Die Like a Phoenix: The Heroes of Euromaidan

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SUMMARY

The Euromaidan events have become a focal point of Ukraine’s recent history. While the story of popular dissent and the overthrow of President Yanukovich still needs to be written, this article examines the events through the prism of three leading politicians. Explaining politics through personalities is usually seen as an outdated way of writing history. But in the specific situation of Ukraine this approach opens up an intriguing perspective on the formation of politics. While in reality a variety of oligarchs have become the defining players behind the scenes, the powerful popular dissent that erupted with Euromaidan suddenly raised the problem how this popular force could be translated into the established channels of politics. Elections are the obvious answer, but elections require politicians who appear to be connected with the popular sentiments. With Poroshenko’s decision to run for President being the exception, Ukrainian oligarchs predominantly prefer to stay away from public office. So the political system needs intermediaries, i.e. politicians who appear to represent popular sentiment and who are willing to accept the responsibility of office, while in fact they pursue a short-term strategy of maximising political benefit for themselves. This article ultimately argues that Euromaidan created a shift in the political culture of Ukraine. Politicians who traditionally appealed to one or the other identity cluster and who entered Euromaidan in the hope of boosting their popular appeal nearly got burned. It is unclear whether Euromaidan created a new type of national identity for Ukraine, but obviously, as the recent parliamentary elections show, it created a sentiment which favours technocrats who can deliver, and not ideologues who appeal to one or the other of the “old” loyalties.

Keywords: Identity formation, Euromaidan, Yuliya Tymoshenko, Arsenii Yatsenyuk, Vitalii Klitschko
1. Introduction

While ethnic diversity was a predominant feature of the Soviet Union, its break-up came as a surprise to many of the constituent territories. In some places, political leaders even had to formulate national identities from scratch in order to unite the inhabitants of their countries with a voluntary sense of ownership and belonging.

One of the least integrated states in the post-Soviet region is Ukraine, whose struggle against disunity remains a pervasive part of the domestic political discourse. This is due to a combination of a weak institutional structure, persistent high levels of corruption and the powerful influence of external politics. The major regional powers of Russia and the EU are constantly competing for influence over Ukraine due to its desirability as a political ally and economic partner. This has worked to polarise the Ukrainian population even more, and political leaders are generally forced to take a side, further deepening the identity discord.

‘Heroes of Euromaidan’ refers to three politicians who – coming from completely different backgrounds – have chosen to cast themselves as opponents and national leaders using the Euromaidan mass movement to create (or manipulate?) political identities to serve them in the run-up to the next elections: Yuliya Tymoshenko, Arsenii Yatsenyuk and Vitalii Klitschko. These three politicians appear as ‘heroes’ because they tried to create larger-than-life images of themselves. And it might be that from the ashes of their political failure, a new Ukrainian identity will emerge.

In general and taking a larger historical perspective, the nationalistic divisions within Ukraine are characterised by a polarisation of political, ideological and social values, as well as the obvious linguistic barrier. Arguably the largest obstacle between the mentalities stems from what has been termed a national ‘inferiority complex’, fostered by an ingrained reliance on a particular foreign power and lack of confidence in self-determination.¹ This disposition encourages Ukrainian citizens to choose a large regional ally, which in practice is either

Russia or the EU. For the purposes of this analysis, let us adopt Shulman’s and Melnykovska / Schweickert / Kostiuchenko’s characterisations of Ukrainian identity clusters, whose supposed incompatibility bars the formation of a stable national identity. These three divisions of identity are termed ‘Ethnic Ukrainian’, ‘Soviet Ukrainian’ and ‘Eastern Slavic’. They were formed through an analysis of historical experience, policy and language preferences, and cultural survey findings.

‘Ethnic Ukrainian’ refers to the identity prevalent in Western regions, within which democratic and individual freedoms are widely valued. This identity cluster is characterised by a strong sense of nationalism, a general preference for the Ukrainian language, active political participation and an EU-centric foreign policy orientation. The term ‘Eastern Slavic’ will refer to the identity prevalent in the patrimonial and Russian-speaking regions to the east of Ukraine. Largely nostalgic of the Soviet legacy, this regional identity generally favours collectivism at the expense of Western democratic ideals and promotes strong relations with Russia. The third identity recognised through this essay is named ‘Soviet Ukrainian’, which is described as more of a hybrid between the two others, formed through widespread immigration and cultural diversity through the mid-regions. This demographic is considered key to any political win; it is characterised by a low regard for religion and culture and a high appreciation of nationalism and independence.

While simplistic, these associations of identity are helpful in an empirical sense, to identify trends and formulate theories on such a multifaceted issue. These characterisations are also being used increasingly by politicians in the construction of their public images and messages, especially in the sphere of new media. In her analysis of Ukraine’s media and its effect on national identity, Dyczok emphasised the importance of symbolism in the contemporary political dialogue. She claimed that simplistic ideas of Ukrainian identity are

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4 Ibid.
5 Shulman op. cit. at note 3, 61.
6 Ibid, Shulman: 61.
being exploited by politicians to great effect, in a media that is treating constituents like an audience. In this way, the three identity clusters discussed above are accentuated, simplified and potentially more polarised as a result of this new kind of political discourse.

2. Yuliya Tymoshenko

2.1. Background

Yuliya Volodymyrivna Tymoshenko was born on 27th November 1960 and raised as the only child of a single mother in the Soviet industrial city of Dnipropetrovsk. Her childhood is described as rough and poverty-stricken, with her resilient taxi driver mother being cited often as a source of her ruthless personal resolve. In 1979, while studying economics-cybernetics at Dnipropetrovsk State University, Tymoshenko married the son of a communist politician, Oleksandr Tymoshenko. The couple met at a time when Tymoshenko was an active member of the youth wing of the communist party, Komsomol. Tymoshenko gave birth to her one daughter Eugenia and spend the latter half of the 1980s working as an engineer-economist. She began her working life as an entrepreneur, running a painstaking small business with her husband in the newly resurfacing video rental industry and sharing a small apartment with seven others. Oleksandr’s family connections were what initially facilitated Tymoshenko’s career move to the gas industry, and his side of the family was heavily invested in this stage of her career.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tymoshenko and her husband founded Ukrainian Petrol Corporation which capitalised on the newly liberated flows of oil. Her rapid success during this time is largely due to her successful networking with Pavlo Lazarenko, a regional political player and well connected gas oligarch. Lazarenko was steadfastly aligned with then President Leonid Kuchma, and was a controversial figure due to the persistent claims of

11 See Ioffe op. cit. note 2.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
corruption surrounding his office and dealings. This public relationship contributed to her promotion to president of United Energy Systems of Ukraine in 1995. Her early public image earned her the nickname “gas princess”, she controlled a monopoly over the gas industry, dressed in designer suits and spoke only Russian. Despite heralding from a modest upbringing, Tymoshenko’s media image was one of a cosmopolitan oligarch with a “Clintonian charisma” and a ruthless negotiating style. In fact, her public image would remain influenced by this stage of her career for the next ten years, and would cement her status as a symbol of the identity struggle.

2.2. Early political career

Tymoshenko entered into politics in 1996, aligning herself with the Constitutional Centre faction in Verkhovna Rada, exploiting her business connections and winning 92.3 % of the vote. Despite her formal political identification as a centrist and nationalist, it seems likely that her 1998 re-election was primarily due to her popularity amongst the Eastern Slavic population. At this stage of her career, Tymoshenko still spoke in Russian and was publicly aligned within the centrist-oligarchical factions. She came out as steadfastly anti-corruption, but her obvious business interests regarding Russia-Ukraine trade relations were not unnoticed by the media. It does not seem at this stage that Tymoshenko would have appealed to Ethnic Ukrainians, who in every other election since independence had voted against oligarchic parties. Indeed, Kuzio claims that much of the support for oligarchs and centrist parties in national elections stems from politically passive Eastern Slavic voters, and that this support is motivated directly through “pressure or financial inducements”. Tymoshenko’s past and public image seems by default to have characterised her as a symbol of the Eastern Slavic identity at this early stage in her career. It is therefore difficult to tell whether her popularity at the time provides any reliable indicators as to the dominant identity within Ukraine.

