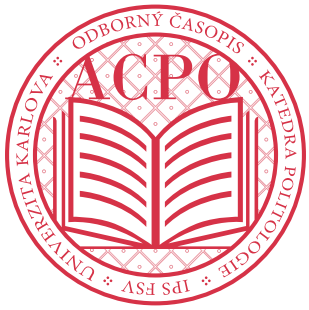
ACTA POLITOLOGICA

www.acpo.cz

RECENZOVANÝ ČASOPIS | PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

2017 | Vol. 9 | No. 1 | ISSN 1803–8220



LYUBCHENKO, Olena (2017). The Ukrainian Crisis: A Case of 'New Orientalism'. *Acta Politologica*. Vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 45-60.

Tento článek podléhá autorským právům, kopírování a využívání jeho obsahu bez řádného odkazování na něj je považováno za plagiátorství a podléhá sankcím dle platné legislativy.

This article is protected by copyright. Copying and use of its content and presenting it as original research without proper citation is plagiarism, which is subject to legal sanctions.

Katedra politologie Institutu politologických studií
Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy

Department of Political Science, Institute of Political Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

ACTA POLITOLOGICA

The Ukrainian Crisis: A Case of 'New Orientalism'

Olena Lyubchenko[1]

Abstract:

During the 2013 Ukrainian Euromaidan uprising and in its aftermath, many politicians, journalists, as well as academics diagnosed the Ukraine Crisis to be a manifestation of middle-class aspirations for a total social, political, and economic integration with the EU. Although correct in part, this account overlooks the heterogeneity of the Euromaidan participants and the role played by radical right and nationalist groups. This paper examines the problematic coalition between liberalism and the radical right factions in the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine. More specifically, it suggests the liberal project that is taking place in Ukraine depends on a specific form of the friend-enemy distinction of 'New Orientalism'. By doing so, this paper presents a reading of Euromaidan through Carl Schmitt's critique of liberalism. The discussion concludes with suggesting a political economy analysis of separatism in the Donbass region.

Key words: *Euromaidan; Ukraine crisis; liberalism; liberal democracy; far right; Donbass; new orientalism; Carl Schmitt; political economy*

Introduction

The ongoing Ukraine crisis raises political issues that we thought were long buried in history. The post-communist state model is on trial once again. During the 2013 Ukrainian Euromaidan uprising and in its aftermath, many politicians, journalists, as well as academics[2] diagnosed the Ukraine Crisis to be a manifestation of middle-class aspirations for a total social, political and economic integration with the European Union (EU). In a way, the story being told is of the completion of the bourgeois revolution that started in 1991 in the midst of the Soviet Union breakdown and was carried through with the 2004 Orange Revolution. This popular narrative follows the basic trajectory of the modernization theory: capitalism leads to democracy.[3] Many academics and commentators claimed that with the end of the Cold War era and its competing worldviews, the spread of liberal democracy would create political homogenization and eliminate social conflict.[4] The current Ukraine Crisis appears to be an example of the latter, transitioning Ukraine into a truly European liberal democratic and capitalist society. However, without much theoretical and historical analysis, the terms 'capitalism', 'democracy', 'liberalism' and 'nationalism' have been employed

[1] Olena Lyubchenko is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Political Science, York University, Toronto. Contact: olenaly@yorku.ca

[2] E.g.: Wilson 2014; Riabchuk 2013; Snyder 2015; Gershman 2015.

[3] E.g.: Rostow 1956; Lipset 1959; Almond and Coleman 1960; Smelser 1964; Huntington 1968; Inglehart and Welzel 2005.

[4] E.g.: Fukuyama 2011; Hoffmann 1987; Friedman 2007.

interchangeably over the past two years, and the struggle for 'liberal democracy' continues to be framed as the 'Ukrainian nationalist project'.

The task of this paper is to demystify and complicate the mainstream narrative of Euromaidan as an organic democratic development. In the context of the Ukraine Crisis, the notion of 'democracy' was used rather vaguely. It tended to be associated with the notions of 'freedom' and 'equality' of the 'Ukrainian people'; however, none of these terms was properly defined. This paper intends to interrogate the assumed unproblematic convergence between the social forces of liberal democracy[5] and those of radical nationalism in the strife for Ukraine's inclusion into the EU. I suggest that the alliance between the pro-European liberal forces and the radical right was enabled by the definition of a common enemy — the external, as well as internal, Russian hegemony. The European homogenization process involves (1) an ideological distancing from Russia and (2) a declaration of an internal enemy, via defining a section of Ukraine's society as backward people. This has materialized in the ongoing civil war.[6]

Following Carl Schmitt's critique of liberalism in *The Concept of the Political* (1976), i.e. that liberalism merely appears to nullify the friend-enemy distinction, I argue that the political has emerged in Ukraine. The current liberal project in Ukraine relies on a specific form of the friend-enemy distinction, namely that of 'New Orientalism': a relational construction of 'transnational bourgeois identity', counterposed to an internal 'Oriental Other'. In this struggle, Ukrainian nationhood has been defined politically and economically as essentially 'European' and liberal-democratic; whereas, the 'Other', the Donbass separatists in the Eastern-most regions, have been defined in negative terms, as distinctly Russian, Soviet, Asiatic, backward, corrupt, and, ultimately, Oriental.

