



UKRAINIAN POLITICS SINCE THE EUROMAIDAN

BY SOFIA SOROKA



Ukrainian Parliament building

“Euromaidan has allowed for a fresh start and provided opportunities for a new generation of voices to participate in decision-making and governance”

The French nation lived through five revolutions to become the stable state it is today; hopefully, Ukraine will only need two. Compared to the turbulence of the Euromaidan, that is, the wave of demonstrations beginning in Kiev in late 2013 demanding closer European integration, two years ago, lasting political change is slow. During my one-month stay in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, the head of Ukraine’s National Security Service was deposed and the Chief Justice of the Kiev Appellate Court was taken into custody after a search of his chambers revealed car keys registered under relatives and thousands of dollars supposedly intended for “grocery shopping” and “dentist work.” Despite the controversial instances presented on the news, my internship with Member of Parliament (MP) Hanna Hopko was a positive experience and revealed the amount of progress made within the Ukrainian government.

Every member of MP Hopko’s staff was incredibly friendly and welcoming. For the duration of my stay we communicated exclusively in English to improve their language ability—a critical skill in the field of foreign affairs. Though MP Hanna Hopko is head of the Foreign Affairs Committee, she was also involved in many domestic projects including reforms for increased tobacco control and increased public access to medicine as well as judicial reforms that will allow for the review of contested decisions. MP Hopko belongs to a new generation of politicians removed from

illicit post-Soviet approaches to representative work. As one of my first tasks, she requested a report comparing different countries’ foreign affairs to improve the efficacy and organization of her own.

In the past, Ukrainian foreign policy was to a large degree reactive and proceeded under Russian influence due to Ukraine’s strong economic ties its more powerful neighbor. MP Hopko is unencumbered by connections between politicians and oligarchs that allowed many parliamentary decisions to be settled covertly prior to Parliament’s session. Throughout June, I observed her approach to resolve problems and her ability to assert her position, despite her young age and limited experience. By translating her public announcements and documents, I saw her thorough understanding of the critical internal and external challenges facing Ukraine, along with her conviction to work to overcome these challenges and improve the country.

The first activity on my schedule was a meeting with a group of German journalists regarding the current military conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The discussion ranged from issues such as the importance of accurate news sources, as much of the news Europe receives about Ukraine is via Russian propaganda, to the politics of nomenclature - why the issue is considered a ‘conflict’ and not a ‘war.’ Also discussed was the plans for coordination with the international community to end the conflict and the necessity to stabilize Ukraine’s



Euromaidan; the before and after of Kiev's city square

future relationship with Russia. The Ukrainian MPs present at the meeting represented various factions within Parliament, which ensured representation of the varying and often discordant opinions. Though the situation requires federal coherence and unity, the inclusion of disparate opinions must be respected as the fullest manifestation of democracy.

Through the internship I was also an active observer to many meetings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. I witnessed the Committee's inner workings: the presentation of daily agenda, the input of invited specialists, the discussions, and the presence of a representative of the Civic Council. Moreover, the attendance of a Civic Council representative at these meetings guarantees government transparency and sets a precedent for public input in federal decision making.

My position also allowed me to work with a burgeoning organization independent from the federal government that will organize the monitoring of funds donated for humanitarian efforts in Ukraine. The organization will join foreign donors with Ukrainian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteer organizations to ensure that the donations are effectively allocated and accounted for. Given Ukraine's history of corruption, the work of this group is critical both to current realities of donations and the general need for federal regulation and fiscal accountability. My contribution to this project included a compilation of international organizations currently helping Ukraine as well as a research report on foreign precedent for regulating international aid.

Finally, during my stay in Kiev, MP Hopko's office organized my visit to Ukraine's Parliament and the office of Ukraine's Reanimation Package of Reforms. At Parliament,

I witnessed presentations, debates, and voting procedures. Visiting the office of the Reanimation Package, I learned of the team's progress and future plans. The team works with experts, NGOs, and members of Parliament and helps to advocate for key reforms in education, the tax code, and the health system. This civic platform emulates the effect of the Euromaidan, through which citizens across the nation volunteered with the military, the families of soldiers, and internally displaced people. For instance, in the office of the Reanimation Package, a former doctor with no previous legal experience began work to reform the healthcare system and increase the efficacy of hospital organization.

I witnessed many such cases throughout my internship. Before participating in the Euromaidan and being elected as the fist chair of her party, the "Samopomich," Hanna Hopko herself was a journalist from Lviv. Provided the long-standing government system of old men adhering to the rules of corruption remaining from the Soviet era, it was refreshing to see many young faces—in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, in the group working to monitor foreign funds, and in the office of the Reanimation Package of Reforms—all of whom are working enthusiastically to reorganize the government, improve the nation, and finally get Ukraine on the right path. Euromaidan has allowed for a fresh start and provided opportunities for a new generation of voices to participate in decision-making and governance.

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Calculated Engagement

By Tate Krasner

1 Doyle, Michael W. and Nicholas Sambanis. "Peacekeeping Operations." The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 333.

2 Doyle and Sambanis, 328-332.

3 Pugh, Michael. "Peace Enforcement." The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 375.

4 Pugh, 384.

Image 1: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1d/EA-6B_Prowler_supporting_Joint_Endavor_from_CVN-73.jpg

Image 2: <http://www.bosniak.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/nato.jpg>

Figure 1: Map of Bosnia-Herzegovina. <http://natocouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Bk-map.png>

Ukrainian Politics Since the Euromaidan

By Sofia Soroka

Image 2: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Bg3bKz9CAAA76eu.jpg:large>