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16 Ibid.
17 Kuzio op. cit. note 7, at 170.
18 Ibid. at 169.
In 1999, Tymoshenko founded the independent All-Ukrainian Union Fatherland (Batkivshchyna) in response to Lazarenko’s escape to the USA and his subsequent indictment for corruption. Tymoshenko framed Fatherland as a uniting anti-corruption party that was formed in outrage of the Prime Minister’s actions, and campaigned strongly to this effect. Her subsequent promotion to Deputy Prime Minister indicates that this bold political move worked to counter her unfavourable association as Lazarenko’s earlier business partner and her connections to his crimes. Her attempt to remodel her political image in opposition to the oligarchy was made evident through her claim that the arrest of her husband in 2000 was organised by her colleagues in an effort to restrain her political activities. She continued with this argument throughout her own indictment in 2001, claiming that the charges were nothing but a politically motivated attempt to discredit her anti-corruption initiatives. The charges were dropped a month later. However, this campaign seems not to have been entirely successful, as Tymoshenko was not re-elected and she remained negatively portrayed in the media.

2.3. Orange Revolution

The 2004 Orange Revolution marked an integral turning point in the evolution of Ukraine’s national identity. It was portrayed in the West as a powerful rejection of corruption and election fraud by the people, but in Russia and the East the revolution was likened to a coup. The objective of the Orange Revolution was to nullify the outcome of the supposedly fraudulent 2004 election, and was co-led by Tymoshenko and the unsuccessful presidential candidate, Viktor Yushchenko.

Although it seems a superficial consideration, the significant change in Tymoshenko’s public image during the 2004 election campaign is hugely important in a study of Ukrainian identity discourse. It is clear that after criminal charges against her were dropped, Tymoshenko sought to re-make her political identity by losing the “gas princess” association. The light blonde hair braid she started wearing in 2004 is traditionally Ukrainian and is hugely significant in folk history, symbolising purity, patriotism and sainthood. Tymoshenko began wearing lightly coloured, local-brand clothing, which was supposedly intended to signify

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innocence as well as “hinting at Western efficiency”\textsuperscript{20}. She also began speaking only in Ukrainian during her public appearances. Tymoshenko’s transparent attempts to appeal to Ukrainian nationalists proved enormously successful over the course of the Orange Revolution, at least partly due to this identity reformation.

Tymoshenko’s political transformation, as well as her alliance with a notoriously pro-EU candidate, seems to indicate an effective abandonment of her Eastern Slavic constituency. However, the support she lost from this region was easily made up for by the fervent admiration her impassioned speeches granted her from the Ukrainian nationalists. This energetic and emotive campaign was also rewarded with favourable attention from the West, with both external and internal media granting her tag lines such as the “Orange Princess” and “Ukraine’s Joan of Arc”. It seems that her new identity as a liberal nationalist allowed her to ‘ride the wave’ of the revolutionary euphoria, whereby the population and her political rivals temporarily forgot about her past associations with corrupt leaders.

It is integral to consider the media’s portrayal of Tymoshenko when attempting to understand the reaction of the Ukrainian public to the Orange Revolution. Under the Kuchma administration, state media had been systematically underfunded and content was heavily regulated.\textsuperscript{21} One journalist at the time said that their purpose was ”to create obedient citizens who would be loyal to the state regardless of what the state did”.\textsuperscript{22} Dyczok claims that throughout the Orange Revolution the Government increasingly lost control of the media and the public focus shifted to the dismissal of the illegitimate President and the rebuilding of democratic freedoms.\textsuperscript{23} Dyczok also argues that the Orange Revolution targeted corruption and impropriety and did not deepen the identity discord within Ukraine, citing examples of where Yushchenko’s rallies included Soviet era music, and where counter-rallies used Western lobbying techniques.\textsuperscript{24} While it is potentially true that there was not a discord evident in Kiev, Russia’s strong condemnation of the Orange Revolution was

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 19
\textsuperscript{21} Dyczok, op. cit. note 10, at 234.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. at 245.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. at 246.
\end{flushleft}
incredibly influential on ‘Eastern Slavic’ Ukrainians who also made up the bulk of Yanukovych’s primary vote.25

Russia officially condemned the Orange Revolution as a coup d’état and at least 36.3 % of Ukrainians were recorded to agree.26 This was based largely on allegations of external interference in the demonstrations, with a leading journalist, Volodymyr Ruban, denouncing the whole revolution as an American plot.27 Additionally, the fact that the vast majority of demonstrations took place in the West and particularly in Kiev seemed to further divide the East / West mentality, especially since the vast majority of Yanukovych supporters would fit into the ‘Eastern Slavic’ identity. Lane supports the contention that the Orange Revolution was a coup d’état through an analysis of surveys and polls taken shortly after the demonstrations.28 He concludes that the passive and generally unsatisfied response recorded after the revolution in 2005 suggests that the demonstrations themselves may indeed have been motivated more by immediate incentives and external pressure than by legitimate revolutionary people power.29 He cites the incentives provided by Yushchenko to campaigners, including food, tent accommodation and “pocket money”, claiming that international sponsors were the primary forces behind this “revolutionary coup d’état”.30

It must also be noted that Shulman’s characterization of the ‘East Slavic’ identity includes an observation regarding their political passivity.31 Therefore, the significantly lower levels of activity recorded in Eastern Ukraine should not be automatically recorded as peripheral support. It is pointless to speculate at length as to the legitimacy of the 2004 Yanukovych victory, but it is relevant to note that the foundation for Yushchenko’s and Tymoshenko’s accusation of election fraud was no more than inconsistent exit polls. Despite Ukraine’s Supreme Court declaring election fraud after 3 months of protests, it is worth suggesting that the democratic voice of the East Slavic population may have been silenced by these

25 Ibid. at 245.
27 Quoted in Dyczok op. cit. note 10, at 245.
29 Ibid. at 527.
30 Ibid. at 527.
31 Shulman op. cit. note 3, 69.
protests.\textsuperscript{32} Yushchenko did win the re-vote with 52\%, but considering there had been a Supreme Court ruling convicting his party of election fraud, Yanukovych still managed to collect 44\% of the vote.\textsuperscript{33}

It seems clear that the Orange Revolution was fairly contained to the West and Central regions of Ukraine, as opposed to the Western media’s portrayal of it as a unanimous show of widespread political discontent. Tymoshenko’s seeming abandonment of her Eastern Slavic identity seems to have earned her a torrent of support in other parts of Ukraine, especially since her new adoption of an ethnic nationalist ideology is theoretically inclusive of all Ukrainians. However, this support has dwindled significantly since its 2004 peak, through her controversial period as Prime Minister and her incarceration and attempted comeback.

2.4. Prime ministership and incarceration

Tymoshenko’s short period as Prime Minister in 2005 was characterized by rampant infighting and a complete absence of co-operation between her office and President Yushchenko’s. She was accused by the President of abandoning Orange Revolution ideals by favouring business interests over public ones, and her administration was dismissed only 8 months after it had taken office.\textsuperscript{34} Tymoshenko vehemently denied the allegations and threw criticism back at the Presidential Administration, and her public approval ratings quickly overtook Yushchenko’s.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, her bloc came out ahead in the 2006 election against both Yushchenko and Yanukovich’s parties, and a coalition was formed that put her in the position of Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{36}

Tymoshenko’s second Prime Ministership was marked again with factional discontent, and a number of controversial deals with Russia and business oligarchs further polarized the

\textsuperscript{32} Levy op. cit. note 19, at 1.
\textsuperscript{33} Levy, op. cite. note 19, at 1.
\textsuperscript{35} Shulman op. cit. note 3, 69.
\textsuperscript{36} Levy, op. cite. note 19, at 1.
electorate. Tymoshenko’s close professional relationship with Vladimir Putin was a subject of great controversy, even more so was the establishment of a comprehensive gas deal between the two states.\textsuperscript{37} The public approval ratings dropped significantly in response to this arguably disadvantageous deal, and the Tymoshenko bloc suffered a narrow loss in the 2010 elections.\textsuperscript{38} This close relationship with Russia seems to go against Orange Revolution ideals, especially where the public interest seems not necessarily to be immediately benefitted. Tymoshenko seems in these years to have lost some of her Ethnic Ukrainian support through increasing dependence on Russia, while failing to gain back any of her Eastern Slavic constituency due to her continued support of EU accession.

Tymoshenko’s slow loss of popularity through her political career seems to have been destined to decline further after this defeat. However, after 2 years of relatively unsuccessful opposition, her arrest and public trial in 2011 seemed to incite the public’s sympathies.\textsuperscript{39} Through her repeated claims that the Yanukovich administration was behind the criminal allegations, Tymoshenko gained the attention and support of the Western world. This outrage was not shared to the same extent within Ukraine, but public surveys suggest a certain degree of unrest over the incarceration.\textsuperscript{40} It seems likely that this perceived injustice formed part of the platform for the 2014 Maidan uprisings, though the time lapse between her incarceration and the protests suggests it was not an integral factor. Instead it seems that Tymoshenko’s trial had more of an effect on her international political image rather than her domestic one.

