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Euromaidan uprising – causes, implementation and legality

Abstract

The scientific paper analyses and explains the events in Ukraine until 2014 or the end of the Euromaidan uprising, after which the civil conflict in Ukraine began. The situation in Ukraine culminated again in February 2022 with the military intervention by the Russian Federation. This paper explains the causal factors of the beginning of the conflict, which has embryo in the Revolution of Dignity or Euromaidan. The focus of the research paper is on Ukraine's domestic and foreign policy, its relations with Euro-Atlantic institutions and Russia under Viktor Yanukovich, and the outbreak of the Euromaidan uprising. The research aims to better understand the conflicts within Ukraine and the relationship between Ukraine the EU, and Russia before and during the Euromaidan uprising through political-legal analysis.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russian Federation, Euromaidan uprising, Viktor Yanukovich, corruption, coloured revolutions, Orange Revolution

Introduction

Understanding any conflict can be challenging, especially if it is still ongoing, like the one in Ukraine. The conflict in Ukraine, although still active, is an ongoing conflict that has been going on for 10 years. Many authors drew attention to Ukraine in the late 20th century, such as Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations* and Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book *The Grand Chessboard*. However, the beginning of any conflict is very difficult to determine due to complex causal historical relationships. There are different views on the Ukrainian situation, and this is why some historians and political scientists, when researching the causes of the conflict in Ukraine, go back to the rule of Joseph Stalin, Stepan Bandera, or even to the beginnings of Kievan Rus' centuries ago. History and historical memory can have an impact on

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crisis situations, especially in Eastern Europe, where history plays an important role in nation-building and the image of “us-them”. However, this paper will examine the contemporary determinants of current conflict that have roots in the 2013/2014 Euromaidan uprising, also known as the Revolution of Dignity (Rukavina, 2024: 5-6).

There are several works in international publications about this topic, both in the West and in the Russian Federation. However, there are two problems within them. First, no one emphasizes the two dimensions of the Ukrainian legal framework and the socio-political context that led to the uprising. Secondly, research is mostly biased. This paper uses sources from several sides with stakes in the conflict and seeks to understand and explain the views and positions from within Ukraine itself, from Western powers and the Russian Federation. For this reason, the work is more objective because it is not exclusive to any side or narrative but strives to be inclusive and holistic to understand the main research topic: the causes, implementation and legality of the Euromaidan uprising.

In the Croatian academic community, this topic has not been researched with a focus on the causes and outbreak of the Euromaidan uprising itself. There are, however, several works that have researched the situation in Ukraine since Euromaidan. Davor Boban wrote two articles on the topic of Ukraine, or more precisely, on the Ukrainian electoral and party system (Boban, 2014a), and the oligarchic system in Ukraine (Boban, 2014b). Three research papers were published in the field of legal science about Ukraine dealing with issues of just war (Đipalo, 2015), crossing the straits in the Sea of Azov (Petrinec & Žganjec-Brajša, 2020) and violations of international law in the intervention of the Russian Federation in Crimea (Miloglav & Tomaš, 2017). The relations between Russia and Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union have been summarized in one subchapter of the book *Political System of Russia* by Davor Boban and Tihomir Cipek in 2017. The only research about Euromaidan is in an article that describes the Revolution of Dignity in contemporary Ukrainian literature (Poliščuk, 2018: 2021).

Thus, this research is relevant because the Ukrainian conflict has not been researched in detail and there are no studies about the Euromaidan uprising in Croatia. The relevance is even greater since the paper explains the arguments and views on the crisis of the West (Euro-Atlantic institutions) and the East (Russia), with a special focus on the social, political and legal dimensions of the Euromaidan uprising.

The research on Euromaidan is important since it is the main source and the beginning of everything that happened afterward, namely the annexation of Crimea (or reunification from the position of Russia), the eight-year civil conflict in eastern Ukraine, and the current open conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation from 2022. Therefore, the research is divided into three parts, which focus on three periods of Ukrainian politics after the end of the Cold War. The first part briefly anal-

yses the context before the Euromaidan uprising in Ukraine, with reflections on the 2004 Orange Revolution. The second part investigates Viktor Yanukovich's presidential mandate (2010-2014) and the main aspects of his domestic and foreign policy that led to the Euromaidan revolution. The last part of the paper researches the events and consequences of the Euromaidan uprising from both political and legal perspectives.

Research questions in this paper are:

1. What was the social and political context in Ukraine before Viktor Yanukovich came to power?
2. What were domestic and foreign policy aspects of President Viktor Yanukovich that led to Euromaidan uprising?
3. How did the Euromaidan uprising begin and end and what were the legal consequences?

The paper is based on multidisciplinary research that includes sociology, political and legal sciences. The methodology of the paper is qualitative research, which consists of studying the context, causal relations, development of the international crisis, and defining the main actors of the crisis with their interests. The research is founded on the analysis and interpretation of relevant literature, which includes books, research papers, official publications, media reports and certain legal and constitutional regulations (Burnham, 2006: 39). For some qualitative information, due to a lack of relevant data and a full picture of some events, some parts of the research are conducted by the triangulation method, which implies the use of multiple data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999: 1189-1193), especially complex ones like the Euromaidan uprising. In order to get a better and broader picture of the political situation in Ukraine, the author uses literature in Croatian, English, Ukrainian and Russian language.

The work might have limitations since the author had obstacles in obtaining literature because some sources of state and academic institutions in Ukraine and Russia were inaccessible due to frequent cyberattacks and the inability to access certain secret documents that are not yet available to the public. For this reason, future research about the crisis in Ukraine may reveal new and different results and arguments. Furthermore, in the future, the crisis in Ukraine could affect other areas of the world that are not included in this study.

Indications of conflict and the Orange revolution

Ukrainian domestic and international issues were described almost immediately after the collapse of the USSR. We can look at these warnings from two perspectives or levels: "1) the domestic level of Ukraine as a state; 2) the international level as a subject of international relations" (Rukavina, 2023).

Samuel Huntington wrote about the first level of problems within Ukraine as a state: “lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed” (Huntington, 1996: 36). „A civilizational approach... emphasizes the close cultural, personal, and historical links between Russia and Ukraine and the intermingling of Russians and Ukrainians in both countries and focuses instead on the civilizational fault line that divides Orthodox eastern Ukraine from Uniate western Ukraine“ (Ibid: 83). This civilizational approach emphasizes the possibility of Ukrainian division. Huntington would be the first to predict a civil conflict within Ukraine along the line of demarcation of the entities, where the eastern part of Ukraine would express a desire for unification with Russia. To avoid this, the civilizational approach encouraged cooperation between Russia and Ukraine, the renunciation of nuclear weapons, which Ukraine had renounced, economic cooperation, measures and assistance to preserve the unity and independence of Ukraine, and contingency planning for the possible disintegration of Ukraine (Ibid).