The focus of this paper is one-sided because my motivation is to deconstruct what has gained global currency as a popular example of grassroots democracy by problematizing the 'democracy' and the far right's seemingly comfortable participation in its development. I am interested in discursive, ideological, but also starkly material use of Euromaidan and so attempt to highlight the ultimate contradictions that it is premised upon. Thus, this paper covers a lot of ground – from theories of democratization and transitions from authoritarianism, to critiques of liberalism in political theory, to the knowledge production analysis of the current nationalist discourse, and in connection, a political economy analysis of separatism in Donbass.

This paper's objective does not imply the embrace of the official Russian state politics. Such an adoption of the friend-enemy terms, albeit from the other side, would be counterintuitive to the main theme of this paper. In fact, I hold that "*in trying to reify ethnic boundaries by imputing negative political meanings to ethnic and linguistic identities, the Ukrainian far right – ironically – shares the same goal as the Russian government*" (Giuliano 2015: 520). For a more complete picture of the history and the causes of the Ukraine Crisis,

[5] In this essay, I use 'liberal' and 'neoliberal' interchangeably. I justify this use historically; I take it to be that 'liberal democracy' as a system was first introduced in Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union in its already 'neoliberal' form through various 'shock therapy' economic, social, political policies. This, some could point out, limits my analysis because the differentiation between liberalism and neoliberalism might lead to different results in terms of their construction of an 'Other' and possible partnership with the radical right.

[6] Although possible, to fully account for the 'cause' of the civil war would mean to go over a long history of Ukrainian nation-building, which is not the purpose of this paper. I merely propose to understand the discourse of friend-enemy that has emerged and is becoming mainstream in Ukraine today.

a similar analysis ought to be undertaken with regards to the 'Russian' side and its specific constructions of Russian nationalism.

The Ukraine Crisis and Its Discourse

On November 21, 2013, then Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych refused to sign a free trade agreement with the EU that would signal a step towards Ukraine's eventual EU membership, and instead agreed to a $15 billion partnership offer from Russia that signified closer cooperation with Ukraine's neighbour and potential membership in Russia's Eurasian Customs Union. This act came to be interpreted as anti-democratic and corrupt by the majority of Western media sources and Ukrainian citizens, who saw Yanukovych as advancing a Russian political and economic agenda over the national interests of Ukraine (The Economist 2013a: 59-60; Greene 2014; Balmforth 2013). It is instructive to look at how Yanukovych's decision, and the Ukraine Crisis more broadly, has been framed thus far by the mainstream media and scholarship in very pro-European terms that naturalize Western liberal-democratic values. Particularly instructive is (a) the definition and use of 'democracy' and (b) the way in which the involvement of the far right among pro-Western forces has been defined as democratic, downplayed, and/or suppressed.

By rejecting the trade agreement with the EU, the editors of The Economist wrote, Yanukovych "*appeared to hand victory to Vladimir Putin in a struggle with the EU over Ukraine's geopolitical orientation*" (The Economist 2013b: 13). Corruption was defined as 'anti-Western', and Ukrainian national interests as the interests of the EU. On November 30, 2013, The Economist wrote that the protests were about a desire for Western values and governance:

> *"*[…] *standing in temperatures of minus 13C, ready to be beaten up, the people on Maidan were defending something far greater than an association agreement with the EU, which was the initial cause. They were standing in the way of a police state, defending fundamental European values and defying the post-Soviet order imposed by Russia."* (2013a: 59)

Ukraine's political path was framed as a choice between two opposites – towards future progress with the EU or back to the corrupt Soviet past with Russia. The outburst of Ukrainian nationalism was represented as the desire to live in Europe under liberal-democratic values.

The general response in academia, albeit limited due to the recent nature of the events, has been similar and can be divided into two commonplace views. In the first, scholars downplayed or obscured the role of the radical right at Euromaidan. For example, Olga Onuch approached the Euromaidan phenomenon along the lines of modernization theory. She asked: how can we account for such a popular uprising within the context of struggling democracies everywhere that suffer from low voter turnout and general popular apathy (2014:44)? For Onuch, the popular appeal of Western-style democracy serves as evidence that the liberal subject has developed in Ukraine, despite the Ukrainian state lagging behind. Therefore, the average protester was a liberal subject who revolted against the current state-form in order to achieve the predominance of liberal-democratic European

values and economic prosperity (Onuch 2014: 48). Meanwhile, the radical-right protester was portrayed as an irrelevant minority (Onuch 2014:46-47). Similarly, Mykola Riabchuk states that what mobilized the protesters was:

> *"their hope for a 'normal life in a normal country' which the agreement had envisaged and come to symbolize. Now, as the government had stolen that hope,* [people] *feel deceived – it's not just about this single incident, but about their whole lives, the whole development of the country stuck for 22 years in a grey zone between post-Soviet autocracies to the East and increasingly democratizing and prosperous neighbours to the West."* (2013)

Here, the West-East dichotomy mirrors the difference between normal and abnormal government and society. Where does the radical right fit into this story of good versus bad?

In *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*, Andrew Wilson (2014) gave Maidan a '*truly democratic*' progressive legitimacy by placing it alongside the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring (Ishchenko 2014: 154). While Wilson could not outright deny the presence of radical nationalism, he represented its forces at the Maidan as marginal, the argument being that since these far-right parties did not win in the subsequent parliamentary elections, they do not represent a credible threat or significant political faction (Wilson 2014: 86-88, 171-172). In fact, he wrote that "*a torch-lit march through Kiev in honour of the World War Two Ukrainian Nationalist hero Stepan Bandera on 1 January was such a stupid idea, it had to be a provocation*" (Wilson 2014:86). A Kyiv-based sociologist, Volodymyr Ishchenko, has come to criticize Wilson's (and others') view as near-sighted, pointing to the determining role of political groups such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Svoboda Party[7], and Praviy Sektor (the Right Sector) in the movement (Ishchenko 2014: 13).