\textbf{2.5. Role in Euromaidan}

Tymoshenko addressed crowds in Maidan Square immediately after her release, signaling the effective commencement of her 2014 presidential campaign. Her speech was described as “triumphant”, but the audiences’ reception was significantly less passionate and revolutionary than it was during her Orange Revolution addresses.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, her entire 2014 campaign seems to show that Ukraine’s once fervent admiration and passionate support for

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] Dyczok op. cite. note 10, at 233.
\item[38] Ibid, at 249.
\item[39] Ibid, 249.
\item[40] Levy op. cite. note 19, at 1.
\item[41] Iofe, op. cite. note 2, at 1.
\end{footnotes}
Tymoshenko had dwindled extensively during her years in power and her incarceration. It was reported that the February 2014 Maidan Square crowd seemed triumphant in her release from prison, but remained unreceptive to her clear political ambitions.\textsuperscript{42} One protestor characterized Tymoshenko as a symbol of the “Old Ukraine”, rife with corruption and international dependency.\textsuperscript{43} This view seems to herald the Maidan Revolution as the primordial turning point in Ukraine’s identity struggle. Commentator Mychailo Wynnyckyj noted that Tymoshenko’s “Joan of Arc” attitude did not work in her favour after the revolutions and that “Ukrainians don’t need a saviour... they want to take care of themselves”.\textsuperscript{44} Tymoshenko’s dwindling support amongst Ethnic Ukrainians can possibly then be attributed to the revolutionary-minded voters not wanting the same outcome as the Orange Revolution.

Tymoshenko’s 2014 political campaign was also received coldly in the Eastern part of the country, likely due to her staunchly anti-Russia policy platform. Tymoshenko came out strongly against the annexation of Crimea, calling on the EU for military assistance and promising to regain the lost territory.\textsuperscript{45} She also firmly placed herself on the side of the EU, claiming accession as the key goal for Ukraine’s foreign policy.\textsuperscript{46} Her campaign was characterised by an onslaught of negativity, with name calling and accusations of corruption being thrown from both sides.\textsuperscript{47} A product of this deterioration was the leaked phone call in May 2014, which seems to reveal her desire to use nuclear weapons against Russians in Ukraine.\textsuperscript{48} Though this recording was dismissed by many as having been manipulated by Russian intelligence, it undoubtedly weakened her already slack grasp on the Eastern Slavic constituency.\textsuperscript{49}

On 25 June 2014, Tymoshenko gracefully conceded defeat to Petro Poroshenko, accepting that the election had been fair and pledging to work with the government to facilitate EU

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{43} Ward, op. cit. note 24, at 1.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, RT. Com.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, RT. Com.
It was contended also that her loss may be attributed to some extent to a loss of support from the Western world, with EU and US channels seeming to support Poroshenko. Since her defeat, Tymoshenko has been reportedly using her political status and oligarchic connections to “make life difficult” for some of the other oligarchic heavyweights who supposedly had some part in her incarceration. She is also continuing to make public appearances in her usual style, participating in such politically advantageous activities as giving blood for soldiers. On it seems that Tymoshenko is reluctant to leave the political sphere altogether, but her resounding defeat in the 2014 election seems to indicate that the Ukrainian identity struggle has evolved beyond her political reach.

2.6 Post Euromaidan

Indeed, this determination to maintain political relevance has persisted in the time since the presidential election. Tymoshenko weighed in on the Malaysian Airlines M19 shooting, linking the disorganised response from the Ukrainian government to her claim of rampant corruption. She also used Russia’s involvement in the incident to reinforce her position on foreign relations, claiming that Ukraine’s international security interests are best served by becoming a part of NATO. In the lead up to the October Parliamentary election, Tymoshenko continued to push this hardline foreign policy agenda, portraying Russia as a hostile aggressor and collecting over 3 million signatures in an effort to sway the NATO debate.

Tymoshenko’s public profile in the parliamentary election campaign was largely an extension of her image post-Euromaiden. It is integral to note that a significant portion of Ukraine’s population were unable to vote in the parliamentary elections, due to a number of territories being under the control of pro-Russian separatists. It is clear to note that divisions within Ukrainian identity are at an all time high, though it is difficult to know at this stage whether this is through natural popular opinion or through force and foreign influence. Tymoshenko’s party failed to gain any parliamentary substantial ground in the October 26

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election, and it seems that her political influence is dwindling. It is possible that Batkivshchyna will form an alliance with the Western-leaning majority, though the personal power available to Tymoshenko will be negligible. The struggle toward Ukraine’s national unity will only be able to progress once the immediate conflict has come to pass. It is nigh impossible at this time to ascertain the attitudes of much of Eastern Ukraine and it is clear that Tymoshenko’s current anti-Russia mandate would not hold much sway in these regions anyway. Despite her agreeable and populist policy framework, Tymoshenko seems to have decidedly lost the support across all sections of Ukrainian Identity and this time a comeback does not seem likely.

3. Arsenii Yatsenyuk

3.1. Background

Arsenii Petrovich Yatsenyuk was born on the 22nd May 1974 in the then Soviet town of Chernivtsi. He is married to Tereziya Yatsenyuk and has two daughters, Khristina and Sofiya. His family background can be described as Soviet intelligentsia. His father Petro Ivanovich Yatsenyuk, a historian, has worked as a professor at the Faculty of History at Chernivtsi National University. He is specialised in Russian, German and Latin American History and was deputy dean of his faculty until 2002. Yatsenyuk’s mother Mariya Grigor’evna Yatsenyuk is a philologist as well. She was a French language teacher at the Foreign Language Department of Chernivtsi National University. Other sources say that she worked as French language teacher in highschools. At present, Petro Yatsenyuk can be still found on the homepage of the university as lector, while Yatsenyuk’s mother is not listed anymore. Without any doubt, this family background laid a good basis for a later career.

Rumours have it that already Yatsenyuk’s ancestors were Ukrainian nationalists. His mother tongue is Ukrainian. Additionally, he is fluent in Russian and English and knows some Romanian. His family tree does not only include Romanian grandparents; also his mother’s ances-

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54 Ibid.
55 See <http://glagol.in.ua/2013/02/01/yatsenyuk-arseniy-petrovich-polnoe-dose-na-lidera-fronta-peremen/>.
tors are subject to speculation as to their Jewish origins. Mariya Grigor’evna’s maiden name Bakai relates to a former well-known Talmudist under the same name.\footnote{See \url{http://smi2ru.ru/evropa/arsenij-yacenyuk-biografiya-nacionalnost-evrej-semya-zhena-foto>}. Apart from his own potential Jewish roots, there are also some hints to be found as to the Jewish origin of his wife.\footnote{See \url{http://conglomer.at.ua/publ/dose/jacenjuk_arsenij_petrovich/2-1-0-30}>. Yatsenyuk himself is of Greek-Orthodox creed and obviously determined to put the rumours of any Jewish ancestry to silence, not least because of anti-Semitic tendencies in his party. Therefore, Yatsenyuk has established a family tree with pictures including those of his grandparents and parents, his wife’s grandparents and parents and his own family on the website of Front of Change, in which the ethnic origin of all people is explicitly claimed to be Ukrainian.\footnote{Homepage of Front of Change, available at \url{http://frontzmin.ua/ua/leader/biography.html>}. Nevertheless, he has occasionally fallen victim to anti-semitic commentaries by his political opponents and on anti-Semitic homepages\footnote{Andrew Anglin, Ukrainian ‘Prime Minister’ Arseniy Yatsenyuk is a Jew, The Daily Stormer 5 March 2014, available at \url{http://www.dailystormer.com/ukraine-prime-minister-arseniy-yatsenyuk-is-a-jew/}> and was listed among the 50 most influential Ukrainian Jews\footnote{Op. cit. note 56.}. Some Jewish clergymen assume that Yatsenyuk is a Jew, while others deny this.\footnote{See \url{http://www.people.su/131281_5>}.}