The second level of observation is the level of international relations. It is a realist approach that emphasizes security and relations between Kyiv and Moscow, and the possibility of an arms race due to security fears, wherein lies the danger of war between the two states. However, this can be avoided if “Russia and Ukraine learn to live together in harmony” (Mearsheimer, 1993: 54). Zbigniew Brzezinski also wrote about this, seeing Ukraine as an important geopolitical entity in post-Cold War Europe. Ukraine was a key state in preventing the re-emergence of Russia as a regional (or global) power. “If Moscow was able to regain control of Ukraine, with its 52 million inhabitants, significant natural resources and access to the Black Sea, Russia would automatically regain everything it needs to create a strong imperial state, encompassing Europe and Asia” (Brzezinski, 1999: 31). “In order for Ukraine to survive as an independent state, it must become part of Central Europe, not Eurasia, and in order to become part of Central Europe, it must fully participate in Central Europe’s ties with NATO and the European Union” (Ibid: 75). When will Ukraine be ready for close cooperation or possible membership in NATO or the European Union? According to Brzezinski, “the decade between 2005 and 2015 is the time of the gradual Ukrainian membership” (Ibid: 75). His prediction did not deviate too much from the actual timeline of events, but only about one year, given that the political turnarounds/shifts towards membership in Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic institutions took place in 2004 and 2014. What are the political turnarounds/shifts?

The first was the Orange Revolution of 2004. Politician Viktor Yushchenko, with his political ally Yulia Tymoshenko, launched great demonstrations where protesters wore orange clothes, and the Revolution was named “Orange”. The reasons for the demonstration were alleged machinations and frauds in the elections, which led to

the annulment and organization of new elections, although not a completely new cycle, but a repetition of only the second election round, including Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych. This required the amendment of the Constitution, as was done through parliament (Verkhovna Rada) in December 2004 and was immediately signed by then-President Leonid Kuchma (Відомості Верховної Ради України, 2005). Viktor Yanukovych complained and called for elections to be held again from the first round, not just another round with him and Yushchenko. After the election was repeated, Yushchenko won, as he was “seen as easier to agree to EU conditions” (Lane, 2008: 547), although in 2004, both Yanukovych and Yushchenko expressed their desire for membership in the EU (Ibid). Perhaps the key overbalancing factor was the popular saying: behind every successful man is his wife, given that Viktor Yushchenko’s wife was Katerina Yushchenko, an official in the US State Department, a White House official under Ronald Reagan, and the finance official (United States Department of the Treasury) under George W. Bush (Concordia, 2017).

In the repeated second round of elections, there were election frauds, manipulations and vote rigging in both camps. In this process, NGOs became *de facto* political bodies, expanding their activities through the media and social networks. The role of NGOs is being transformed from acting in civil society on behalf of citizens to acting in political struggles for power. “What is portrayed in the media as *people’s power* is in reality an elite-manipulated demonstration” (Lane, 2008: 528). These elections showed the division between the western parts, preferring Yushchenko, and the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, supporting Yanukovych (OSCE, 2005: 5). With the new president, Viktor Yushchenko, the Orange Revolution ended, which aimed to move Ukraine away from the control of Russia (Karatnycky, 2005: 40-50). Namely, the Russian Federation supported Viktor Yanukovych, hoping that he would implement the integration plan in the post-Soviet space, resulting in the Yalta Agreement, or Agreement on the Establishment of the Common Economic Space, signed on 19th September 2003. The signatories were the Presidents of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan; however, integration plan was halted by the Orange Revolution because Yushchenko, on 27th August 2005, refused to sign documents establishing a supranational tariff institution and customs union, but he did sign documents regulating the free trade zone (ФЕНЕНКО, 2017: 273-274).

Through the political activity of the implementors of the Orange Revolution, Ukraine failed to become a successful candidate for Euro-Atlantic integration. The names changed, but the processes in the state remained the same. Mutual disagreements, power struggles, bribery of MPs, harassment of political opponents and personal ambitions taking precedence over principles and commitment (Harasymiw, 2007: 20) were the main instruments that broke the Orange Revolution. Yushchenko himself was a non-revolutionary cadre, as he was a moderate politician who was

extremely cautious and careful, oriented more towards consensus (Ibid: 11). In addition, the corrupt system of government in Ukraine survived the Orange Revolution, as it is founded on a system of oligarch clans that controlled politics (Boban, 2014b: 40). “Since the alliance between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko broke down by September 2005, removing her from the post of prime minister, the Donetsk clan and oligarchs managed to preserve their wealth and power” (Ibid, 43). The failures of the Orange Revolution benefited its main loser, Viktor Yanukovych, who managed to recover and became prime minister again in 2006 and president of Ukraine in February 2010, after defeating Yulia Tymoshenko (Copsey & Shapovalova, 2010: 211) (Herron, 2011: 47-48). If the French Revolution ate its children through Jacobin terror, the Orange Revolution ate its children through corruption, clientelism and the clan-oligarchic system.

The reign of Viktor Yanukovych and the creation of pre-revolutionary conditions

Viktor Yanukovych, a native of the Donetsk region, became prime minister under President Leonid Kuchma. Prior to that, he was governor of the Donetsk oblast state administration in times of “uncertainty: organized crime was rampant, and government ministers and prominent businessmen were frequently the targets of assassination attempts” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023) (Енциклопедія України в Інтернеті, 2023). “Yanukovych and his allies aimed to establish a political and economic monopoly of power in the Donetsk region, and toward this goal they eliminated competitors and integrated criminal and business allies into the Party of Regions, the political face of the Donetsk clan” (Kuzio, 2014: 197). That was successfully achieved during his first year as governor of Donetsk Oblast. As a political dead man after the Orange Revolution, he worked for a long time to achieve his goal to become the president of Ukraine. He succeeded in 2010 and started to transform the balance of power. The Ukrainian parliament changed the rules according to which coalitions can be formed between political parties, enabling the dissolution of Yulia Tymoshenko’s government and the appointment of Mykola Azarov as the new prime minister. Although, according to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, it was forbidden to form parliamentary coalitions, based on a decision from 2008, in April 2010, the Constitutional Court issued a new decision allowing this practice. For Yanukovych, the Constitutional Court played an important role in centralizing his power. With constitutional reforms, he strengthened presidential powers, while the opposition portrayed it as authoritarianism. The amendments to the constitution were not passed through the consensus of Ukrainian political parties but were based on decisions of the Constitutional Court, with a low level of trust among the citizens. Although the laws were violated, the political process of their changes was challenging (Matuszak & Sarna, 2013: 12-14).

