

THE KREMLIN'S "ACTIVE MEASURES" FAILED IN 2013: THAT'S WHEN RUSSIA REMEMBERED ITS LAST RESORT—CRIMEA

SANSHIRO HOSAKA
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF JAPAN

Abstract: Using leaked emails attributed to covert political actors, this study explores the Kremlin's comprehensive influence operations (active measures) to thwart Ukraine's aspirations to join the European Union. These efforts were launched by Putin as early as the beginning of 2013 to avoid losing Ukraine as part of his Eurasian integration project. In Ukraine, however, pro-Russian political forces were weak, clandestinely suppressed by President Viktor Yanukovich and his party. Moscow's major efforts, including the Rus Baptism anniversary, trade sanctions, and "Medvedchuk project" failed to turn the tide; some even backfired, consolidating support for the European project among the Ukrainian elite and public. Although Putin interrupted the signing of the EU Association Agreement by taking advantage of Yanukovich's personal weakness, he became increasingly frustrated with the Ukrainian president, who "sacrifices Russia's strategic interests" and sought to become an "all-Ukrainian national leader" resistant to Russian pressures. Russian policy was at an impasse, without any viable instruments to restrict the westward drift of Ukraine, making the situation totally different from that of 2004. These observations allow us to construct a nuanced interpretation of Russian behaviors in late 2013 and early 2014, which suggest a

Sanshiro Hosaka is affiliated with The Open University of Japan. Contact: yokokuma-no2018@gmail.com.

possible review of and change to their Ukraine policy. The Crimea operation comes to be seen as a well-considered and proactive move to compensate for the failed influence operations and achieve a strategic goal: keeping Ukraine in Russia's orbit.

Leaked Emails: What Do They Tell Us?

What drove Russia to make the fateful decision of annexing part of the territory of its “brotherly” neighbor in 2014? To address this challenging question meaningfully, researchers need to put themselves in Putin's shoes (not the ones prepared by Russian political technologists), and imagine the fiasco “the most powerful man in the world”¹ encountered in Ukraine in 2013.

In the fall of 2016, email accounts allegedly belonging to Vladislav Surkov, the Kremlin's ideologue and Putin's aide on the Ukrainian issue, were made public by patriotic Ukrainian hackers.² The Internet is admittedly filled with fake “leaks,” but multiple digital forensics experts have confirmed the authenticity of these particular communications.³ Unlike screenshots and PDF documents, which can easily be forged, the leaks involved nearly one-gigabyte data dumps of whole mailboxes, including valid metadata such as IP addresses, which are almost impossible to fabricate.⁴ Moreover, many trivial details that had not previously been made public—including the names of Surkov's secretaries, as well as that of his essay reviewer living in London—mesh with real life. Following the Surkov leaks, the mailbox of Kirill Frolov, a researcher at the Russian Institute for CIS Countries and head of the Association of Orthodox Experts, which is close to the Russian Orthodox clergy, was disclosed in

¹ Rupert Cornwell. “Forbes Reveals World's Most Powerful People 2013—With Vladimir Putin Taking Top Spot.” *Independent*. October 30, 2013, At <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/forbes-reveals-worlds-most-powerful-people-2013-with-vladimir-putin-taking-top-spot-8913265.html>. All links in this paper were valid as of January 31, 2018.

² The data dump of the email account `prm_surkova@gov.ru` is available at: <https://informna-palm.org/29027-vzлом-surkova/>.

³ Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab. “Breaking Down the Surkov Leaks: What the leaked inbox of the Kremlin's ‘Grey Cardinal’ tells us about the war in the Donbass.” October 25, 2016, At <https://medium.com/dfrlab/breaking-down-the-surkov-leaks-b2feec-1423cb>; Mark Krutov. “Tainy serogo kardinala.” [Secrets of the Gray Cardinal] *Radio Svoboda*. October 26, 2016, At <http://www.svoboda.org/a/28076558.html>.

⁴ The author also randomly checked header information of emails, using an online IP location finder and, for some messages, DKIM (electronic digital signatures) verifier. Although the author found little evidence, both in main body text as well as in metadata, in favor of possible forgery or modification of all or part of the leaks, the further verification of specific emails that experts find suspicious would be welcomed. For this purpose, details of the original messages (sender, receiver, subject, date, and time) the author cited for this research are shown in the footnotes.

a similar way.⁵

A quick examination of the publicized data makes it clear that most of the leaked emails and attached documents are routine and of little interest to sensation-seekers.⁶ Moreover, even if certain messages contain exciting assessments or assertions, they do not make an obvious contribution to policy formation. Nevertheless, a meticulous comparison of multiple emails with open-source information makes it possible to identify the Kremlin's plan and elucidate its implementation in a somewhat organized manner. For example, as the leaks show, Frolov is an enthusiastic promoter of "social partnership between the Church and the State." He is merely an occasional functionary for the Kremlin and not in a position to make any important decisions, but his private correspondence with Sergei Glazyev, Putin's adviser on Eurasian integration and curator of Ukrainian projects until Surkov's arrival on the scene,⁷ reveals the details of the execution of the religious segment of the Kremlin's comprehensive program, to which Frolov was assigned.