Another weak point with regard to his family relations is his older sister Alina. She has been living in Santa Barbara, California, for a long time, has been married more than once and is known to be a scientologist. According to some conspiracy theorists, Arsenii Yatsenyuk himself and the Slovak president Andrej Kiska belong to the Scientology axis of evil which intends to take over Europe.\footnote{Wayne Madsen, The Charge of the Scientology Brigade, Strategic Culture Foundation 1 April 2014, available at \url{http://m.strategic-culture.org/news/2014/04/01/the-charge-of-the-scientology-brigade.html}>. There has not been any convincing material proving his Scientology membership. Connecting him to his sister’s lifestyle seems like a rather cheap attempt of slandering Yatsenyuk. A fact that can hardly be proven wrong, however, is that Yatsenyuk profited from the educated background of his parents. He attended a special school focused on English language (during Soviet times) and even intended to draw up and defend his diploma thesis in English.\footnote{See \url{http://www.rudenko.kiev.ua/persons/yacenyuk>}. This undertaking was denied authorisation because his teachers lacked profound knowledge of the foreign language in question.\footnote{Ibid.}}}
According to some sources, Arsenii Yatsenyuk began to study law in 1991, others say 1992. Given the fact that he finished his legal studies in 1996, 1991 is the more credible option because of the 5-year course system which is characteristic for Ukrainian universities. It is stated, however, that Yatsenyuk did not often show up for class anyway because he was busy starting his own student law firm, gaining first experience in the then emerging private sector. If his father, then deputy dean of the Faculty of History, facilitated Yatsenyuk’s simultaneous careers as student and president of Yurek Ltd. as suspected by some, can hardly be said with certainty. However, one can without the shadow of a doubt state that young Yatsenyuk picked the right partner to found the firm, Valentin Gnatyshin, the son of the then governor of Chernivtsi district. Rumors have it that this was the first time in Ukrainian history that students were granted a license for providing legal services. Thus Yatsenyuk’s brilliant intuition for successful affiliation with influential personalities can be traced back to the early years of his career.

Yatsenyuk followed the line of ‘family business’ only for a short time by teaching at university from 1996 to 1997. In parallel, he kept his position as President of Yurek Ltd. after graduation until September 1997, implementing several privatizations of industrial and agrarian enterprises during this period. In the beginning of 1998, he moved to Kiev and became a consultant in the credit department of Aval Bank. He quickly ascended in the hierarchy, becoming advisor to the Chairman of the Board of Aval in December 1998. At the age of 27, in August 2001, he was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Board. He gained a second degree in economics from the Chernivtsi economic institute that same year, with a specialization in accounting and audit. Three years later he earned a PhD in economics with a dissertation entitled “The organization of bank monitoring system and its regulation in Ukraine”.

68 See <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/news/961182.html>.
70 See <http://www.people.su/131281>.
Already these first years of his career impressively demonstrate Yatsenyuk’s ambition. He can undoubtedly be ranked among the ambitious young entrepreneurs who understood Western market economy before its legal basis had been established in the post-Soviet space.

3.2. Early political career

2001 marks an important point in Yatsenyuk’s career. Instead of pursuing a career in banking, finance or trade-related fields, he decides to take up new professional challenges and becomes a politician. His first political position is that of an acting Minister of Economy of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which he assumes in September 2001. According to some sources, he was nominated by the Chairman of the Crimean Council of Ministers, Valerii Gorbatov. However, two months later, he is already Crimean Minister of Economy. In the end of April 2002, the whole Council of Ministers has to resign. But Yatsenyuk comes to an arrangement with the new Chairman and thus keeps his position.

In this very moment of his career, one of Yatsenyuk’s strong suits becomes obvious: his diplomatic ability to work with opponents of his former mentors. At that time, Yatsenyuk does not have a clear-cut (public) political profile. He is a hard-working man, rather interested in dealing with the matters at hand than gathering like-minded political figures around him to pave the way to a career in this field. This chameleon-like attitude fosters his career in politics as well as it did before that in banking.

In January 2003, Yatsenyuk returns from Crimea to Kiev and becomes first deputy Chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU), once more presumably nominated by a chairman, Sergei Tigipko. In 2004, he is promoted acting chairman because Tigipko leaves NBU to lead the election team of Viktor Yanukovich.

3.3. Orange Revolution

2004 marked another important step forward not only in the democratic history of Ukraine, but likewise in the professional life of Arsenii Yatsenyuk. As acting chairman of the NBU, he prevented the collapse of the Ukrainian currency and the country’s banking system.\(^74\) At that time Yushchenko, who won the election against Yanukovich, did have a low opinion of Yatsenyuk.\(^75\) During the crisis, Yatsenyuk granted a credit to Mriya Bank, which was then led by Petro Poroshenko.\(^76\) Without any doubt, this highly criticized move did provide him with a strong ally in the future. Yatsenyuk resigned from the acting chairmanship of NBU in February 2005 because a change of scenery was in order.

In March 2005, he was appointed Vice-Governor of Odessa, once again on the suggestion of a chairman – this time Vasilii Gushko. He stayed in this position for half a year until he was promoted Ukrainian Minister of Economy at the end of September 2005 under Yurii Yekhanurov. It did not take long until the government was dismissed by the newly elected parliament in March 2006. Yatsenyuk stayed acting Minister of Economy until August and led negotiations relating to Ukraine’s prospective membership in the World Trade Organization. He also led a committee concerned with questions about the relation between Ukraine and the EU and was a member of a consulting council dealing with foreign investments in Ukraine.

In September 2006, President Yushchenko appointed him first Vice-President of the Head of Secretariat of the President of Ukraine and his representative in the Cabinet of Ministers. Eventually, Yushchenko must have overcome his (at best) skeptical stand towards Yatsenyuk in the previous two years. Additionally, Yatsenyuk became a board member of the NBU and two other banks.\(^77\) In the end of 2006, he also became a member of Our Ukraine – People’s Self Defense.\(^78\)

\(^{77}\) Op. cit. note 52.
Yatsenyuk was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs on 21st of March 2007. He was only Yushchenko’s second choice and benefitted from the fact that the President’s favoured candidate was rejected twice by parliament. Yatsenyuk’s appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs went hand in hand with his membership in the Security Service of Ukraine which undoubtedly provided him with a broad range of contacts with influential personalities. He stayed in this position until he was dismissed by the Ukrainian Parliament in December 2007.

In an article from 11th September 2007 Yatsenyuk denied being a member of any party, although he occupied the 3rd place on the list of Our Ukraine – People’s Self Defense. He said that he would only consider joining a party if the ideology impressed him. While a survey detected only little support by the parliamentarians for Yatsenyuk to be Speaker in November 2007 (0.7 %), he was nevertheless elected as such on 4th of December. On 21st December 2007, the President terminated Yatsenyuk’s membership in the Security Service. It was renewed the same day, although it was not mandatory in his new position.

In May 2008, Yatsenyuk’s name appeared on the list of potential candidates of the party United Center, but he once again denied ambitions to lead a political projects. However, he made an exception for movements founded by himself. On 17th of September 2008, Yatsenyuk offered his resignation as Speaker of the Ukrainian parliament since the ruling coalition fell apart. On 21st of November 2008, the president finally achieved his long-cherished goal of expelling Yatsenyuk from the Ukrainian Security Service.

3.4. Bid for the presidency

Probably disappointed after experiencing the unstable political situation in Ukrainian first-hand and feeling the need to give himself a profile in the view of the public eye, Yatsenyuk announced his plan to found a political party on the basis of the public initiative Front of Change in December 2008. He had already been ranked in listings of the most influential Ukrainians several times. In Korrespondent, he occupied the 28th rank in 2006 and the 12th

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position in 2007. In the same year, he was placed 8th in a rating by Fokus covering the 200 most influential Ukrainians.\textsuperscript{83} Thus it came as no surprise that in spring 2009 Yatsenyuk announced his intention to run for president. In the eye of the economic crisis which hit Ukraine in late fall 2008, Yatsenyuk was regarded as a ‘breath of fresh air’.\textsuperscript{84} The faces of leading politicians had been the same since the Orange Revolution in 2004 – Tymoshenko, Yanukovich and Yushchenko\textsuperscript{85} - and had told the same old stories ever since.

Yatsenyuk had reached the required age to become President of Ukraine in May 2009, shortly after his announcement to run for president. Nevertheless, in the beginning of his campaign he occupied a good third place with around 12 to 13 percent, not far behind Tymoshenko.\textsuperscript{86} At the end, he did not stand a chance. But why?