With Yanukovych's change of government in Ukraine in 2010, the *modus operandi* of Ukraine's political elite and the economically oligarchic clans stayed the same. "The strength of the Donetsk clan was confirmed after a vote of no confidence in the government of Yulia Tymoshenko in March 2010" (Boban: 2014b: 43). Yanukovych appointed Mykola Azarov as the new prime minister, in whose government 8 of the 29 ministers were from Donetsk and 16 members of the government belonged to the narrow circle of Leonid Kuchma, former President of Ukraine (Kuzio, 2011: 221). Under Yanukovych, corruption increased significantly, the oligarchic system of government in the background strengthened, and authoritarian tendencies intensified. "Corruption, which previously flourished in Ukraine, has become systematic, almost total character" (Фесенко, 2014: 26). One of the more obvious examples of corruption was public procurement, since between 2010 and 2013, the Law of Ukraine on Public Procurement was amended 35 times, thus distorting competition and transparency in the process and making the law ineffective (Стародубцев & Бугай, 2016: 5).

Interestingly, in his campaign, Yanukovych and his Party of Regions announced the fight against corruption, and many of his voters expected a greater anti-corruption stance. In his initial reform program, corruption had no special place. Yanukovych signed the Law on preventing and combating corruption in June 2012 (although the law itself was passed in the Verkhovna Rada in April 2011). The new measures allowed prosecutors to indict several politicians and hundreds of smaller government officials, but the strong fight against corruption was weakened over time (Matuszak & Sarna, 2013: 16). These measures had an effect on the perception of corruption under Yanukovych. Thus, after his coming to power, Ukraine was in the 146th place, according to the Corruption Index of Transparency International in 2010, in the 152nd place in 2011, and after signing anti-corruption measures, it dropped to the 144th place in 2012 and 2013 (Transparency International, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). However, for many Ukrainians, especially those who saw themselves as part of the West, this was still a high perception of corruption. Other international institutions also pointed out the challenges of corruption, with better methods of measuring corruption, as opposed to the perception itself, which does not show real corruption. The OECD describes Kiev's progress in fighting corruption between 2008 and 2011 as negligible. With regard to the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan, Ukraine managed to meet one of the twenty-four OECD recommendations (Matuszak & Sarna, 2013: 19).

Furthermore, Tomas Fiala, the president of the European Business Association, stated that half of the companies paid bribes and were "targeted by corrupt officials and had little choice but to participate in tax avoidance and other illicit schemes just to conduct ordinary business" (Stecklow et al. 2014). In addition, he explained that companies paid 6% of bribe revenues in 2008, and in 2011, it increased to 10% (Пасочник, 2012). Corruption was a longstanding problem, which had intertwined all levels of

government and public administration. The strong anti-corruption measure could make the system completely dysfunctional, increasing dissatisfaction among officials who need to implement public policies. Bribery and overall corrupt practices remained consistently at a high level for decades and affected almost all spheres of citizens' lives, for whom it became a common, everyday form of social behaviour. Most Ukrainians considered it a regular part of life, justifying corruption as a regular market mechanism to speed up activities or to balance low wages. "The low-ranked public servants are poorly paid, but they have a lot of opportunities to receive extra money in addition to their salary by exploiting their positions. Ukrainians face corruption at nearly each step they take – in the medical sphere, education, permit system, law-enforcement and justice" (Yemelianova, 2010: 2). If corruption was so deeply prevalent in society, how much could Yanukovich improve the situation during his term in general? Although he managed to reduce the level of perception of corruption by a few points, once corruption becomes a part of everyday life, it is almost impossible to ameliorate it.

Corruption did not spare the institutions associated with Ukraine's national security. Those institutions often served narrow oligarchic-clan interests rather than the interests of citizens and the state. "Citizens who do not trust public bodies or law enforcement bodies, get a strong motive for the violent overthrow of the ruling regime. Ukraine has failed to address the practice of selective justice and the use of security forces in the security sector for its own political purposes in order to put pressure on political opponents" (Дацюк et al. 2015: 24). Furthermore, Yanukovich's Party of Regions used security forces, such as the Security Service of Ukraine (*Служба безпеки України* - SBU) to prevent any future-coloured revolutions (Kuzio, 2012: 559). Some researchers, such as Kuzio, will call this process *Putinization* (and *Russification*) of Ukraine's security forces and national security policies (Ibid: 580-581). However, what could be expected from Yanukovich, who lost power through that revolution? Russia's security policy and the definition of coloured revolutions as hybrid security challenges arose precisely on the example of Yanukovich, so it can be said that the *Yanukovichization* of Russian security forces actually took place, not the *Putinization* of Ukrainian security forces. Yanukovich used those methods to prevent any repetition of the 2004 scenario. Nevertheless, in some respects "it should not be forgotten that during the Yanukovich era, Russia successfully infiltrated Ukrainian security and defence institutions, practically depriving it of the ability and capacity to defend itself" (Лаф & Солоненко, 2016: 21). "The Chairman of the SBU and Ministers of Education, Foreign Policy, and Defence were successfully lobbied by Russia. Two Russian citizens (illegally) control the Ukrainian President's bodyguards and informational, analytical work in the Presidential Administration" (Kuzio, 2012: 581). This undermined Ukraine's national security and was a strong lever of Moscow's power in Kyiv, surpassing the influence of other foreign powers, such as Washington or Brussels. An interesting

question for future research is how the great political powers in international relations influence the decision-making of states?

