

# A b s t r a c t s

## Man without qualities The election of Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine

The election of Volodymyr Zelensky as the new president of Ukraine marks a watershed. Not only the margin of his victory over the incumbent president Petro Poroshenko on 21 April 2019, but also the circumstances in which it occurred, are striking. The newly elected president conducted his campaign almost solely via social media. Content was replaced by “likes”. As a “man without qualities”, Zelensky offered the perfect projection screen for a wide range of voters’ wishes. The main point was that he was a fresh face. At the same time, traditional elements of political culture and institutional peculiarities in Ukraine continue to have an impact. The implications of Zelensky’s presidency for domestic and foreign policy, the question of whether he can develop his own room for manoeuvre in order to bring an end to the war in eastern Ukraine, and the extent of progress with regard to Ukrainian nation-building are analysed by Yuri Durkot, Volodymyr Kulyk, Kateryna Mishchenko, Gwendolyn Sasse and Andrew Wilson.

## Emil Aslan Souleimanov Proclaiming a presence, keeping alliances open Russia and the civil war in Libya

After Syria, Russia is now also making its presence felt in Libya. This time, however, its approach is very different. Far less military support is being provided for the eastern Libyan ruler Khalifa Haftar than for Assad in Syria. Even though Haftar has some powerful supporters in Moscow, Russia is leaving all options open. On the one hand, economic interests are at stake, namely arms sales and investments in the energy sector. At the same time, Russia is also presenting itself as an important power factor, in competition with the US – albeit in a much less antagonistic fashion than in Syria.

## Artem Galushko Political justice in Russia Criminal proceedings against Ukrainian citizens

In Russia, numerous Ukrainian citizens have been tried in court since the start of the war against Ukraine. Many of them have been given long prison sentences. The trials make a mockery of any rule of law. They have been marked by arbitrary decisions, presumption of guilt and forced confessions. As was the case during the Soviet era, the unwritten rules and practices of a politicized judicial system override the official constitution.

## Battlefield Ukraine

### Studies in the Sociology of War

Andreas Heinemann-Grüder  
Hostage-takers or saviours of the state?  
Irregular battalions in Ukraine

In the spring of 2014, numerous irregular battalions were created in Ukraine. They went to the Donbas, where the police and the army had failed to defeat the separatist movement and the intervention of Russia. These battalions have rather different histories, but they have all been supported by the government. Now, most of them are subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. However, some militias of a more right-wing origin remain opposed to these ministries even today. While the extremist parties with which they are associated are being met with little political support, the battalions hit the headlines on a regular basis.

Johann Zajackowski  
Homogeneity and fragmentation  
The changing nature of voluntary battalions in Ukraine

The Ukrainian voluntary battalions were created in a historic emergency. During the first phase of the war, these units acted in a highly autonomous way and pursued the same interests as the representatives of the state. However, the Minsk II Agreement fundamentally changed the relationship between the state and the voluntary units. The movement became fragmented. The volunteers find themselves confronted with considerable social and societal problems in their attempt to reintegrate into civilian society. The extent of their political capacity to act is also limited.

Nikolay Mitrokhin  
In the name of the state  
Russian nationalists deployed in Ukraine

To a large degree, the “Russian spring” in Ukraine in 2014 was fuelled and controlled by Russia. From the mid-2000s onwards, the Kremlin had built up a broad network of social organisations in Russia who were in close contact with groups in Ukraine or which had offshoots there. They all regarded the collapse of the Soviet Union as a development that needed to be reversed. When Ukraine finally threatened to slip away in 2014, they sounded the attack. All the threads of this

apparently autonomous activity were being pulled by the presidential administration in Moscow. Decades-worth of ties between the men responsible for making the decisions provided the basis for the enmeshment of the state and non-civil society.