The second general response of academia to the Ukraine Crisis accepts in theory and declares in practice the benefits of the partnership between the radical-right and liberal forces in Ukraine but does so uncritically. Jennifer J. Carroll argues that the beauty of Maidan lies precisely in its unifying nature: the mobilization of elements across class divisions and ideological affiliations – both on the left and the right – through the idea of a nation striving for a European, liberal-democratic future (2014: 9-10, 12). She argues that academics must put semantics aside when analysing the radical-right forces. Instead of analysing the content of radical-right banners (Svoboda and Right Sector), they must remark on the fact that their members were fighting for the same cause as the rest of Ukrainians, i.e. "*wanting things to be Ukrainian*" (Carroll 2014: 12). While obviously condemning radical-right ideals in themselves, Carroll does not shy away from suggesting that they were useful for the Euromaidan cause in general by radicalizing popular grievances through the idea of the nation. In other words, we can forgive their slogans so long as they support a European Ukraine against Eastern separatism and Russian encroachment. Carroll notes that:

> *"many dedicated members of these so-called 'radical groups took up arms in cooperation with so-called 'ordinary' Ukrainians against a common enemy*

[7] The literal translation of 'svoboda' ('свобода') is 'freedom'.

> *that threatened the very dignity and livelihood of the Ukrainian nation* […] *numerous protestors told me that radical groups '*[did] *the necessary work of radicalizing ordinary Ukrainians against their oppressors' and '*[made] *the nation visible, so that people know what they are fighting for'"* (2014: 12).

In a sense, Carroll tries to sanitize the radical right by fitting it into the bourgeois revolution interpretation of Ukrainian Euromaidan. Thus, her analysis is not too far off from that of Onuch, Riabchuk, and Wilson. However, what Carroll makes explicit is that in the case of Ukraine the project of the radical right and the project of European liberal-democratic integration are not contradictory.

Democratization

Before turning to the analysis of the far right, I want to address the simple view of 'Euromaidan' as a project of completion of the 'bourgeois revolution', or a full transition to liberal democracy that began with the fall of the Soviet Union through the 2004 Orange Revolution. It is necessary to pose the question, what is the relationship between the transition to capitalism and the development of democracy? The debates within democratization and democratic transitions scholarship that are often informed by modernization theory have focused on: (a) the ways in which transitions occur and democracies are consolidated, but also (b) around the similarities and differences between the various 'waves' of democratization – in Southern Europe, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Indeed, Euromaidan itself has been presented as another 'wave' of democratic transition in Ukraine.

Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl (1994) maintain that in the post-communist states democratization has, in part, been a strategic politico-economic project with an international dimension. They write:

> *"the regime changes in eastern Europe triggered a major collapse in intraregional trade and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Into this vacuum moved an extraordinary variety of western advisors and promoters binational and multilateral. To a far greater extent than elsewhere, these external actors have imposed political 'conditionality' upon the process of consolidation, linking specific rewards explicitly to the meeting of specific norms or even to the selection of specific institutions'."* (Schmitter, Karl 1994: 182)

Echoing Schmitter and Karl, Valerie Bunce (1995) notes that in Eastern Europe democratic transition implied a number of inter-related processes of restructuring, both economic and political: the role of the state with regards to its citizens as well as the international system, liberalization of economy and foundations of a capitalist society, re-definition of citizenship via creation of a new capitalist class system (1995: 120-121). Thus, democratization in the post-communist era was not just a political regime change but one based on certain economic preconditions. This view is remnant of the modernization theory model, which suggests a causal relationship between capitalism and democracy.

Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986), Gerardo Munck (2011) as well as Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) assume a normative value of minimalist democracy. They differentiate between liberalization and democratization in a manner where economic liberalization can occur without democratization, whereas democratization usually follows, entails, and depends on economic liberalization, but on a wider, more political scale. Their conception of democracy is not very different from Robert Dahl's "polyarchy", which refers to an electoral, representative democratic regime only, following the development of a competitive market-oriented economy, not a "true democracy", which perhaps is more of an ideal than an achievable reality (Dahl 1989:251).

This analysis shows that 'democracy', and its 'freedom' and 'equality' is a relative concept. Because the protests at the Maidan have been interpreted in terms of Ukrainian nation's fight for freedom from totalitarianism, for equality, and for liberal democratic, European values, it is the task of political scientists to demystify those very ideas. A 'transition' to a democracy defined as polyarchy might result in establishment of valuable political institutions, but it might not answer all the political and socio-economic demands of the people who protested at the Maidan and in Eastern Ukraine.

Far Right

The role of the far right was central to the victory of the Maidan and since then has become infiltrated into the new Ukrainian government in Kyiv and its policy-making. The far right was most active in the setting up of self-defence units, as well as attacking and occupying government and administrative buildings, police headquarters and getting access to armament. As Ishchenko clarifies, Maidan participants were not middle-class proper (which, if our criterion is based on consumption patterns, makes up about 10-15 % of the Ukrainian population) but individuals with nothing to lose, largely, "*a movement of dispossessed workers*" (2014: 11, 19). Peculiarly, their grievances were expressed not in terms of social and economic demands but acute nationalism; aligning with ultra-nationalist and radical-right movements. In this sense, as Ishchenko points out, Svoboda became what we may call a popular, democratic, grassroots party of the Maidan (Ishchenko 2014: 12).