In foreign policy, Yanukovych managed to end the gas conflict or the gas war that broke out between Russia and Ukraine during the rule of President Yushchenko (Pirani et al. 2009: 5-42) (Pirani, 2009: 2-26). This was one of the main foreign policy challenges and successes of Yanukovych. On „21st April 2010, Prime Ministers Mykola Azarov and Vladimir Putin signed a package of agreements in Kharkov on the method of setting the price of gas and extending the time of stationing the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimean bases until 2042” (ФЕНЕНКО, 2017: 280), “with an additional five-year renewal option (to 2042–47) unless one of the parties notified the other in a written form about their termination, no later than one year before the term of the agreement” (Hurak, 2016: 105). Despite this agreement with Russia, Yanukovych continued to cooperate with Western institutions and did not interrupt or freeze Ukraine’s negotiations with the EU’s Eastern Partnership initiative, as some state structures in Russia had hoped (ФЕНЕНКО, 2017: 396). As in the 2004 presidential election, Yanukovych sought to balance between East and West, between a militarily strong Russia and economically strong developed democracies of Euro-Atlantic integration. However, the policy of balancing and playing with multiple players is a double-edged sword, since it allows for double gains until the state does not have to decide whether to go into further integration with one of the players. In Ukraine, this is even more complicated due to the civilizational division between the pro-European (pro-Western) and pro-Russian parts.

Ukraine’s rapprochement with the EU began on 22nd January 2006, when the EU Council of Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the mandate of the European Commission to start negotiations on new founding agreements. The perspective of Ukraine’s membership in the EU was not put in those documents, but that possibility was not denied either (Ibid: 396). At the beginning of 2008, negotiation of a final agreement on a deep and comprehensive free trade area took place and was concluded on 9th September 2008 at the Ukraine-EU summit in Paris with a three-part document: 1) The Joint Declaration on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement; 2) Georgia (because of the Russian intervention in Georgia a month earlier); 3) Deepening EU-Ukraine Cooperation (Council of the European Union, 2008). Yanukovych resumed negotiations with the EU, although there were difficulties. For example, in 2011, when Yulia Tymoshenko was jailed for corruption, some EU countries criticized Yanukovych, and several EU member states boycotted the 2012 European Football Championship matches played in Ukraine. However, despite this, Ukraine’s rapprochement did not stop. During 2012, several Ukraine-EU meetings agreed on drafts of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, after which “signing at the Eastern Partnership Summit was to be held on 28th-29th November 2013” (ФЕНЕНКО,

2017: 396). Despite these agreements with the EU, Yanukovich continued to balance relations with Russia (Rukavina, 2024: 7).

For Yanukovich, Ukraine's strategic move was not to join NATO, but the EU, due to greater economic benefits, better and more reliable business conditions, and ensuring the rights of national minorities in Ukraine. A new *Law on the Fundamentals of Domestic and Foreign Policy* was passed, emphasizing the refusal to join NATO and assuring Ukraine to be a neutral state, but integration with the EU became a priority. However, despite this pro-European direction, most countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (including Russia) signed the Free Trade Agreement in 2011 with Ukraine (Баца, 2017: 70). During 2012 and 2013, Russia tried to establish a Customs Union with Ukraine, offering even more favourable energy prices. Due to its policy towards the EU, Yanukovich refused the Customs Union with Russia, but Ukraine became an observer according to the 3+1 formula. This status failed to change even with Vladimir Putin's visit to Kyiv on 27th July 2013 for the conference entitled "Orthodox-Slavic Values: The Foundation of Ukraine's Civilizational Choice" (President of Russia, 2013), after which Yanukovich showed no change in foreign policy towards the EU (Фененко, 2017: 281). Yanukovich's balancing was noticed by the former Minister of Economy of Ukraine, Viktor Suslov: "Yanukovich, of course, greatly overestimated himself. He thought it was easy enough to blackmail Russia and the West with the fact that Ukraine could go to the other (side), and asked for gifts from both sides. I guess he didn't take into account that the world's leading states always have the tools for an *asymmetric response*. At the time, he was trying to play a double game: allegedly moving towards Europe, he was sending encouraging signals to Russia as well" (Погибин, 2015).

In early September 2013, Yanukovich, through meetings in his party, managed to silence the Russian faction and set Ukraine's clear direction towards the EU. At the meeting, he explained that Russia had not adhered to the Kharkov agreement on gas supplies and prices and that Ukraine had made its choice to join the EU. Nonetheless, he still continued to balance, stressing that "Ukraine is ready to join the points of the work of the Customs Union (Russia) which are not in conflict with the Free Trade Agreement with the EU, because Russia is Ukraine's largest trading partner" (Гаврилов, 2013). After that meeting and Yanukovich's statement, representatives of the Party of Regions in the Verkhovna Rada, together with the opposition, passed all necessary legal changes for European integration. On 18th September 2013, the Cabinet approved a draft agreement on Ukraine's accession to the EU. The aim of the accession agreement is to "promote gradual convergence, deepen Ukraine's participation in EU policies, programs and agencies, and create the conditions for improved economic and trade relations that will lead to Ukraine's gradual integration into the EU internal market and trade area, deepening security cooperation to ensure the rule of law

and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Інтерфакс-Україна, 2013). However, Yanukovich failed to keep the course towards the EU, and on 21st November 2013, the government and Ukrainian Prime Minister Azarov “adopted a resolution halting the preparations for signing the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. He explained the decision by saying that Kyiv was bound to carefully evaluate the potential “cost” of integration into the European market to compensate for possible losses on the Russian market, with the countries of the Moscow-led Customs Union and the CIS” (Hurak, 2016: 114). The real reasons for rejection are numerous, but several can be singled out.

First, there are economic reasons. Ukraine went through an economic crisis in 2013, and some authors will attribute this to Russia’s influence, which cannot be ruled out due to the economic ties between the two countries as well as the already mentioned problems of corruption. On 21st November 2013, Deputy Prime Minister Yuriy Boyko described the situation in Ukraine at a press conference: “Since August of the current year, our country has lost 15–20 thousand jobs and approximately 30–40 billion in trade turnover” (Ibid). Azarov further described the situation on 22nd November 2013, as purely economic: “he focused on the unreasonable prices for imported gas, debt to the International Monetary Fund, and unacceptable conditions announced by the government concerning new credit lines” (Ibid: 115). Yanukovich spoke similarly after being exiled to Russia in 2014. By signing the Agreement with the EU, Ukraine would experience negative consequences in agriculture because Ukrainian producers had fewer subsidies than competitors in the EU, and after the signing of the Agreement Ukrainians would be uncompetitive. This problem concerned almost the entire mechanical engineering complex of Ukraine, transport engineering, energy, military-industrial complex and others (УНІАН, 2014). Yanukovich also reiterated how the IMF’s loan terms were unacceptable, as they included a 50% increase in gas tariffs, a wage freeze, lower pensions and other social benefits, making it a disaster for the Ukrainian people (Ibid).

