’s Ukraine.

Of the six military levers (military interventions, military threats, military bases abroad, military support to secessionist republics, peacekeeping forces, and military alliances dominated by Russia) only “military bases abroad” was empirically relevant.⁷ Of seven political levers, meanwhile, five were visibly present: support for anti-Western groups; multilateral organizations dominated by Russia; control of the CIS Election Monitoring Organization; Russian state TV; and the Russian diaspora. Of the five economic levers, all five were relevant: energy monopoly; trade embargoes; subsidies; credits; and debt payments. For the purpose of this study, let us assume that all levers have an equal weight. Having noted the presence of 11 out of a total of 18 possible levers, we can see that Russian leverage falls in the category of “medium” leverage (range: 7 to 13), suggesting that the West’s leverage (medium) was roughly matched by that of Russia.

As mentioned above, this measure reflects what may be termed “potential” or “nominal leverage.” As in the case of the West, Russian leverage was actually higher than represented by the calculated score, as the latter does not include vast informal levers,

7 Though “military threat” (to annex Crimea) was mentioned in some media outlets, until we have documented proof it was used by Russian authorities to pressure Yanukovich, we cannot include it as a relevant lever.

such as corruption and political or military blackmail. Tolstrup's list also does not include cultural levers (e.g., religion, language) and the identity politics that Russia has actively pursued in Ukraine.

Three conclusions ensue. First, even given the limited number of quantitatively observable levers, we can see why Russia was able to prevent Yanukovich from signing the AA, to annex Crimea and to launch a hybrid war in Ukraine. What Russia could not affect, however, was the reaction of ordinary Ukrainians. Initially mobilized to protest the government's decision to put the signing of the AA on hold, the protesters became radicalized, and the protests assumed a life of their own after the government decided to violently suppress the Maidan. Second, as Russia's leverage over Yanukovich was matched by that of the West, Russia's policy of "managed stability" (i.e., support for Yanukovich) prolonged his stay in power, but could not secure his political survival. After the collapse of Yanukovich's government, Putin swiftly changed his role in Ukraine from one of stabilizing to destabilizing the new government. Third, the answer to the original question (why Yanukovich managed to survive three months of political crisis) can be attributed in part to the Russia's "black knight" role. As this study shows, if the linkage of the country in question [Ukraine] is higher to the "black knight" state [Russia] than to the West—democratization is not likely to occur. And, if Russia's leverage on the country in question [Ukraine] is equal to/or higher than that of the West, Russia's policies of managed stability and instability can be more effective than Western democratizing efforts. By extending the theory to non-democracies and by offering a single measure for Western versus Russian leverage on Ukraine, this study invites the development of more sophisticated techniques for measuring "black knight" leverage vis-à-vis the West. Finally, Levitsky and Way's theory underestimates the role of agency, namely the role leaders, elites and the masses play in explaining regime dynamics. The futility of focusing only on one set of variables is another reason why the theory was unable to predict the outcome of the Ukrainian case. This suggests that it would be worthwhile to develop more

integrative accounts of the dynamics of hybrid regimes in post-communist Eurasia (and beyond).

Agency-Based Factors Affecting the Fall of Yanukovich

The factors discussed above help explain why Yanukovich appeared to be immune to both Western pressure and “people power” for almost three months of the crisis. Until the third violent attempt to disperse the Maidan failed (it occurred between February 18–21, 2014) he managed to prevent any significant defections from the three key pillars of his regime: the Party of Regions’ parliamentary faction, the “oligarchs,” and the security sector. With the West imposing no sanctions and Putin at his side, Yanukovich virtually neutralized structural democratizing pressure. This indicates that Yanukovich could have likely survived until the next presidential elections, whenever they were to be held.

The fall of Yanukovich was triggered by several agency-based factors, most importantly by his personal strategic blunders, which were apparently made under pressure from Moscow.⁸ On the one hand Russia provided political support (by publicly denouncing the protests), economic assistance (by providing 3 billion USD out of a promised 15 billion USD bailout and a 30% discount on natural gas), and security (by sending Putin’s aide Vladislav Surkov and a group of Russian agents to Kyiv) to support Yanukovich. On the other hand, the growing pressure from Moscow ultimately turned out to be counterproductive. The Kremlin expected state-led violence would disperse the Maidan. The effect, however, was just the opposite: each attempt to crack down on the protesters increased their organizational capacity, numbers, and persistence.

8 The decision to use force against the protesters has been attributed to pressure from the Russian government and its political consultants in Ukraine (chief among them Vladislav Surkov). The latter were allegedly composed of two groups of Russian special agents charged with coordinating the “antiterrorist operation” in Kyiv (Wilson 2014, 89).

State-led violence also provoked the radicalization of the protesters. As the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) reported, 69.9 % of the total number of protesters came onto the Maidan in direct reaction to the violence exhibited against the peaceful protest movement on November 30, 2013 (KIIS 2013). A failure to predict the outcome of these harsh decisions, apparently forced on him by the Kremlin, was Yanukovich's greatest strategic mistake. It precipitated the collapse of his regime in five ways.