Svoboda, originally founded after the fall of the Soviet Union, was officially entitled the Social-National Party of Ukraine (Ishchenko 2014: 14). After the three-month struggle at the Maidan, Svoboda emerged not only as one of the official opposition parties with direct influence over policy-making but also as a party whose members serve as ministers in government. Currently,

> *"Svoboda holds a larger chunk of its nation's ministries (nearly a quarter, including the prized defense portfolio) than any other far-right party on the* [European] *continent. Ukraine's deputy prime minister represents Svoboda (the smaller, even more extreme 'Right Sector' coalition fills the deputy National Security Council chair), as does the prosecutor general and the deputy chair of parliament."* (Foxall and Kesslermarch 2014)

To be more explicit, Andriy Parubiy was appointed the new secretary of Ukraine's security council; also a co-founder of Svoboda, his deputy, Dmytro Yarosh, is the leader of the Right Sector, and the highest-ranking right-wing extremist is Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Sych, who is also a member of Svoboda (Hughes 2014). Moreover, Western recognition of Svoboda as a legitimate political player has been common in the aftermath of the Euromaidan:

> *"In December, shortly after protests began against Ukraine's pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovych, U.S. Senator John McCain shared a platform and an embrace with Svoboda chief Tyahnybok at a mass rally in Kiev, assuring demonstrators, 'The free world is with you; America is with you.' In February of this year, France and Germany oversaw a peace deal between Tyahnybok, two other opposition leaders, and Yanukovych (though soon after, protests forced Yanukovych to flee to Russia). And in early March, the U.S. State Department published a debunking of Putin's 'False Claims About Ukraine,' assuring Americans that Ukraine's far-right 'are not represented' in parliament."* (Foxall, Kesslermarch 2014)

In terms of the concrete influence of the far right over government policy, the magazine *Foreign Policy* reports that "*one of* [Svoboda's] *chief demands – that all government business be done in Ukrainian – was passed into law, instantaneously marginalizing the one-third of Ukraine's citizens (and 60 % of Crimeans) who speak Russian. Then for good measure, the party launched a push to repeal a law against 'excusing the crimes of fascism'*" (Foxall and Kesslermarch 2014).

Regardless, the radical right's greatest success is not its participation in the government but rather that its ideological discourse has come to dominate the conversation around Ukraine's present and future. This discursive triumph has influenced a general right-wing shift in Ukrainian politics as well as in mainstream and academic thinking, to which Carroll's piece itself serves as a prime example. For instance, the ideological symbols and slogans such as "Glory to the Nation! Death to the Enemies!" and "Glory to Ukraine! To heroes, glory!" which before the outbreak were traditionally expressed exclusively in ultra-nationalist circles, were transformed into common, quite mainstream parlance (Ishchenko 2014:15; Luhn 2014). On the Memorial Day of the Victims of Repression, the leader of Svoboda, Tyahnybok, proclaimed (in a rough English translation):

> *"For us, the nationalists, it is not enough that Parliament because of certain political situation, of necessity, finally adopted anti-communist laws. By the way, from the first days of its foundation 'Svoboda' constantly stressed the need to adopt similar legislation. But now it is absolutely essential these laws take an effect in Ukrainian state. It is also important that psychology of all Ukrainians was turned to Ukrainian manner and every Ukrainian looked at the world in the light of Ukrainian's view but not through bolshevik-communist-Kremlin glasses. Because, unfortunately, nowadays anti-Ukrainian and Moscow's influence is largely maintained in*

> *Ukraine. It is important to remember our true heroes, honour their memory, especially in such places like this Memorial complex."* (Svoboda 2015)

At the same time, on its official website, Svoboda is also described as:

> *"a modern political party, which is open to cooperation. In our international activities we are looking for those supporting traditional European values, human rights, the rights of nations, respect their sovereignty and oppose imperialism; those partners, whose vision concerning Ukraine, European and global challenges has something in common with our own point of view."* (Svoboda 2015)

There appears to be a contradiction of tone between the first and the second statement. With regard to the second statement, we sense the apprehension about the risk of being perceived as a far-right party, and hence, the desire to establish itself as liberal and European and truly legitimate. Whereas, in the first statement, which reveals an organic, naturalistic view of a nation, Tyahnybok places the idea of the 'nation' above liberal-democratic values, such as individual freedom of choice and association.

On the one hand, the official economic rhetoric of the opposition parties, including Svoboda, has been one of striving for a bourgeois identity, for a 'European', globalized Ukraine with open markets, and adoption of the EU's current neoliberal austerity policies. The new neoliberal government "*accepted all the credit conditions imposed by the IMF – increasing public utility tariffs, freezing wages, cutting a whole range of benefits* […] *that would put the burden of the economic crisis on the poor*" (Ishchenko 2014: 22). On the other hand, the underlying ideology of the economic regime has become the radical-right nationalism: freedom for the Ukrainian nation and the right of self-determination of the 'Ukrainian' people, based on their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and historical distinction from the 'Russian' nation. The Solidarity Bloc of Petro Poroshenko, the majority party in government, relies for its legitimacy on the Maidan revolution as a victory against both internal and external aggression against Ukraine, against what it calls the "*enslavement*" of the Ukrainian people (The Solidarity Bloc 2014). Here, enslavement is invoked selectively and excised from socio-economic conditions. What are we to make of this contradictory marriage between liberalism and nationalism? Between, on the one hand liberal universalism and, on the other, Ukrainian national exclusivity?