Another reason for the postponement is Ukraine’s dependence on Russia. In 2011, Vladimir Putin warned that “if the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement is signed, Russia will be forced to implement measures to protect economic interests and raise the issue of excluding Ukraine from the free trade zone it signed with the CIS” (ФЕНЕНКО, 2017: 396). In October 2013, Putin stated that Ukraine would not be able to join the Customs Union if an association with the EU was formed (Баца, 2017: 70). Interestingly, there were two semi-official meetings between Putin and Yanukovich on 27th October and 9th November 2013, after which many unconfirmed stories were created by various officials (Hurak, 2016: 116). On 28th-29th November 2013, due to a certain level of persuasion or lobbying from Russia, Yanukovich asked the representatives of the EU in Vilnius to start trilateral negotiations between the EU, Ukraine and Russia, in

order to find a compromise. The EU rejected this proposal as unnecessary, unfounded and unacceptable (Ibid: 116-117). The postponement of signing the Association Agreement with the EU fell on fertile pre-revolutionary ground due to the corruption-deprived and impoverished internal situation in Ukraine.

The Euromaidan uprising

It can be said that Ukraine was “pregnant” for a new revolution, which was supposed to take place during the presidential elections in the spring of 2015, but the “birth” happened before the expected time, triggered by the postponement of the EU Accession Treaty (Ibid). For a part of the Ukrainian citizens, EU membership was the only hope, or more precisely, the utopia, vision of how the EU would enable the prosperity of Ukraine, which proved to be wrong in many member states, especially Eastern Europe. States can become prosperous and legally transparent only if they make changes internally, where the EU can primarily help, not implement change. “Accumulated political and socio-economic problems have repeatedly provoked protests: in November 2010, entrepreneurs protested against the Tax Law; in autumn of 2011, the anger of citizens was caused by the reduction of a number of social benefits; in autumn of 2012, the reason for the protests was the manipulation of the vote count in the parliamentary elections” (Фесенко, 2014: 27). Such a situation was accompanied by great dissatisfaction and distrust of state institutions. In 2013, Ukraine’s trust in parliament was 1.99 on a 10-point scale (last place in Europe), the level of satisfaction with the Government was 2.26 (last place in Europe), and trust in the police was 2.50 (last place in Europe) (Українська правда, 2013). It is important to emphasize the tradition of mass street protests in Ukraine since the 1990s and the Orange Revolution on Maidan Square in Kyiv “whose territory then turns into a protest tent city” (Фесенко, 2014: 27) (Onuch, 2015a: 28-30).

Depending on the author, the uprising can be divided into several stages. When divided into two phases, the first phase was in November and December 2013, accompanied by peaceful student protests, and the second phase, in January and February 2014, which was more violent (Фененко, 2017: 397). If Euromaidan is seen as a dynamic process and a socio-political phenomenon, it can be dissected in the next three phases: “Phase 1. Student Euromaidan; Phase 2. Maidan Camp; Phase 3. Maidan-Struggle” (Shveda & Park, 2015: 86). Due to the all-encompassing complexity of the uprising and overlapping of events, a precise division cannot be either the first or the second, as this analysis proves.

The first protests started on 16th November 2013 in the western cities of Ukraine, before the announcement of the rejection of the Association Agreement accompanied by anti-Russian slogans (Фененко, 2017: 397). In Kyiv, protests started on the

Independence Square (*Майдан Незалежності*) with a Facebook post from Afghan journalist Mustafa Masi Nayyem (who will become a member of the Verkhovna Rada after the uprising) on 21st November 2013: “Okay, let’s get serious. So, who’s ready to go to the Maidan today by midnight? Likes will not be considered. Only comments under this post with the words *I’m ready*. Once there are over a thousand, we’ll start organizing ourselves” (Junes, 2016: 78-79) (Onuch, 2015b: 217) (Bohdanova, 2014: 133). In a few days, several hundred people gathered on Maidan. During the night of 23rd to 24th November, groups of citizens began to arrive in Kyiv, especially students from different cities of Ukraine, because a pro-European march was planned for 24th November which gathered around a hundred thousand people. This is when the transformation of the character of Euromaidan started from peaceful civil protest to violent political conflict. “There were two “Maidans” already existing in Kyiv at the time. The first one, at Independence Square, was a “public” one, and the second one, at the European Square, was the “political” one where, of course, party symbols and leaders started appearing. On 26th November, the leaders of both Euromaidans decided to join forces on the condition that politicians would not exploit the situation for their political purposes” (Shveda & Park, 2015: 87). Which political parties were on political Euromaidan? These were extreme right-wing nationalist parties and groups, some were paramilitary, and some of them were opposition parties. They decided to use the protestors, such as students and liberal intellectuals, for their political interests. Those opposition parties were the All-Ukrainian Association Batkivshchyna (*Всеукраїнське об’єднання Батьківщина*) led by Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Udar (УДАР) led by Vitali Klitschko, and Sloboda (*Всеукраїнское объединение Свобода*), led by Oleh Tyahnybok. The right-wing radical nationalist groups, such as UNA-UNSO, Trozubac, Patriots of Ukraine and others, joined forces in the so-called the Right Sector (*Правий сектор*) (Marples, 2016: 425-427) (Ryabchuk, 2015: 131-133). In late November 2013, they usurped protests by turning them into their tool of political struggle (Фененко, 2017: 397) while aggravating conflicts and violence with the legal forces of Ukraine using their provocateurs who were infiltrated between the protestors (Ryabchuk, 2015: 131-133) (Работяжев, 2020: 526-257).

The first clash with the police, who were unarmed for the first few days at the beginning of the protest, took place on 30th November 2013, which will be interpreted differently by different sources. According to Ukrainian research papers and media reports, police entered a peaceful student tent camp and physically confronted protesters with arbitrary orders from the president and his team (Яковлев & Гарань, 2015: 50) (Zelinska, 2017: 4) (Shveda & Park, 2015: 87). President Yanukovich and Russian media warned how there was no reason for such police behaviour because the number of protesters was declining at the time, and it is necessary to investigate who gave permission to set up a Christmas tree when conflict erupted. A part of the

public suspected Oleksandr Popov and his administration, which then held power in Kyiv (УНІАН, 2013). At that time, the Maidan Self-Defence Forces had already begun to form and were ready to start a conflict if the protests were banned (ФЕНЕНКО, 2017: 397) (ЛУКИЧОВ, 2021: 23-24). “The protesters set up barricades after the police assault on December 11th and then the Square resembled a fortified military camp, soon to be more disciplined and organized, thereby reflecting their anti-government sentiment” (Shveda & Park, 2015: 88). In the coming months, it will be difficult to distinguish whether they were attacked or used attack tactics as the best form of (self)defence. Over time, the forces of the Right Sector increased among the protesters, and the number of students and liberal intelligentsia decreased. In January and February 2014, a survey by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology proved how the Right Sector 2014 accounted for between 21% and 50% of the protesters, and among the citizens of Ukraine, it had a popularity up to 10%, while the most popular party was the Party of Regions and Viktor Yanukovich, who still had the greatest support in public opinion (Київський міжнародний інститут соціології, 2014).