Yatsenyuk’s career can be described as ‘meteoric’.\textsuperscript{87} By the age of 35, he had not only held the position of a Ukrainian Minister twice and in different fields, he had also been acting Chairman of the National Bank and a member of the Security Service for quite a while (temporarily even against the will of the then Ukrainian President). However, as shown above, he had been appointed to most positions due to personal connections. Yatsenyuk did not last in a position for long (except early in his career), but must have been an ambitious person considering his regular and fast promotions. On the other hand, his political stand can be described as “hazy” for a long time. His boss at the NBU, Tigipko, must have been in line with Yanukovich; two years later, Yatsenyuk became a protégé of Yushchenko. Yanukovich and Yushchenko were the leading figures of the Orange Revolution, who had symbolised two very different visions for Ukraine’s future. In that respect, Yanukovich was meant to represent the Eastern Slavic constituency and was expected to keep the political path of Ukraine close to its big Slavic brother. Yushchenko, on the other hand, was the candidate who should shatter the old Soviet bonds and smooth the way towards the West. It is highly interesting that Yatsenyuk found himself approved in both political environments.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Andrew Wilson, \textit{The Rise And Fall (And Rise?) Of Arseniy Yatsenyuk}, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty 18 October 2009, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/The_Rise_And_Fall_And_Rise_Of_Arseniy_Yatsenyuk/1854794.html>.
  \item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Alongside with a lack of political edge, funding played an important role in Yatsenyuk’s campaign. Two oligarchs, Viktor Pinchuk and Dmytro Firtash, were Yatsenyuk’s acclaimed main sponsors in his run for the presidency. When the alleged coalition between Tymoshenko and Yanukovich fell into pieces Firtash decided to side with Yanukovich. As main sponsor, Pinchuk replaced Yatsenyuk’s Ukrainian team with more Russia-oriented personnel. Furthermore, Yatsenyuk’s presence in the media shrank drastically when he lost Firtash’s support and thus his close connection to Inter TV.\(^{88}\)

Yatsenyuk’s image as young liberal was replaced by a ‘Putin-lite’\(^{89}\) version by his new team. Giving up his former pragmatic approach, Yatsenyuk promoted from then on a new Ukrainian isolationism which included criticising the EU, everything non-Ukrainian and culminated in the idea of a Ukrainian-led Eastern EU as an alternative for all those disappointed by the original. Putting Yatsenyuk in khaki clothes and selling him as ‘the new tough kid on the block’\(^{90}\) ruined his authentic image and doomed the campaign to failure. Even the support of Viktor Yushchenko and his wife in Yatsenyuk’s campaign\(^{91}\) could not prevent the downfall.

Another big problem was that Yatsenyuk did not have a well-established party organisation spread all over the country at his disposal. Eventually, he only gained 6.96 %\(^{92}\) at the presidential elections in 2010.\(^{93}\) President Yanukovich proposed Yatsenyuk - alongside with two other candidates – as Prime Minister, but he declined due to an amendment which in his opinion constituted a breach of the Ukrainian Constitution, and beyond that would lead to an even deeper political crisis.\(^{94}\) The provision in question allowed not only parliamentary factions to take part in the formation of a majority coalition, but also individual members of parliament.\(^{95}\)

According to the journalist Yuliya Mostovaya, a sociological survey (which was conducted in the beginning of 2011 with a sample 30 times bigger than usual) clearly showed that

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\(^{88}\) Wilson, op. cit. note 83.
\(^{89}\) Ibid.
\(^{90}\) Ibid.
\(^{91}\) Ibid.
\(^{92}\) See <http://sta-sta.ru/?p=27612>.
\(^{94}\) Ibid.
\(^{95}\) Ibid.
Yatsenyuk would have defeated Yanukovich in a second round of presidential elections.\textsuperscript{96} In an interview carried out by journalists of the newspaper ZN Yatsenyuk talked about certain actions taken by opponents before the elections which were in breach of the Constitution.\textsuperscript{97} He also mentioned on this occasion that illegal pressure was put on candidates of his party Front of Change.

Although Yatsenyuk had not given the impression of being politically close to Yuliya Tymoshenko and had made some rather adverse statements in the press about her and her party prior to that,\textsuperscript{98} he decided to form a political alliance with her party Fatherland in April 2012. Tymoshenko being in prison, Yatsenyuk was elected leader of the Joint Opposition in June. In July, he - alongside with other members of Front of Change – suspended his membership. This step enabled all people involved to seize the opportunity to run as independent candidates in the parliamentary elections, appearing on the list of Fatherland.\textsuperscript{99} In December 2012, Yatsenyuk was elected leader of Fatherland, while Turchinov replaced him as leader of the Joint Opposition. In June 2013, Tymoshenko was re-elected head of Fatherland and Yatsenyuk became chairman of the party’s political council as suggested by her.\textsuperscript{100} One day before, on June 14\textsuperscript{th}, the merger between Front of Change and Fatherland had been decided unanimously.\textsuperscript{101}

Approaching his 40\textsuperscript{th} birthday, Yatsenyuk probably realised that he neither had the popularity nor the necessary funds to make it to the top of Ukrainian politics on his own. By then he might have understood that a vast network of friends in all kinds of positions might be very useful, as well as being welcome in the US and Europe, but not the key to achieve his ultimate goals. Yatsenyuk has never been perceived as “the guy next door”. Several attempts to give himself an image more down-to-earth had a rather little, if not even an adverse effect. During the presidential campaign, a LiveJournal account was set up for Yatsenyuk which he promised to look after in person. In fact, a political blogger who is famous for scandals wrote the entries. One day, he forgot to log out from Yatsenyuk’s account and commented on an-

\textsuperscript{96} See <http://www.people.su/131281_4>.
\textsuperscript{98} See <http://glagol.in.ua/2013/02/01/yatsenyuk-arsenyi-petrovich-polnoe-dose-na-lidera-fronta-peremen/>.
\textsuperscript{99} See <http://sta-sta.ru/?p=27612>.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} See <http://ria.ru/spravka/20140227/997287007.html>. 
other user’s LiveJournal account by resorting to offensive language. Deleting came too late since the Russian search engine yandex had already saved the commentaries in its cache.\footnote{Op. cit. note 98.}

This story and also that about the new team in the presidential elections may sound like sabotage or a bad joke. They might also be cited as characteristic examples for the decisive factor of media in general and social media in particular in political campaigning in the 21st century. Additionally, they stress the importance of a clear-cut public image. Yatsenyuk, however, had not cared enough about his public image for a long time. In some articles, he has been compared to the rabbit from a Soviet children cartoon\footnote{David Herszenhorn, Ukraine’s New Premier, the ‘Rabbit’, Seems to Be in His Element, The New York Times 12 March 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/13/world/europe/ukraine-acting-prime-minister-arseniy-yatsenyuk.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C[%22Ri%3A11%22%2C%22Ri%3A14%22>.} and was more than once offered a carrot by journalists mocking him. Moreover, he has been described as ‘Kinder surprise’ on various occasions, a term that suggests taking him not too serious as a politician. It also conveys the image of somebody whose political ideas are not very clear because by buying Kinder surprise you never know what to expect. One could argue that his indecision and ambiguity are – at least to some extent - opportunistic strategies to reach his goals. Nonetheless, one cannot brush aside his political successes. On January 25th 2014, President Yanukovich offered him the position of Prime Minister. At this time, he had not even reached the age of 40.

3.5. Role in Euromaidan

President Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was the triggering moment for the Euromaidan movement. It started out as a civil society movement. People with a multitude of ideas what closer ties to the “West” would mean gathered at Maidan Nezalezhnosti in the centre of Kiev and promoted their vision of a different society. Subjects discussed span from more democracy, social security, political stability and the creation of jobs, to further rights for LGBT, a bigger degree of mobility and in general better opportunities at home and abroad. As this reaction had been triggered by the action (or rather: non-action) of President Yanukovich and aimed at his dismissal, the Euromaidan automatically became a battlefield for political groups with different orienta-
tions. It did not take long until it gave a stage to members of the political opposition. Without any doubt, Yatsenyuk was one of the figure heads of the opposition and tried to make the most of it.

There are three main figures (apart from Yuliya Tymoshenko who was imprisoned during the events) which appeared as opposition leaders at Euromaidan: Vitali Klitschko, Oleh Tyahnybok and - last but not least - Arsenii Yatsenyuk. He was by far the most experienced politician among the three. But although leading Tymoshenko’s Fatherland while she was in prison and thus following in her footsteps, he cannot be described as a Western media darling. It seems that Yatsenyuk had been hardly noticed by Western journalists before becoming the Prime Minister of Ukraine. While Tymoshenko with her typical braid has been depicted in Western media for more than a decade as mother of Ukraine, Yatsenyuk has failed to play a role with a recognition factor comparable to that. Also, the interviews conducted fail to attest him a likeable personality. Probably also a lack of personal information may be held accountable for this. As diplomatic as he appears on the screen – he has had hard times dealing with criticism brought forward in interviews. A paramount example hereof is the interview with the German newspaper Die Zeit conducted in May 2014. Confronted with potential political blunders, he eventually rushed out of the room, feeling misunderstood and little appreciated. He was significantly more successful in politics. With 26 % in the election of 2012, Fatherland came in second only after Yanukovich’s Party of the Regions. Nevertheless, Fatherland is mainly supported by the Ethnic Ukrainian constituency.