**Maxim Aliukov**

**By the grace of Moscow**

**The genesis and spirit of the “People’s Republic of Donetsk”**

The ease with which the anti-Maidan rebels succeeded in proclaiming the “People’s Republic of Donetsk” in 2014 is impossible to explain without taking into account the previous collapse of the Party of the Regions. As a result, the state structures in the Donbas region had become paralysed. Building up new quasi-state structures proved more difficult. Ultimately, the “People’s Republic” regime was only able to survive by being propped up militarily, politically and economically by Russia. As a result, the “People’s Republic of Donetsk” is by now entirely subservient to the Kremlin.

**Natalya Saveleva**

**Autonomous beginnings, controlled endings**

**Armed groups in the Donbas supported by Russia**

During the summer of 2014, numerous militias fought against the Ukrainian army in eastern Ukraine. They consisted mainly of volunteers, some of whom came from the Donbas itself. Meanwhile, others streamed into Ukraine from Russia. However, the establishment of the militias would not have been possible without the support of experienced fighters from both countries. Many of them were supplied with weapons, ammunition and food from Russia – with the approval of the state. The situation changed entirely when the Ukrainian army succeeded in pushing them back. From then on, Russia sent regular troops, centralised the reinforcements for the militias and ensured that they were integrated into a “People’s Militia” controlled by Moscow.

**Anton Shekhovtsov**

**Radical parties, irregular units**

**Militant Ukrainian groups from the right-wing extremist milieu**

After the war against Russia broke out in 2014, numerous militias were formed in Ukraine. Some of them were founded by members of radical right-wing organisations. The Kyiv-2, Sich, Karpatska Sich, Azov, DUK PS and UNSO militant groups were created by men who had already organised paramilitary exercises during the 1990s, who had worked for security guard firms, or who were involved in protection rackets. Most of them belonged to the “Maidan self-defence forces”

during the protests in the winter of 2013/2014. Contrary to what is often claimed, however, the level of influence of these militant groups and their ideology is low. Since 2015, they have been almost entirely insignificant.

**Kostiantyn Fedorenko, Andreas Umland**  
**Between the front and parliament**  
**Voluntary units and political parties in Ukraine**

Voluntary units were established in Ukraine in 2014. They supported the army in the fight against the separatist rebels and Russian interventionists in eastern Ukraine. Some of these units were founded by political parties and organisations from the right-wing extremist camp. After the hot phase of the war had passed, several of their commanders took on roles in the parliaments and in the administration. However, they did not become an influential political force. The voluntary units were neither willing nor able to successfully assert their interests in the political arena.

**Kostiantyn Fedorenko**  
**Recruitment, legitimisation, discreditation**  
**The “public relations work” of the battalions in the Donbas**

In armed conflicts and wars, the media play an important role. This is also true of the war in eastern Ukraine. The conflicting parties are attempting to use the media for their own purposes. They propagate their political and military position, agitate their own population and attempt to discredit their opponents. In so doing, they aim to legitimise their actions, to mobilise ideological and material support and to recruit fighters. Social media outlets are gaining in importance.

**Elena Klymenko**  
**A wartime childhood**  
**Artillery bombardment and poverty in eastern Ukraine**

They are the weakest links in human society. War, the worst form of disruption of this society, causes more suffering among young children than anyone else. In Ukraine, more than 200 children have died in the Donbas as a result of military activity, while 200,000 are living in direct proximity to the front, where shooting still continues five years after the outbreak of the war. There, the supply situation is extremely precarious. The 1.5 million refugees from the region also include a large number of children.

Nina Krienke  
Exit from the rumour zone  
The influence of the West in Ukraine

The events of 2014 in Ukraine have been cause for concern for many people in Germany. Rumours and conspiracy theories abound about the hidden forces pulling the strings. Journalists and academics may have been able to shed light on the situation, but the debate remains polarised. Russia's influence on the events in Ukraine has now been relatively thoroughly examined. However, other international players such as the US are also pursuing their own interests there. To date, their role has mainly been the subject of discussion in the so-called "alternative media". Transparency and an objective analysis are required in order to dispel the rhetoric of suspicion.