One explanation for this coalition has to do with tactics: the (neo)liberal economic and political Ukrainian elite needed to align themselves with ultra nationalism. The radical-right forces were critical in representing popular sentiments. As Ishchenko points out, "*part of the reason why the intelligentsia didn't take a distance from the far-right may have been that they knew they were objectively weak, and thought that dissociating themselves from Svoboda and Right Sector would mean being sidelined from the movement altogether; the alliance was too important to them*" (2014: 16). Thus, the politicians and the intelligentsia adopted radical nationalism as the only successful way to argue for a European Ukraine. An explanation of the local interests should be situated within the global context. Such an account can highlight that the political and economic agenda of Ukraine is partly enforced by powerful

external interests, where Ukrainian elites potentially represent global rather than national interests and use nationalist rhetoric to legitimate a global economic and political agenda.[8]

In line with this interpretation, others suggest that far-right nationalisms in post-Soviet states often perform a compensatory function for those who are the economic 'losers' of the transition to a neoliberal capitalist order. They argue, "*it is the 'transition losers'* […] *who experience a sense of insecurity, are frustrated with the democratic experience, and seek refuge in nationalist values*" (Häusermann and Kriesi 2011). This analysis suggests that in Ukraine, neoliberalism – in its global and local form – relies on the far right's nationalist discourse for legitimation in lieu of substantial economic security. I return to the political economic analysis after a reading of Carl Schmitt's critique of liberalism that helps to conceptualize events in Ukraine.

Schmitt: The Political

In *The Concept of the Political,* Schmitt characterizes liberalism as a movement for universal pacifism, which negates the political-fundamental status of man – the friend-enemy distinction and a natural inclination to war. There are two dimensions to his critique of liberalism. First, Schmitt shows that the liberal project aims to universalize the human condition, deny and neutralize the political. Liberal democracy, Schmitt writes, appears as "*a completely pacified globe,* […] *without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics*" (Schmitt 1976: 35). The liberal-bourgeois individual:

> "*rests in the possession of his private property, and under the justification of his possessive individualism he acts as an individual against the totality. He is a man who finds his compensation for his political nullity in the fruits of freedom and enrichment and above all in the total security of its use. Consequently, he wants to be spared bravery and exempted from the danger of a violent death.*" (Schmitt 1976: 62-63)

Secondly, and more importantly, Schmitt unmasks power, or the political enmity from under liberal pacifism. It serves to reproduce his thoughts verbatim:

> *"the concept of humanity is an especially useful ideological instrument of imperialist expansion, and in its ethical-humanitarian form it is a specific vehicle of economic imperialism* […] *To confiscate the word humanity, to invoke and monopolize such a term probably has certain incalculable effects, such as denying the enemy the quality of being human and declaring him to be an outlaw of humanity; and a war can thereby be driven to the most extreme inhumanity."* (1976: 54)

[8] For a critical account of the history of global capitalism, and specifically the discussion of 'empire by invitation', please see Panitch and Gindin (2012).

Thus, depoliticisation defined as universal humanism is an ideology that covers the true intentions of those who use it for their own (economic or national) advantage. By presenting their values as universally valid human values, the proponents of liberalism first dehumanize their opponents only to then legitimately destroy them as enemies of humanity. For example, in calling the League of Nations an imperialist "alliance" of states, Schmitt argues that international political bodies do not eliminate war. Rather, they legitimize and sanction them against those enemies that could not be incorporated or suppressed (1976: 55-56).

In the next section, I attempt to show how the current liberal project in Ukraine (for now) supports Schmitt's diagnosis. Bringing together a discursive and a political economic analysis, I suggest that the declaration of the 'enemy' in the Ukraine Crisis has taken the form of a 'new Orientalism'.

'New Orientalism' Discourse and Its Critique

The term 'Orientalism' was first coined by Edward Said to describe a process by which Western societies constructed 'Eastern' colonized cultures as backward and primitive, and in doing so named themselves developed, modern, and rational. Anthropologist Michal Buchowski and feminist scholar Sedef Arat-Koc augment Said's analysis to understand a new phenomenon in Eastern Europe where 'Orientalist' thinking is applied internally, to the post-Soviet 'losers' of globalization. By using their framework of 'New Orientalism', I argue that in Ukraine, as part of the process of homogenization with Europe, we see a construction of a new identity. The 'Other' in this context is what Buchowski terms the 'homo-Sovieticus', whose existence occurs within national borders but by definition is seen as anachronistic. Whereas previously all of Eastern Europe in Western eyes appeared "*as 'neither fish, nor fowl', semi-oriental, not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized*," in the process of Western incorporation of Eastern Europe after 1989, there has been "*a restructuring of the perception of social inequalities by the hegemonic liberal ideology*" (Buchowski 2006: 464). Buchowski explains,

> *"the degree to which various countries, authorities, social groups and individuals have embraced the free market and democracy – evaluated by those powerful who set rules of the game – has become a yardstick for classifying different regions, countries and groups as fitting more or less into the category of 'us' i.e. '(post)modern-Western-liberals'."* (2006: 464-465)

No longer geographically defined, those who have not embraced 'Europe' for ideological or socio-economic reasons are deemed irretrievably backward and, virtually, ethnically different. Arguments from essentialised cultural standpoints dismiss and delegitimize any disagreement about political and economic development. Arat-Koc highlights how 'culture' is used to hide political economic issues:

> *"as neoliberal hegemonies exclude theories that demonstrate failure as central and integral to the functioning of capitalism and inevitable, as social, economic, and historical explanations for failure are excluded from*

> *hegemonic discourses, 'culture' (as a reductionist, essentialized, shrunk, caricatured version of what the term could otherwise mean) becomes the 'only' accepted 'explanation' in mainstream discourse."* (2014: 329)

Echoing Schmitt's critique of liberalism, this reveals the very undemocratic nature of the 'liberal-democratic' project in general and in Ukraine, in particular.