All in all, the political circumstances created a favourable starting point for Yatsenyuk. On December 2nd 2013, he called upon the activists to picket the building of the Cabinet of Ministers. His first goal was the resignation of the Azarov government, followed of that of Yanukovich himself. On this occasion he encouraged all Ukrainians no matter where from to come to Kiev to exercise their constitutional right to peaceful demonstration. Some people, however, picture him as a person who does not really belong to those people looking good on the stage of Euromaidan, where he - according to some - ‘seemed rather out of his

105 Ibid.
element’. Adept in economics and diplomacy and experienced in boardrooms and the corridors of power, some nevertheless say he lacks charisma to attract the masses. Furthermore, the comparison with a rabbit does not match the picture of a politician of the opposition who should be someone respected by his voters and his political opponents.

Another aspect costing political credibility abroad is Yatsenyuk’s alleged political vicinity to Svoboda. As leaders of the other two big opposition groupings, Klitschko’s and Tyahnybok’s names are often found in close proximity to Yatsenyuk’s. While Svoboda has supposedly close ties to the Right Sector, Yatsenyuk has failed to clearly distance himself from the nationalist and often xenophobic, racist and anti-Semitic statements issued by members of Svoboda. This not only gave Vladimir Putin the chance to label him (together with the whole current Ukrainian government) as fascist, but has in addition substantially hurt Yatsenyuk’s reputation amongst the European and American public. While the Europeans are very cautious to everything with only the slightest appearance of right-wing politics, the American public is widely known to be alarmed when the fate of Jewish population no matter where seems to be at stake.

Of great importance is also Yatsenyuk’s stand towards the language issue. It is broadly known that Ukrainian is the only official language in the country although a lot of its population’s mother tongue is Russian. Yatsenyuk, stemming from the West and a native speaker of Ukrainian, clearly has some emotional baggage connected to this issue. For example it has been reported that he changed the name plate of his Crimean office from Russian to Ukrainian immediately after assuming office. While the official homepage of his former party Front of Change is available in Ukrainian and Russian, the site of Fatherland is available in Ukrainian only. One of the first actions of his government was the proposal to abolish Russian as regional language. For someone who held political positions in the Crimean government and Odessa, two Ukrainian strongholds of Russian language, this action is a decision of poor judgment. Although it is debatable whether the language law which was supposed to install Russian as a regional language had been necessary in the first place and the govern-

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107 Herszenhorn op. cit. note 102.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
ment backed off its proposal quickly, the symbolic meaning inherent to Russian language had major consequences. Ukraine has been characterised as a strictly divided country in Western media for a long time, but the separation was never as real as after that announcement. It did not only give Putin a pretext to send troops to Crimea and regions with majorly Russian speaking population. It also frightened those who regard Russian as their mother tongue and often have not only a strong emotional relation to Russia, but also close economic and family ties. Proposals to grant local councils the right to promote Russian and other languages\footnote{Grigory Vasilenko, 
Ukraine’s Yatsenyuk Offers Minority Language Loophole to Regions, Rianovosti 8 May 2014, available at <http://en.ria.ru/world/20140508/189674256/Ukraines-Yatsenyuk-Offers-Minority-Language-Loophole-to-Regions.html>.} might be suitable means to mitigate the current situation, but do not make the damage undone. It is obviously hard for Yatsenyuk to admit making this mistake, as the mere mentioning of it does make his blood boil.\footnote{Bota op. cit. note 103.}

Another detail which does not generate a lot of sympathy in the West is the fact that Yatsenyuk heavily relies on Ukrainian oligarchs to support Ukraine’s way to real independence from Russia. The oligarchs are regarded as having profited from the privatisation of state property, enriching themselves at the expense of ordinary Ukrainian people. From a moral point of view, the situation is democratically suspicious, those people cannot be trusted. But Yatsenyuk is pragmatic enough to have realised that at the end, no Western country will stand up for Ukraine and endure Russia’s wrath. In this situation, he does not have a lot of other options. But as he has shown before, one cannot be sure that this means a life-long alliance with Poroshenko and his likes. Judging from his house in the noble suburbs of Kiev, Yatsenyuk eventually might be a little bit of an oligarch himself.

### 3.6 Post-Euromaidan

On 27\textsuperscript{th} February 2014, Yatsenyuk was appointed Prime Minister of Ukraine by the Ukrainian Parliament. Since then, he has been certainly in a rather difficult situation. Being replaced as leader of Fatherland by Tymoshenko in 2013, his major role ever since has consisted in gaining the support of Western countries to stop Russian invasion. While Tymoshenko was campaigning against Poroshenko in the presidential election, Yatsenyuk assumed (among other
duties) typical tasks of a Foreign Minister by shaking hands with European and American politicians and donours. Ready to help out financially, they tended to be very hesitant when it came to potential political or economic sanctions against Russia. Before the presidential election, the only step taken in this field by the EU was a travel ban imposed on several Crimean individuals. Economic sanctions have been adopted as recently as in the end of July and have led to broad criticism all over Europe. A big success for Yatsenyuk was certainly the signing of Ukraine’s Association Agreement with the EU. Its political part had been already signed on March 21th 2014, while the signing of its economic provisions had been delayed until after the presidential election. Meanwhile, although this part of the agreement was signed as well, its implementation has been postponed to December 31st 2015.

Yatsenyuk has not made himself eligible for the post of the Ukrainian President in 2014. Although it is unclear why, several reasons might be brought forward. First of all, he might have considered his role as Prime Minister as far more important, especially taking into account the state of war in Ukraine. He never tires to underline Russia’s role in the current events and has gained a lot of political profile by that. Secondly, by handing the leadership of Fatherland back to Tymoshenko he lost the opportunity to profit from a party with a broad political network. Tymoshenko being out of prison and taking the stage from the very first moment, Yatsenyuk might have come to the conclusion to better bet his money on somebody else rather than himself. Others wrote that assuming the position of a president during times like these might only hurt Yatsenyuk’s future in politics, and that he was not ready to sacrifice his entire career for an uncertain outcome. Thus, the presidential elections became an almost epic battle between the “gas princess” and the “chocolate king” who are both wealthier than Yatsenyuk. Perhaps the negative memories of Yatsenyuk’s previous attempt to become President also played a role.

In the end of March 2014, a blogger predicted that “[i]f Yats isn’t dead in six months, he’ll have a cushy teaching post at an American university.” So far, this prediction has not come true. Yatsenyuk is still standing, although the coalition supporting his government fell apart in July 2014, which prompted him to hand in his resignation as Prime Minister. It was declined by Parliament a few days later. Therefore Yatsenyuk is still in place, willing to imple-

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ment unpopular reforms he deems necessary for the future of Ukraine. A recent survey depicts him as one of the most popular Ukrainian politicians of these days. He is listed as the Ukrainian politician with the biggest amount of followers on Facebook and ranks third in online searches. This evidence displays the good chances for Yatsenyuk’s political career in the near and far future.

4. Vitali Klitschko

4.1. Background

The son of a former colonel of the Soviet Air Force, Vitali Volodymyrovych Klitschko, was born on 19th July 1971 in Belovodskoe near Frunze (now Bishkek), the capital of the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic. He was raised in extreme poverty and moved quite a lot before his family finally settled down in Ukraine. His mother tongue is Russian, so he had to learn Ukrainian when he decided to take part in the Ukrainian political landscape, and he still speaks Ukrainian with some difficulties.

Klitschko began boxing when he was 14 years old. In his sports career, he earned a record number of successes: he is a two-time world amateur kickboxing champion and four-time professional kickboxing champion, three-time Ukrainian boxing champion, champion of the First World Military Championship, and a silver medalist at the World Amateur Boxing Championship. In 1996, he entered professional boxing, and earned a variety of titles, e.g. the European Champion, the Inter-Continental WBO and WBA champion as well as the WBO and WBC Heavyweight champion. The World Boxing Council named him the best puncher in the history of heavyweight boxing. Married and father of three children (two sons and one daughter), Klitschko is really close to his younger brother, Volodymyr (Vladimir), who is also a boxer and who also took part in Euromaidan in support of his brother. In 1995, Vitali Klitschko graduated from Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky Pedagogical Institute of Dragomanov and later both Klitschko brothers obtained Ph.D. degrees, becoming the sportsmen with the highest level of academic education.