The events of 30th November 2013 provoked a mountain of reactions and solidarity among Ukrainians and brought new people to Maidan. It can be said that these conflicts maintained the fire of the Euromaidan uprising. During December 2013, there were no major conflicts due to the holidays, although there were individual clashes with police, accompanied by information and media support. Even before the conflict, in the summer of 2013, numerous opposition media initiatives were established at the local level, among them “Hromadske Radio, Hromadske.TV, Espresso.TV, Spil’no.TV. They all chose the internet as their platform. It was the one area that neither the state nor corporate world could control” (Dyczok, 2016: 11). They became extremely popular in Ukraine, supporting the protests and encouraging people to go out to protest on Maidan (Bohdanova, 2014: 137). Some of those media journalists were present on 30th November when the big clash took place at exactly 4 am on the Maidan. “Live streams of the protests by several online TV channels (Spilno.tv, Hromadske.tv, Espresso.tv), which recently emerged in Ukraine, provide a significant alternative to news media on traditional television channels, which were extensively controlled by the government or by oligarchs loyal to the authorities” (Ryabinska, 2015) and many journalists, due to corruption and inability to do their job, worked for free or for a low fee (Ibid) (Onuch, 2015b: 229-231). Foreign media were also very involved in reporting on the Ukrainian crisis. There is interesting research on BBC reporting that focused more on promoting civic values, leading to inconsistencies in reporting. Meanwhile, Russia Today focused on the (ethnic) nationalist actions of extremist groups, an anti-Western attitude through anti-Americanism anti-Europeanism pointing to “Western hypocrisy” due to interventions in other states that were not so much in the public spotlight, like Ukraine is, and reported on information warfare and coup against the world order

(Miazhevich, 2016: 68-69) (Miazhevich, 2014: 186-188). In the Euromaidan uprising, as in previous coloured revolutions, such as the Arab Spring in Syria and Libya, there was a great influence of social networks. In addition to media activity, there was a high presence of foreign world leaders and diplomats from the West, such as Angela Merkel, Jaroslav Kaczynski, Viktoria Nuland and John McCain, whose influence and role could also be addressed in some future analyses. To calm the situation, Russia offered Ukraine “even lower energy prices and \$15 billion in financial assistance” (Boban & Cipek, 2008: 348).

In January 2014, the protests escalated. President Yanukovych tried to delegatize the protests through the Verkhovna Rada, passing a package of laws qualifying non-violent methods of resistance to the authorities as criminal offenses (Рахманин, 2014) (Zelinska, 2017: 4). Although there are few sources that speak of the reasons for such action, the most common is the unconfirmed assumption that this step was taken after a secret, confidential meeting with Vladimir Putin on 8th January 2014 at his residence in Valdai (Лещенко, 2014: 218-219) (Wilson, 2014: 81). “Many believe that these actions caused an outburst of indignation among the protesters, and most decisively encouraged violent actions” (Мироненко, 2015: 138). By the end of January, fierce clashes with the police followed, and the first casualties took place on the Maidan. Then protesters began to occupy local and state administration buildings (Потапенко, 2015: 10) (Zelinska, 2017: 4) (Shveda & Park, 2015: 88). A solid organizational structure within the movement began to form, and “amorphous civic resistance turned into military Self-Defence” (Мироненко, 2015: 138). Andrey Levus, Maidan’s deputy commander, said that “Maidan’s Self-Defence is more like a revolutionary army than a revolutionary militia, which is necessary because this system of power can only be suppressed in a coordinated and organized way” (Ibid). “Since the end of January, 10-12 thousand resistance fighters organized in hundreds of groups along ideological, geographical and ethnic lines have been working alongside the protesters in Kiev, and they have chosen their own commanders” (Ibid). Such radical views, like of the Right Sector leader Dmitry Jaros, were shared by a few protesters, but they managed to usurp the protests for their own political ends. “All of these nationalist political parties are electorally unpopular because patriotism – not ethnic nationalism – is dominant in Ukraine” (Kuzio, 2019: 548).

The main result of the escalation in January was the readiness of the authorities and Yanukovych to negotiate with the opposition, showing a willingness to find a compromise. Therefore, as a sign of readiness to be serious in this step, Yanukovych dismissed PM Mykola Azarov with ministers (Фененко, 2017: 398) (Куманичкин, 2014: 93) (Лукичов, 2021: 25). Yanukovych started to realize that there was no other way out of this situation, and in early February he would begin multiple negotiations with the opposition to calm the situation in the country (Zelinska, 2017: 4) (Shveda

& Park, 2015: 88), and by 12th February he was ready to form a coalition government. A few days later, he signed an amnesty and released all protesters arrested for violent behaviour (Лукичов, 2021: 29). At the same time as the negotiations, a part of the opposition, Klitschko and Yatseniuk, were in Berlin on 16th February for a meeting with Angela Merkel, after which the protesters became bolder, reinforced with new fresh forces from prison (Фененко, 2017: 398). Between 18th and 20th February, there was a major escalation of the conflict between the Maidan Self-Defence Forces against the police and Berukt (*Бе'ркут* – a special police unit under the territorial divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine), where about 100 protesters and police officers were killed. Events from this period to the present day have been interpreted differently. The EU and NATO member states supported the Ukrainian viewpoint that this was the action of Yanukovych and the secret services of Ukraine (SBU) (Zelinska, 2017: 4) (Мироненко, 2015: 140), among whom allegedly were members of the Russian Federal Security Service who fired with snipers at protesters (Wilson, 2014: 88-90). On the other hand, Yanukovych and the Russian media are convinced that the operation was a false flag operation (a political or military action carried out with the intention of blaming the opponent). Namely, the snipers did not have permission from Yanukovych or the Interior Ministry to open fire on the protesters, and the shooting started from the building of the Maidan Conservatory, which was under control of Maidan protesters, more precisely by the forces of self-proclaimed Maidan commander Andrei Parubiy (Семёнов, 2014: 397). He, according to witnesses, “had all the authority to access weapons on the Maidan and that no pistol, let alone a sniper rifle, could be brought in or taken out of the square” (Бышок & Кочетков, 2014: 55). Interestingly, this information about the false flag operation is also mentioned in the West; for example, the “telephone conversation¹ between Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and EU diplomat Catherine Ashton, recorded on 5th March, suggests that someone from the opposition could have hired snipers” (Семёнов, 2014: 398). In addition, the Centre for Globalization Research in Canada also states that sniper attacks were carried out by opposition neo-Nazi groups, more specifically UNA-UNSO (Engdhal, 2014: 1-3) (Ryabchuk, 2015: 131-133). Regardless of who started the shooting, all the dead were declared sacred victims and are called the Heavenly Hundred (Фененко, 2017: 398). After these clashes, it became clear to Yanukovych that this was a planned armed coup, and he had to conclude an agreement with the opposition.