In the case of Ukraine, the backward 'Other' is ideologically associated with Russian politics, culture, and language, both inside and outside the nation-state. Due to the history of Western and Eastern imperialism, the ideological but nonetheless real and material border between West and East in Ukraine demarcates people by language, culture, ethnic affiliation and even political ideology, i.e. liberalism in the progressive West and socialism in the backward East. As evident from Tyahnybok's statement above, communism and the working-class movements have been associated with Russian political culture and history, and therefore viewed as a Russian imperial imposition both from within and from without. The oversimplified identification of present-day Russia with the Soviet Union, as well as with communism itself, is ahistorical. First, it obscures the history of Ukraine, as nineteenth-century Ukrainian nationalism was openly leftist, not to mention that it maintained a strong anarchist tradition that was born in central Ukraine under Nestor Makhno (Ischchenko 2014: 16-17). Secondly, that Russian nationality and language, and socialism have become synonymous is wildly inaccurate, since Russia is no longer (and presumably never has been) a socialist state: its economy is now quite obviously structured by capitalist social relations, even if at variance (i.e. the prominent role of 'oligarchs' and patrimonialism) with Western models of capitalism.

Studies of the local population's agency in self-determination movements in the Donbass region have been scarce. In order to dismiss Eastern-Ukrainian concerns as illegitimate, the use of 'New Orientalist' discourse by politicians, academics, and reporters helps present them as irrational and dehumanized compared to the civilized 'ethnic' Western-Ukrainians advocating for proper Western institutions and values. If we look at yet another one of Tiahnybok's statements, we find another demarcation along friend-enemy lines of 'civilized' versus 'uncivilized':

> *"In Donbas, gangs of armed terrorists are shouting separatist slogans and – with the support of the Kremlin – carry out physical destruction of the Ukrainian nation. They are, de facto, beginning an ethnic cleansing – people get killed for saying 'Glory to Ukraine!', for speaking Ukrainian language and/or wearing 'vyshyvankas.'[9] People are kidnapped just because they are Ukrainians. Three of Svoboda's representatives have also been abducted. This mess must stop – the state has a duty to its citizens, thus should eliminate terrorism and guarantee security of the people."* (Svoboda 2015)

[9] 'Vyshyvanka' is a colloquial term for an embroidered peasant blouse in Ukrainian traditional costume. In the aftermath of the Euromaidan, it has been used as a symbol of Ukraine's freedom, worn in the mainstream, and popularized by the fashion industry in Ukraine and in the West.

Evidently, the centre of the focus is not the protesters' practical demands but their 'character' and nationality. In fact, there has been a "*spread of dehumanizing rhetoric against the movement in Eastern Ukraine* […] *after the Odessa massacre on 2 May, when thirty people were burned to death in the Trade Union building,* [and] *some Ukrainian nationalists were exultant*" (Ishchenko 2014: 32). The materiality of the shift of the official discourse to the right is striking.

While ethnic, cultural, and language differences have been employed to explain the politics of separatism in the East, the three are not so easily discernible into separate and sovereign 'Ukrainian' and 'Russian' identities. Elise Giuliano explains,

> *"Cultural boundaries between Russians and Ukrainians are fuzzy and faint, as indicated by the high rate of inter-ethnic marriage there. Russians and Ukrainians share, for the most part, a common religion – Eastern Orthodoxy, or a secularism inherited from the Soviet era; a common language (Russian), very similar languages (Ukrainian and Russian), or a mixture of the two (Surzhyk); and a host of social practices and cultural expectations based on their shared experience as Soviet and post-Soviet citizens* [...] *In general, the porosity of cultural boundaries suggests that ethnic identity by itself provides little information about why many people in the east feel alienated from the Ukrainian state."* (2015: 516-517)

Much evidence indicates that cultural and linguistic essentialism have been constructed by and used in favour of a certain political-economic project. However, the association of language and support for separatism has not been a static one throughout Ukraine's history. For instance, in the Donbass region those citizens who have reported that their national language is Ukrainian still voted for Yanukovych in the 2012 presidential elections (Ibid.). Even after language became politicized in the aftermath of the Maidan by the political elites (via Ukraine's interim government's annulment of language law making Russian an official language of the Ukrainian state that was passed under Yanukovych in 2012), residents of the Donbass region did not see it as the main reason behind separation. Giuliano provides statistical evidence:

> *"In an International Republican Institute (IRI) poll, 74% of respondents in east Ukraine (Donestsk; Dnepropetrovsk; Kharkhiv; Luhansk) answered either 'definitely no' or 'not really' when asked: 'Do you feel that Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine are under pressure or threat because of their language?' A majority of ethnic Russians also answered 'definitely no' (49%) and not really (17%)."* (2015: 518)