First, after several failed attempts to violently disperse the Maidan, the regime lost its monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Despite reshuffling the command of the armed forces, there was a constant danger that the officers would not obey orders. After one unsuccessful attempt to mobilize the armed forces against protesters, the military stayed out of the conflict.⁹ Second, after the Ukrainian parliament adopted a package of anti-protest laws ("dictatorship laws") on January 16, 2014, 10 western and central regions effectively slipped out of the government's control (as evinced by the occupation of regional administrative buildings). The ensuing "multiple sovereignty," severe political crisis, massive mobilization, and the subsequent split of elites ensured that the crisis would turn into a political revolution.

Third, the power vertical collapsed after the third failed attempt to violently disperse the Maidan. In the wake of massive bloodshed in Kyiv, the Party of Regions faction in parliament crumbled in just three days. However, the first signs of a coming crisis had already appeared two months earlier, when after the first instance of violence in Kyiv two prominent party figures—Inna Bohoslovska and Davyd Zhvania—publicly quit the party. Then on February 19, 2014 seven MPs defected, and later that same day another eleven followed. And on February 20, 2014 the newly appointed head of the Kyiv City State Administration, Viktor Makeyenko, expressed his support for the residents of Kyiv and

⁹ On February 19, 2014 the acting Minister of Defense, Pavel Lebedev, acknowledged sending airborne troops from Dnipropetrovsk to Kyiv. However, due to an accident en route the convoy of 25 trucks did not reach its destination, instead returning to the base (Miakshykov 2014).

quit the PoR. Shortly afterwards more than twenty deputies of the PoR simply left the country. As a result, the Party of Regions faction in parliament virtually ceased to exist. In just three days it had shrunk by almost 40%, going from 205 to 127 deputies (Verhovna rada of Ukraine, n.d.).

Fourth, the collapse of the regime was also precipitated by its defeat in the “information war.” Live broadcasting from Kyiv’s central square (the Maidan) became a focal point for sustaining mass mobilization. For the entire period of crisis, there were at least three national TV stations (Channel 5, News 24, and Espresso TV) and three online TV channels (Hromads’ke [Public TV], U-stream, and Spil’no TV), in addition to dozens of online streamers, who were permanently broadcasting from the Maidan. Even though they were occasionally disrupted, mobile and internet connections allowed protestors to maintain communication, both between themselves and the outside world.

Finally, although European mediators reached a deal with Yanukovich and the opposition on February 21, 2014, the people on the Maidan refused to accept it after witnessing massive bloodshed. It was the inability of all the parties involved to take sufficient account of the dynamics on the ground that turned this crisis into a political revolution.

Conclusions

This study focused on international competition over Ukraine prior to the 2014 revolution. It combined structural- and agency-based variables to explain why Victor Yanukovich was able to withstand both Western pressure and “people power” for some three months prior to finally abandoning his post and fleeing Ukraine. In particular, it set out to re-conceptualize Levitsky and Way’s concepts of linkage and leverage by extending them to Russia, while testing the theory by applying it to the specific case of Ukraine.

The empirical findings yield four conclusions. First, while structural factors (like the growth of the regime’s organizational

power, Russian leverage over Ukraine and the West's inconsistent approach to sanctions) extended Yanukovych's stay in power, it was agency-based factors (first and foremost his flawed decision to crack down on protesters) that most contributed to his downfall. The latter are not taken into account by Levitsky and Way's theory, which explains why the actual outcome (regime change) differs from the predicted outcome (regime survival).

Second, this study argues that the capacity to apply sanctions on Yanukovych's regime could have made Western leverage more effective. Despite Yanukovych's concentration of presidential power and Russia's support for him, the West could have facilitated the regime transition and prevented the outbreak of political violence if sanctions had been applied not after, but before, Yanukovych actually lost power. Late and inconsistent sanctions affirmed that the West expected Yanukovych to stay in power until the next elections. This expectation proved a mistake, as it sought to repeat the 2004 compromise solution to the crisis. But unlike in 2004, the 2014 crisis spiraled out of control and grew into a political revolution, which led Russia to launch a counter-revolution. The latter now poses not only an existential threat to Ukraine, but also represents a danger to the entire postwar international order.

Third, nominal Russian leverage over Ukraine appeared to be greater than that of the West. This explains why Putin was able to disrupt the signing of Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU in Vilnius. While the EU attempted to resolve the crisis through compromise, Russia sought to keep Ukraine in its orbit by pushing Yanukovych toward a violent, confrontational scenario. As soon as this plan failed, Putin changed his policy of "managed stability" to "managed instability" in Ukraine.

Finally, although Western and Russian leverage both weakened Yanukovych's regime, its downfall was brought about from within the state. External pressure, especially from the Russian side, had considerable impact on elites, but it hardly affected the majority of Ukrainians. "People power" was stronger than either the West's inconsistent support or Russia's efforts at counter-balancing it. The issue was that the unwanted Ukrainian

revolution caught the West by surprise. Having no consistent policy either towards Ukraine or Russia, the West could not prevent Putin from annexing Crimea and igniting a hybrid war in the east of Ukraine. An inability to learn hard lessons from the Ukrainian crisis (and take a unified position to prevent further aggressive steps by Russia) could ultimately become very costly for the West.

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