On 21st February 2014, a truce was reached and the Agreement to Settle the Political Crisis was made among opposition leaders Vitali Klitschko (UDAR), Arseniy Yatsenyuk (VO Batkivshchyna), Oleg Tyagnibok (VO Svoboda) and President Yanu-

¹ The telephone conversation between Urmas Paet and Catherine Ashton is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEGJ0oo3OA8>. 7th February 2023.

kovych (Zelinska, 2017: 4) (Бышок & Кочетков, 2015: 61) (Shveda & Park, 2015: 88). The Agreement consisted of six points defining the return of the 2004 semi-presidential system (abolished with the help of the Constitutional Court in 2010), new constitutional reforms, early presidential elections until December 2014 with a new election law, joint investigations into violence on the Maidan (current authorities, opposition and Council of Europe). Furthermore, the president will not impose a new state of emergency, protesters will abstain from violent actions (thereby confirming that there were provocations) and a new law to amnesty protesters will be created (Åslund, 2015: 108) (Zelinska, 2017: 4). Co-signatories of the Agreement and guarantors of its implementation were also three EU Foreign Ministers: Radoslaw Sikorski from Poland, Frank Walter Steinmeier from Germany and Laurent Fabius from France, who also attended the negotiations, while Russian Ambassador Vladimir Lukin refused to be a co-signatory (Wilson, 2014: 91) (Лукичов, 2021: 27-28). However, representatives of various radical groups on the Maidan rejected the Agreement, threatening “through the mouth of one of the Self-Defence commanders Vladimir Parasyuk, an ultimatum to the president – voluntary resignation or storming his residence the next morning” (Мироненко, 2015: 140) (Zelinska, 2017: 4). A similar view was expressed by the Right Sector commanders, such as Dmytro Jaros, to whom the Agreement lacked clear commitments regarding the resignation of the president, the dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada, and the punishment of law enforcement officials and executors. The Right Sector refused to lay down arms and lift blockades since the Agreement between the opposition and Yanukovych did not meet the main demand - the resignation of Yanukovych (ibid). “Shortly after the signing of the Agreement, the police left the streets of Kiev, and on the night of 22nd February, Maidan Self-Defence activists took control of the government district: the Verkhovna Rada, the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Interior Ministry” (Бышок & Кочетков, 2015: 62) (Zelinska, 2017: 4). President Viktor Yanukovych, understood that the Right Sector decided to carry out a *coup d'état*, fled first to Kharkov, and then asked for help from Russia, where he fled on 24th February 2014. “This date can be considered as the end of the third stage of Euromaidan’s transformation, the logical end of the Revolution of Dignity” (Shveda & Park, 2015: 88). How is this viewed in legal science, and how does it stand in terms of legality and legitimacy?

Parliament supported parts of the aforementioned Agreement, the return of the 2004 Constitution, but also suspended Interior Minister Zakharchenko and changed parts of the penal code, releasing Yulia Tymoshenko (Wilson, 2014: 94). However, the change of the Constitution could not be officially carried out without the signature of President Yanukovych, who went to Kharkiv on 22nd February without signing the “Draft Law on Renewal of Certain Provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine”

(Фененко, 2017: 398). This means that the return of the 2004 Constitution was not completed legally.

Furthermore, with the escape of Yanukovich, the parliament had to initiate an impeachment procedure. What was the procedure to impeach Ukrainian president? If the President commits the act of treason or other crime, the Verkhovna Rada shall initiate the impeachment procedure by a majority of votes. A special temporary commission of inquiry shall be formed, consisting of a special prosecutor and special investigators. After the conclusions and proposals of the commission, the Verkhovna Rada, for the points where the irregularity of the president's work was proven, makes a decision on the accusation of the president by a vote in which three quarters of deputies are needed to make a decision against the president. Then the decision is reviewed by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, issuing opinions on compliance with the constitutional procedure of investigation and consideration in the case of revocation. There is also receipt of the opinion from the Supreme Court of Ukraine that those acts contain elements of treason or other criminal offense (Конституція України, Розділ V, Стаття 111). How was Yanukovich impeached on 22nd February 2014? He was unconstitutionally removed from the position of the legitimate president because the prescribed constitutional procedure was not carried out (Бышок & Кочетков, 2014: 264) (Marples, 2016: 425-427). How was the Constitution of Ukraine violated? None of the impeachment procedures mentioned in the Constitution were initiated, except for the vote in the Verkhovna Rada, where three quarters of the deputies had to vote for the impeachment of the president, or 338 out of 450 deputies. Even this part of the impeachment was not respected since 328 MPs voted for the impeachment (Wilson, 2014: 93). However, in this context, while Yanukovich was on the run, the Ukrainian opposition had no choice but to carry out a truncated impeachment procedure (Rukavina, 2024: 8).

Why is the constitutionality important? Because of the definition and meaning of the constitution, especially in the world of liberal democracies. It is the fundamental and highest act of the state and is the source of the entire political and legal order. The Constitution is “as a set of fundamental legal-political rules that: 1. are binding for everyone in the state, including ordinary law-making institutions; 2. concern the structure and operation of the institutions of government, political principles and the rights of citizens; 3. are based on widespread public legitimacy; 4. are harder to change than ordinary laws; and 5. as a minimum, meet the internationally recognized criteria for a democratic system in terms of representation and human rights.” (Bulmer, 2017: 5). With the violation of the constitution on 22nd February 2014, the main pillars of Ukraine's statehood were put into question, which will be of great significance for future events. “The West declared (the Euromaidan uprising) the pinnacle of democracy, although it was clear that one of the basic rules of democracy was violated - to come

to power by winning elections” (Boban & Cipek, 2017: 348). However, these problems would not have occurred if there had not previously been great dissatisfaction among Ukrainians with dysfunctional authorities, corruption and the general state of society. Undoubtedly, there was a will for change, but this change should have come within legal and legitimate frameworks, through a regulated system of changing legal frameworks and the Constitution.