Instead, in agreement with both Giuliano and Ishchenko, I propose that it is more useful to understand the alienation experienced by the population in the Donbass region from the new Ukrainian government and Euromaidan in political-economic terms. The Donbass region is the most industrialized and urbanized area of Ukraine. The older Soviet enterprises

in the area – mostly coal industry and metallurgy – were a central production hub in the USSR and after its fall; it produced for Russia as its biggest trading partner (Ishchenko 2014). The local economy and social relations, due to a close geographic proximity, are tied to Russia's. Thus:

> "*in the estimations of ordinary people, joining the Customs Union would maintain trade ties with Russia and other post-Soviet states and therefore preserve jobs and the status quo. A shift in economic orientation toward Europe would bring uncertainty to the region. Such a change, moreover, would affect large numbers of workers since Donetsk and Luhansk are overwhelmingly urban (90% and 10%).*" (Giuliano, 2015: 518-519)

The region opposed Ukraine's EU association out of a practical prediction of losing jobs through privatization or shutting down of national enterprises and industries, which are central to employing the urban population and sustaining their lives. The strategic-economic interests of the Donbass region are dismissed as ideological and cultural, as if Eastern Ukrainians must automatically disagree with EU association and values by virtue of being labelled ethnically 'Russian' by Western Ukrainians.

In connection to the political economic question, Giuliano (2015) emphasizes the political-symbolic alienation of the Donbass residents from the Euromaidan movement and the new Ukrainian government, due to their conception of nationhood in ethnically exclusivist terms. Giuliano explains,

> *"*[…] *some Ukrainian elites articulated an interpretation of Ukrainian history that, put in stark terms, viewed the past through Stalin's crimes such as collectivization which produced the Great Famine of 1932 (the Holomodor). In this view, Ukraine is a victim of the imperialist Soviet Union which perpetrated genocide and destroyed Ukrainian language and culture. More extreme versions of this view celebrate Stepan Bandera and factions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists – a group that fought the Soviets during World War II in part by making common cause with the Nazis. Advocates of these ideas identify post-Soviet Russia and ethnic Russians with the Soviet Union* […] *Their ideology fit in with a strand of ultranationalist discourse that, over the years, had scapegoated ethnic Russians for the country's problems and identified them with the Soviet Union and Russia. After Maidan, Ukraine's interim government did not criticize ultranationalist discourse, but instead appointed a former leader of a neo-fascist party, Andriy Parubiy, to the important post of head of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council* [...] *More dangerously, as the violence heated up, Kiev allowed semi-private paramilitary groups—such as the far right, neo-Nazi Azov Battalion – to fight in east Ukraine."* (2015: 519-520)

In concluding this section, I want to bring together the discursive and the political economic analyses. The very history of Ukraine, its language, and culture has been reinvented in Western, liberal terms. Aside from the evident materiality of the civil war, which reproduces and reflects certain narratives of national ethnicity as well as global political economic interests, Ukraine is a contemporary example of how knowledge production is a political economic issue.

Conclusion

Revealing the discourse around the Ukraine Crisis in terms of a 'New Orientalism' helps explain the relationship between liberalism and nationalism that became 'common sense' at Euromaidan and, currently, in the larger Ukraine Crisis. The modernization school of thought claimed that with the end of the Cold War era of ideology, the spread of capitalist social relations and consequently the transitions to liberal democracy would create political homogenization and render ethnic conflict irrelevant. At a first glance, the current Ukraine Crisis fits this vision as an example of homogenizing political and economic forces at work, transitioning Ukraine into a 'true' liberal democratic capitalist society. It was not the purpose of this paper to deny that Euromaidan is a popular, democratic phenomenon. The purpose of this paper was, first, to interrogate what is meant by 'democracy' – and whether or not its institutionalization will fulfil the demands of protesters and second, to complicate the romanticized story of a fight for liberal, European values in light of the radical right's participation in Euromaidan and advance into the new Ukrainian government. In Ukraine, as part of the process of homogenization with Europe, we see a process of the invention of the Ukrainian nation in ethnic, exclusivist terms, which defines a section of Ukraine's society as a backward 'ethnicity'. This distinction has concretely manifested in the ongoing violent conflict between the Donbass region and Western and Central Ukraine. Following Schmitt's critique of liberalism, I argue that the Ukrainian Crisis reveals how liberalism, in this specific historical and geopolitical context, relies on a certain friend-enemy distinction for the advancement of its supposed universalist project.

As a way of moving beyond the New Orientalist discourse, I suggest that we understand the political-economic reasons for the separatist politics in Eastern Ukraine, which might point in a useful direction of the re-evaluation of the official Ukrainian as well as the general European political, economic, and social policies.

REFERENCES:

ARAT-KOC, Sedef (2014). Rethinking Whiteness, 'Culturalism,' and the Bourgeoisie in the Age of Neoliberalism. In BAKAN, Abigail B.; DUA, Enakshi (eds.). *Theorizing anti-racism: linkages in Marxism and Critical Race theories*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 311-339.

BALMFORTH, Richard (2013). Mass Rallies in Ukraine Against Government U-Turn on EU. *Reuters* [online]. November 24, 2013. [cit. 2016-07-29]. Available at WWW: <http://

uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-eu-idUKBRE9AN0C920131124>.