The legend of the Klitschko brothers is the one of self-made men who were raised in poverty and built an economic empire from almost nothing. But apart from the legend, they have undoubtedly found the keys of success in themselves. Early in their career they turned down flamboyant boxing promoter Don King and decided to run their own multi-million empire instead. Signing contracts for different brands, the Klitschko brothers have really understood how to be at centre stage. Their official website\textsuperscript{116} offers the possibility to buy mugs or T-shirts with the effigy of the brothers. Books and movies have also been produced by them. As one man of their party said, “They are not just men, for us Ukrainians, they are gods.”\textsuperscript{117}

In line with their business interests, in 2007 the two brothers created “Klitschko Management Group” with the goal, as Vladimir Klitschko described, to “develop individual and authentic marketing strategies for companies, brands and personalities. Furthermore, they consult and support companies with their market entry into Eastern European countries.”\textsuperscript{118}

One of the biggest commercial achievements of the company was the renewal of the contract with German TV-channel RTL on broadcasting 5 title bouts. Besides RTL which pays € 3 million for broadcasting rights, the total of € 5 million earnings is divided between advertising profit and gate revenue. Furthermore, the brothers get € 3 million euros for every fight in the ring; the rest goes to the title-challenger. The brothers receive considerable advertising profits and they have surrounded themselves with influential partners. They are the brand ambassadors of the largest network of fitness-clubs in Europe McFit, and they also advertise vitamin products Eunova, telecommunication company T-Mobile, automobile Mercedes, and the brewery Warsteiner. Together with Sylvester Stallone they co-produced the musical “Rocky”, the world premiere of which took place in Hamburg.

Vitali and Vladimir were listed among the top 100 of the richest Ukrainians according to Korrespondent magazine, their overall financial standing has been estimated at $ 55 million in 2011. Focus magazine, as far as it is concerned, estimated the Klitschkos’ capital as $ 75 million in 2013 (the 135\textsuperscript{th} rating position of the 200 richest people in Ukraine). According to the

\textsuperscript{116} See <www.klitschko.com>.
\textsuperscript{117} Jonathan Green, Knockout Blow: In Kiev with the Klitschko Brothers, the Boxing World’s Toughest Heavy-weights, Daily Mail of 19\textsuperscript{th} May 2012.
\textsuperscript{118} See <http://www.k-mg.com>.
net, Vitali Klitschko has a net worth of about $20 million. The source of wealth is mostly boxing.

From 1998 on, the Klitschko brothers took not only part in a range of charitable activities, they also created the International Fund for Promotion of Sports "Sports - XXI century", whose aim is to support young talented athletes and sporting events to promote sports among young people as an alternative to negative social influences. Five years later, they established the Klitschko Brothers Foundation, which was renamed the Klitschko Foundation in 2014. As it is described on the website of the Foundation, the mission is “to help young people to practice the philosophy of healthy living and healthy thinking, and advise government on the development of sport and education in Ukraine and also to provide physical, spiritual and intellectual formation of the young generation.”

In 2002, Vitali and Vladimir began a long-term co-operation with UNESCO, particularly in the implementation of the "Education for children in scarcity" project which greatly influenced their subsequent charity, and Vitali was designated UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador to speak at the Wroclaw Global Forum 2012. The brothers were nominated UNESCO Champions for Sport by Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of the Organization, in December 2006. The designation of the Klitschko brothers was a tribute to “their exceptional success in the sport of boxing, their long-term commitment on behalf of the marginalised, their exemplary efforts to promote and support UNESCO’s Programme for the Education of Children in Need, and their valuable contribution to furthering the Organisation’s ideals and objectives.”

4.2. Early political career and Orange Revolution

Vitali Klitschko’s political ambitions have been known for years. Already in the 1990s, he reminded the Ukrainian politicians he met of the need to build a viable state. During the Orange Revolution, he was on Maidan Nezalezhnosti to support citizen protests against electoral fraud. During this event, the Klitschko brothers openly supported the candidacy of Vik-

120 See <http://www.klitschkofoundation.org/foundation/history>.
121 Isabelle Le Fournis, Ukrainian Boxers Vitaliy and Wladimir Klitschko to be Named UNESCO Champions for Sport, UNESCO PRESS, Press Release N°2006-146.
tor Yushchenko. One year later, Vitali became an advisor to the newly-elected President Yushchenko.

Klitschko began campaigning for Mayor of Kiev in 2005. He lost the 2006 mayoral election against Leonid Chernovetskyi, but was placed second with 26% of the vote, ahead of the incumbent Oleksandr Omelchenko. This first campaign was fought on an anti-corruption platform and led to the creation of the bloc "Civic party" PORA-ROP (uniting the parties PORA and Reforms and Order Party). Some analysts stated that Klitschko’s relatively late entry into the campaign might have cost him votes. Still, Klitschko was elected as a people’s deputy to the Kiev City Council since "Civic party" PORA-ROP won 14 seats in the 2006 election. The election as alderman of the city of Kiev was quite surprising because he was not even living in Ukraine. At the same time, he was promoted to full-time adviser to the President. In the May 2008 Kiev local election, Klitschko ran again and won 18% of the vote. He simultaneously led the Vitaliy Klitschko Bloc that won 10.61% of the votes and 15 seats and again, he was elected to the Kiev City Council. The same year, he was also appointed to the Ukrainian delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

In April 2010 Klitschko became the leader of the political party Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR). The acronym is the Ukrainian word for “punch”. According to the website of the Party, the ranks of UDAR include over 10,000 members in all 24 regions of Ukraine. The Party has over 596 active organisations, and 399 deputies of local councils at various levels represent UDAR in 15 regions of Ukraine. The Party’s ideological basis consists in the development of Ukraine as a democratic country. As its main goal, UDAR aims “to focus the Ukrainian political discourse on the interests of the society as well as European standards, which will allow Ukraine to become a successful European state.122 The programme of the party, as it appears now on the official website is rather lengthy and only available in English. However, the success of UDAR almost exclusively depends on the charisma and the celebrity of Klitschko. 2012 UDAR entered the Verkhovna Rada, with Klitschko elected to lead the Party’s group of deputies. After his election as Mayor of Kiev in 2014, his mandate was terminated by a decision of the Verkhovna Rada, supported by 256 parliamentarians with the necessary minimum of 226 votes.

122 See <http://klichko.org/about/history/>.
4.3. Role in Euromaidan

Klitschko’s involvement in Euromaidan began in early November 2013 when people were protesting against the manipulation of the parliamentary election. In fact, following the protests, the leader of UDAR called for the resignation of President Yanukovich. One month later, Klitschko failed with a no-confidence vote against the Government; his application received only 186 of the 226 necessary votes. The Government opponents blamed the then-Prime Minister Azarov for ensuring that Ukraine did not sign the Association Agreement with the EU, declaring that Ukraine needed a break to re-negotiate with the EU and neighbouring Russia.

From the beginning of December 2013, when the protests picked up strength, Klitschko called for increased support for the opposition against President Yankovich. Urging Yanukovich’s resignation, Klitschko declared: "Who does not want to live in a police state, but in a modern country, should not remain indifferent." According to information given by the newspaper DER SPIEGEL, Chancellor Angela Merkel and a group of conservative deputies from the European People’s Party (EPP) wanted to strengthen Klitschko’s position through joint public appearances at that time, with the aim of turning Klitschko into the leader of the opposition and a candidate against Yanukovich. Klitschko expected a lot from Germany, where he had lived for years. In a commentary printed in Bild-Zeitung, Klitschko thanked for support from abroad, particularly from Germany, declaring: "The contact with Chancellor Angela Merkel, Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, or even the CDU foreign policy expert Elmar Brok is very encouraging and helps us further.”

Klitschko reinforced his opposition stance following Yanukovich’s gas deal with Russia and called for nation-wide strikes. He accused Yanukovich of sacrificing the national interests.\(^{127}\)

Klitschko even compared Yanukovich to a dictator, saying that the latter betrays his country to enrich himself and to remain as dictator in power.\(^{128}\) In January 2013 he spontaneously went to the Munich Security Conference and pleaded for more support from the West.\(^{129}\)

But what the opposition intended to be a pacifist movement of opposition went quickly out of control and deteriorated into some kind of civil war, against which Klitschko was powerless. Already on 19\(^{th}\) January 2014, Klitschko declared that he “did not rule out a civil war, but will take “every opportunity to avoid bloodshed”.\(^{130}\)

Urging the intervention of Western countries many times, he also accused Yanukovich’s government of deliberately organising provocations to disperse the crowd on Maidan Nezalezhnosti with blood and violence, and to crush the protests.\(^{131}\)

The end of February 2014 really marked Klitschko’s loss of control. In fact, the Union Hall on Maidan Nezalezhnosti which served as headquarters for the opposition and housed the press centre, the command centre for the brigades of government opponents and the central food station, was destroyed.