For a part of the Ukrainians and opposition parties, Euromaidan represents the consolidation of the European path for Ukraine, bringing back the previous Constitution or strengthening the powers of the Parliament (Saryusz-Wolski, 2014: 12-13). Nevertheless, after Euromaidan, the new government violated the legality of the Constitution (the foundations of Ukraine’s statehood), and it lacked legitimacy since the last legitimate president had fled from Ukraine (Marples, 2016: 426-427). For the Russian Federation, this means that all previous treaties, agreements and arrangements between Ukraine and Russia no longer exist for the Kremlin, according to the legal principle - *rebus sic stantibus*. In international law, this is a clause under which all contracts are valid until the circumstances that existed at the time of their signing change (Suraputra, 2014: 462-464). Thus, Russia began the reunification of Crimea. Therefore, this event can be looked upon as the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning, depending on one’s viewpoint. The beginning of the end means that the uprising (and/or *coup d’état*) in February 2014 marked the end of the statehood and territoriality of Ukraine as it had existed since the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, the end of the beginning marked the beginning of the historical separation of Ukraine from Russia and the approach to Western Euro-Atlantic integration. President Zelensky noted, after the attacks on Crimea in 2022, that “everything began with Crimea and everything will end with Crimea” (Walker, 2022), forgetting how in reality everything began on Maidan and perhaps everything will also end on Maidan.

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to research events related to the Euromaidan uprising. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been a divided state, between the western pro-Euro-Atlantic regions and the eastern pro-Russian regions. This was indicated by a civilizational approach that showed concern for a potential civil war in Ukraine. The second, realistic approach foresaw a war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, and some authors emphasized the need to harmonize Russia-Ukraine relations in order to prevent any potential conflict. There were two attempts to bring Ukraine closer to Euro-Atlantic integration. The first was in 2004 through the Orange Revolution, which failed due to the inability of the revolution’s leaders, Yushchenko and Tymoshenko, to carry out the necessary reforms. When comparing the cases of

the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan, although the two events are very similar, there are several differences. Euromaidan lasted longer, but with somewhat poorer coordination and planning, the protests spread throughout the country, which led to a lack of clear boundaries and goals for the protests and ultimately opened the door to radical voices. The key difference is the willingness of protesters to use violence (Onuch, 2015a: 55-56). Furthermore, “in contrast to 2004, the 2014 crisis was not triggered by the stolen elections but by the stolen dream or the government’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU” (Matsiyevsky, 2018: 350). The end of the Orange Revolution came in 2010 with the new president, Viktor Yanukovych. The foundation of foreign policy is domestic policy (or *vice versa*) or as an old Hermetic philosophical axiom stated: as within, so without; as below, so above. On the domestic front, Yanukovych strengthened his presidency with the Constitutional Court and tried to fight corruption, but without great success. The oligarchic-clan and corrupt system had entered all spheres of society, disrupting even parts of Ukraine’s national security system. “The Euromaidan Revolution/Revolution of Dignity of 2014 was very much a revolt against political corruption” (Harasymiw, 2019: 290). On these weak and unstable foundations of domestic policy, Yanukovych was trying to pursue a balanced foreign policy in a divided state.

Yanukovych’s postponement of the EU Accession Treaty was first and foremost an economic decision. Due to the poor economic situation in Ukraine, Yanukovych could not accept the financial terms of the IMF. In addition, Ukraine was already in a trade agreement with Russia. Yanukovych tried to rebalance the compromise by proposing a trilateral EU-Ukraine-Russia meeting, which the EU refused, and Yanukovych’s response was to postpone the signing of the Association Agreement. However, that decision fell on fertile pre-revolutionary ground, since one part of Ukraine’s citizens wanted the change through EU membership. This was the outbreak of the protests, which over time became violent due to the presence of extreme nationalist groups. The Euromaidan uprising ended with the overthrow of Yanukovych for violating the Constitution of Ukraine and its main legal framework. The views of these events differ around the world. Actors in Ukraine, such as protesters, some politicians and experts, believe it is a victorious people’s revolution. Others, such as the US and EU authorities, believe that Euromaidan is a reaction of the population to the moves and abuses of power by Yanukovych. And the third view is that of the Russian Federation, eastern parts of Ukraine, and some politicians and experts from the West, that it is a *coup d’état* and an illegal takeover of power by force and by a small group of people (Мироненко, 2015: 140) (Куманичкин, 2014: 90) (Marples, 2016: 425-427).

The final result of Euromaidan is the annexation (or reunification) of Crimea to the Russian Federation, the eight-year civil conflict in eastern Ukraine, and Russia’s military intervention in 2022. This research explains the main source and the begin-

ning of the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine. Uprisings and revolutions are not events that happen, but a process that occurs gradually, so it is important to study and understand the legality and the causal relations.

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Ustanak na Euromajdanu – uzroci, provedba i nasljeđe

Sažetak

Znanstveni rad analizira i objašnjava događanja u Ukrajini do 2014. godine, odnosno kraja Euromajdan ustanka nakon kojeg je počeo građanski rat u Ukrajini. U veljači 2022. godine situacija u Ukrajini je ponovno kulminirala s vojnom intervencijom Rusije. Ovaj članak obuhvaća uzroke početka konflikta, koji svoj začetak ima u Revoluciji dostojanstva ili Euromajdanu. Fokus istraživačkog rada je na unutarnjoj i vanjskoj politici Ukrajine te njezinim odnosima s euroatlantskim institucijama i Rusijom za vrijeme Viktora Janukoviča i izbijanje Revolucije Euromaidan. Istraživanje ima za cilj bolje razumijevanje sukoba unutar Ukrajine te odnosa Ukrajine s EU i Rusijom prije i za vrijeme Euromaidana kroz političko-pravnu analizu.

Ključne riječi: Ukrajina; Rusija; Euromajdan ustanak; Viktor Janukovič; korupcija; obojene revolucije; Narančasta revolucija