BUCHOWSKI, Michal (2006). Social Thought & Commentary: The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: from Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother. *Anthropological Quarterly*. Vol. 79, no. 3, pp. 463- 482.

BUNCE, Valerie (1995). Should Transitologists Be Grounded? *Slavic Review*. Vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 111-127.

GREENE, Richard Allen (2014). Ukraine Favours Europe over Russia New CNN Poll Finds. *CNN* [online]. May 14, 2014 [cit. 2016-07-29]. Available at WWW: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/12/world/europe/ukraine-cnn-poll/>.

DAHL, Robert (1989). *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

FOXALL, Andrew; KESSLERMARCH, Oren (2014). Yes, There are Bad Guys in the Ukrainian Parliament. It's Time for a Frank Conversation about Some of the Unsavory Characters in Kiev. *Foreign Policy* [online]. [cit. 2015-12-21]. Available at WWW: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/18/yes-there-are-bad-guys-in-the-ukrainian-government/>.

FRIEDMAN, Thomas (2007). *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

GERSHMAN, Carl (2015). A Fight for Democracy: Why Ukraine Matters. *World Affairs*. Vol. 177, no. 6, pp. 47-56.

GINDIN, Sam; PANITCH, Leo (2012). *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*. New York: Verso.

GIULIANO, Elise (2015). The Social Bases of Support for Self-determination in East Ukraine. *Ethnopolitics*. Vol. 14, no. 5, pp. 513–522.

HÄUSERMANN, Silja; KRIESI, Hanspeter (2011). *What do voters want? Dimensions and configurations in individual-level preferences and party*. Paper prepared for the conference: The Future of Democratic Capitalism [online]. Zurich, Switzerland, June 16-18, 2011 [cit. 2015-12-21]. Available at: <http://www.mwpweb.eu/1/22/resources/publication_954_1.pdf>.

HOFFMANN, Stanley (1987). *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics*. Boulder: Westview Press.

HUGHES, Michael (2014). The Neo-Nazi question in Ukraine. *The Huffington Post* [online]. November 3, 2014 [cit. 2015-12-20]. Available at WWW: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-hughes/the-neo-nazi-question-in_b_4938747.html>.

INGLEHART, Ronald; WELZEL, Christian (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

ISHCHENKO, Volodymyr (2014). Interview: Ukraine's Fractures. *New Left Review*. Vol. 87, May-June 2014, pp. 7-33.

ISHCHENKO, Volodymyr (2015). Maidan Mythologies. *New Left Review*. Vol. 93, May-June 2015, pp. 151-159.

LINZ, Juan J.; STEPAN, Alfred (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

LUHN, Alec (2014). The Ukrainian Nationalism at the Heart of 'Euromaidan'. *The Nation* [online]. January 21, 2014 [cit. 2015-11-29]. Available at WWW: <http://www.thenation.com/article/ukrainian-nationalism-heart-euromaidan/>.

MUNCK, Gerardo L. (2011). Democratic Theory after Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. *Perspectives on Politics*. Vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 333-343.

O'DONNELL, Guillermo; SCHMITTER, Philippe C. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

ONUCH, Olga (2014). The Maidan and Beyond: Who were the protesters? *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 44-51.

PRESS SERVICE OF SVOBODA (2014). *Oleh Pankevych: "Ukrainian nationalism in Svoboda's interpretation" has nothing to do with chauvinism, xenophobia or anti-Semitism*. Svoboda Official Website [online]. March 27, 2014 [cit. 2015-10-10]. Available at WWW: <http://en.svoboda.org.ua/news/comments/00010640/>.

PRESS SERVICE OF SVOBODA (2015). *Oleh Tiahnybok: We are not satisfied only by adoption of the anti-communist laws - it is necessary to ensure its effectiveness in Ukraine*. Svoboda Official Website [online]. May 17, 2015 [cit. 2015-10-10]. Available at WWW: <http://en.svoboda.org.ua/news/events/00013803/>.

RIABCHUK, Mykola (2013). *Maidan & Beyond: Some Preliminary Conclusions*. The Vienna Institute for Human Sciences [online]. December 10, 2013 [cit. 2015-11-15]. Available at WWW: <http://www.iwm.at/read-listen-watch/transit-online/maidan-beyond-some-preliminary-conclusions/>.

SCHMITT, Carl (1976). *The Concept of the Political*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

SCHMITTER, Philippe C.; KARL, Terry L. (1994). The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go? *Slavic Review*. Vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 173-185.

SMELSER, Neil J. (1964). "Towards a Theory of Modernization". In ETZIONI, Amitai; ETZIONI, Eva (eds). *Social Change: Sources, Patterns, and Consequences*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 258-74.

SNYDER, Timothy (2015) Edge of Europe, end of Europe. *The New York Review of Books* [online]. July 21, 2015 [cit. 2015-11-30]. Available at WWW: <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/07/21/ukraine-kharkiv-edge-of-europe/>.

SOLIDARITY BLOC OF PETRO POROSHENKO (2014). *Official Party Program* [online]. August 24, 2014. [cit. 2015-12-15]. Available at WWW: <http://solydarnist.org/?page_id=915>.

THE ECONOMIST (2013a). Ukraine's Protests: The Birth of the Nation? *The Economist*. Vol. 409, no. 8866, pp. 59-60.

THE ECONOMIST (2013b). Ukraine: Day of the Gangster Pygmy. *The Economist*. Vol. 409, no. 8864, pp. 13-14.

WILSON, Andrew (2014). *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*. London: Yale University Press.