Klitschko continued to appear as the only, or at least the best, alternative to Yanukovich, until Yulia Tymoshenko was released from prison at the end of February 2014. As the SPIEGEL in March observed, “Tymoshenko stole the show to Klitschko at the EPP Congress”, even if the latter had called for her release from prison. Appealing to Yanukovich to resign, Klitschko’s popularity once more increased when he stood between the police and the protesters.\(^{132}\)

Refusing Yanukovich’s proposal to take over the most important government post at the end of January, he did not choose the easy way. Klitschko continued to insist on the need for fair elections, while he could have taken power easily. It shows that this involve-


\(^{130}\) See *Pro-West-Protest: Krawalle in der Ukraine - Klitschko attackiert*, SPIEGEL ONLINE (19/01/14).

\(^{131}\) See *Eskalation in der Ukraine: Klitschko bricht Krisentreffen mit Janukowitsch ergebnislos ab*, SPIEGEL ONLINE (18/02/14).

\(^{132}\) See *Machtkampf in der Ukraine: ’Vitali Klitschko ist die einzige Alternative’,* SPIEGEL ONLINE (23/01/14).
ment was not completely for personal purpose, but above all that he understood that accepting the offer would have meant agreeing with Yanukovich and taking part in the government which he was criticising.\(^{133}\)

Even if Klitschko appeared to be a leader who mobilised and created emotions as was shown by the amount of Ukrainians who joined the movement, the frustration of the protesters rose and the impact of Klitschko began to grow weaker by the end of Janyuary. In fact, the people were discontented by the lack of an effective strategy against the Government, and also because their protests seemed to be unsuccessful.\(^{134}\) As one protester declared, "The men at the head of the opposition have no political experience, and they distrust each other. Klitschko lives only by his popularity and the impact of his fists; he lacks the will power and determination of Yulia Tymoshenko."\(^{135}\) As Klitschko declared in an interview, he considers that the greatest achievement of the Euromaidan was that civil society showed that it had power, but also to emphasise the strength of the Ukrainian society, vital for democracy.

4.4. Post-Euromaidan campaign

Klitschko mentioned the possibility of standing as candidate for the Ukrainian presidency in October 2013, when elections were not yet planned. He reiterated that he would stand as a presidential candidate on 28th February 2014. As he said, "I made the decision: I will participate, I would run." He was firmly convinced that reforms are needed, declaring: "We must fight for our vision and our country."\(^{136}\) But one month later, Klitschko waived his presidential nomination. Instead, he supported the candidacy of oligarch Petro Poroshenko, both wanting to prevent ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from obtaining the presidency. He explained at a meeting of UDAR that the only chance to win is to nominate a candidate of the democratic forces, and that this must be the candidate who enjoys the widest support\(^{137}\).

\(^{133}\) See *Krise in der Ukraine: Klitschko lehnt Regierungsangebot von Janukowitsch ab*, SPIEGEL ONLINE (25/01/14).

\(^{134}\) See *Straßenschlachten in Kiew: Oppositionschef Klitschko befürchtet bald Tote*, SPIEGEL ONLINE (21/01/14).


\(^{137}\) See *Ukraine: Klitschko verzichtet auf Präsidentschaftskandidatur*, SPIEGEL ONLINE (29/03/14), available at <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-klitschko-verzichtet-auf-praesidentschaftskandidatur-a-961427.html>.
This official reason but also the political reason of that decision could be explained by other motives than the ones given by Klitschko. In fact, Klitschko was sharing the statute of favourite with Tymoshenko as it can be seen from the opinion polls of that time. His victory was not assured but he had good chances, even if an alliance with Poroshenko presented more advantages. But why did Klitschko waive his candidacy and not Poroshenko, as the former was in a stronger position to win? Different explanations exist. Firstly, it may have been related to a law which Parliament passed and which might have prevented Klitschko's candidacy. According to that law, citizens who permanently reside in another country and are subject to tax in that other country are no longer considered "residents" of Ukraine. Furthermore, a presidential candidate must have lived in Ukraine ten years before the election. However, Klitschko had lived a long time in Germany; he has a German residence permit and also pays taxes in Germany.

Klitschko finally ran as a candidate in the local elections in Kiev and became Mayor of the city on 25th May 2014, after having failed three times before. But as mayor, Klitschko only has representative functions while power is vested in the municipal authorities, nominated by the President.138 He was sworn in as Mayor on 5th June 2014 and was deprived the same day of his mandate as Member of Parliament. Poroshenko was elected President of Ukraine on 25th May 2014 and appointed Klitschko as head of Kiev City State Administration on 25th June 2014.

On the whole, the political involvement of Klitschko is mostly characterised by what could be called "the hesitations of a beginner". In particular, his political agenda remained unclear until he announced his retirement from boxing in December 2013. Even then, his economic programme, his vision for social policy and his approach concerning relations with Russia were not clearly defined. Since his election as Mayor of Kiev Klitschko did not win unanimous support. In fact, only one week after his election he discredited himself by appointing Ihor Nikonov as his chief advisor, described as 'one of the most aggressive developers in Kyiv, someone who directly says that he dreams of building a skyscraper in Kyiv that he saw in

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New York some time ago. A few days after his election, Klitschko called on the demonstrators on Maidan Nezalezhnosti to end the protests. "The barricades have served their purpose and now need to be put away," said Klitschko at a joint press conference with President Poroshenko. Klitschko also called for donations to the Ukrainian army, describing the "reign of terror" in some cities as unacceptable.

The post of Mayor of the capital of the country gives Klitschko the possibility to be heard easily, although the post itself does not bring much power. As a recent retiree from sports Klitschko will be henceforth more present on the political stage and will probably try to define a real programme for his party. It can also be foreseen that, as a really ambitious person, he will run for the next presidential elections if his popularity allows it.

5. Conclusion

Having looked at Euromaidan as a focal point of recent Ukrainian history and the moment of birth of a new culture of civic activism, the intertwined histories of the three politicians in the spotlight of this paper invite us to reconsider the question whether their public struggles have led to the creation of a new Ukrainian identity. Before Euromaidan much of the political posing and positioning of career politicians such as Tymoshenko and Yatsenyuk was meant to appeal to constituencies defined along the lines of traditional identity clusters. Euromaidan transcended these traditional boundaries: it was neither an expression of 'Ethnic Ukrainian' unrest nor of 'Soviet Ukrainian' dissatisfaction nor of 'Eastern Slavic' wishes for political restoration. It was a colourful expression of protest against the regime of Yanukovich, but in terms of a positive vision for the future of Ukraine, it was a concert of many voices. And it had a nearly cathartic effect on the political scene: Tymoshenko who continued to play along the old game of identity clusters vanished, Yatsenyuk just managed to

139 Serhiy Leshchenko, Klitschko’s First Moment of Shame, Ukrayinska Pravda (10/06/14).
141 See Kämpfe im Osten: Klitschko wirbt um Spenden für ukrainische Armee, SPIEGEL ONLINE (28/05/14) <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-klitschko-wirbt-um-spenden-fuer-armee-a-972074.html>.
abandon his prematurely chosen populist stance and escaped embarrassment, and Klitschko, possibly the most authentic of the three ‘heroes’, ended up with a well-deserved position in politics that may serve him as a springboard for the future.

Only time will tell whether Euromaidan will once be considered the birthplace of a new Ukrainian identity. But it seems fair to say that it created a broad demand for politicians who can deliver. People are tired of promises and ideologies. They have made their choice and know that charting the course towards EU integration will require transformations that go beyond the usual window-dressing. It appears that this preference for technocratic expert government is well in line with the continuing oligarchic nature of Ukrainian politics. Oligarchs have understood that a technocratic pro-EU government will be good for their business and that there is more to gain from EU association than from exporting traditional products into the Eurasian Customs Union. Poroshenko’s style of statesmanship is thus well in line with popular sentiment, and oligarchs will be well-advised to refrain from ideologised statements and keep a low profile while the country is undergoing its transformations. A lot of issues have not been settled yet, but the time of flamboyant saviours of the nation seems to be definitely over.

P.S.: At the elections to Verkhovna Rada on 26th October, 2014 Yatsenyuk’s People’s Front came out as the party with the largest share of the vote (22.16 %). Tymoshenko’s Fatherland was among the biggest losers with only 5.68 % of the votes cast.