As early as the beginning of 2013, despite public claims that "under no circumstances will Russia ... impose anything on anyone,"⁸ Putin approved and launched a comprehensive program of covert influence operations to draw Ukraine away from its path toward European integration and back into Russia's orbit. As a former Ukrainian diplomat alerted Western colleagues in 2013, Ukraine found itself facing "targeted ideological, political, economic, and information warfare."⁹ Further analysis shows that the plan Putin initiated has much in common with the classic Soviet technique "active measures" (*aktivnye meropriiatiia*),¹⁰ which

⁵ The data dumps of the email account frolov_moskva@mail.ru are available at the following site and other affiliated sites: <https://ordilo.org/damp-poshtovoyi-skryny-glavy-rosijskoyi-syektu-assotsyatsyya-pravoslavnyh-ekspertov-kyryla-frolova/>

⁶ It should be noted that highly sensitive communications and decisions might circumvent the official email accounts routinely administered by their secretaries.

⁷ In the early 2000s, Glazyev was seen as "Putin's alter ego" in political technology circles; the former was among the first to develop the ideology "national revanche." The party Motherland (*Rodina*), co-headed by Glazyev, was said to be a Surkov project to split the communist vote in 2003. Andrew Wilson. 2005. *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 112.

⁸ "Press Statements and Answers to Journalists' Questions Following Meeting of the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission." *President of Russia*. July 12, 2012, At <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/15945> (the English translation was partially modified by the author).

⁹ The first signals of the continuing Russian hybrid war were, however, largely ignored at that time. "Predpolagaemaia strategiiia Kremlia v adres Ukrainy"[The alleged strategy of the Kremlin towards Ukraine]. *Radio Azattyk*. August 22, 2013, At <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/ukraine-european-union-russia/25082484.html>.

¹⁰ Kux describes active measures as "a wide span of practices including disinformation operations, political influence efforts, and the activities of Soviet front groups and foreign communist parties" aimed at "enhancing Soviet influence, usually by tarnishing the image of opponents" and which "involve elements of deception and often employ clandestine means

have been attracting growing practical and academic interest as a crucial element of Russian hybrid warfare.¹¹ A serious limitation on the study of active measures, however, has been “the secret nature of the operations.”¹² The Surkov and Frolov leaks help overcome this limitation, as both caught artful political technologists completely off guard, shedding light on the goings-on backstage, where they see no audience and stop “acting.” The disclosed information they have desperately attempted to discredit provides researchers with an excellent opportunity to estimate the Kremlin’s actual interpretation of the contested events of the Ukraine crisis, minimizing the bias of researchers who tend to rely heavily on (dis)information actively disseminated by Kremlin “insiders” and knowledgeable *eksperty* [experts].¹³

This article is part of a comprehensive study that aims to reexamine mainstream narratives on the Ukraine crisis by illuminating behind-the-scenes communications between covert political actors as exposed in the leaked emails. By focusing on the year 2013,¹⁴ the author challenges the assumption still accepted by a wide range of scholars and practitioners that the annexation of Crimea was a spontaneous response by Russia to the flight of Yanukovich. The Kremlin’s strategic and tactical insights into Ukraine, revealed in the leaks, provide background to the fateful decision to annex Crimea, though the findings need to be corroborated by further evidence. The core argument of this article is that the Kremlin began comprehensive influence operations to block Ukraine’s integration into the EU as early as 2013, but by the middle of November 2013 it had exhausted nearly all political, economic, cultural, and religious resources, and Russian policy found itself at an impasse. This understanding reframes the Crimea operation as a considered and proactive move toward a strategic to mask Moscow’s hand in the operation.” Dennis Kux. 1985. “Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation: Overview and Assessment.” *Parameters* 15:4:19.

¹¹ Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss. 2014. *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture, and Money*. New York: Institute of Modern Russia; Steve Abrams. 2016. “Beyond Propaganda: Soviet Active Measures in Putin’s Russia.” *Connections* 15:1.

¹² Jolanta Darczewska and Piotr Żochowski. 2017. *Active Measures: Russia’s Key Export*. Warsaw: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. Marka Karpia, 7. At <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2017-05-30/active-measures-russias-key-export>.

¹³ For textbook reactions by Russian political technologists to discredit the Surkov leaks, see, for example, Sergei Krasnov. “Politolog ob”iasnil, pochemu ‘vzломannaia perepiska Surkova’—feik” [The *politolog* explained why ‘the hacked correspondence of Surkov’ is fake]. *MK*. October 25, 2016, At <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/10/25/politolog-ob-yasnil-pochemu-vzlo mannaya-perepiska-surkova-feyk.html>; “Kak ustroena elektronnaia pochta Kremli: rasskazyvaet politolog Gleb Pavlovskii” [How the email of the Kremlin is organized: *politolog* Gleb Pavlovsky explains]. *Nastoiashchee vremia*. October 27, 2016, At <http://www.currenttime.tv/a/28077066.html>

¹⁴ This period is better reflected in the Frolov leaks than in the Surkov leaks (the leaked emails in the latter account start with the end of September 2013), but there are some interfaces observed between the two leaks.

goal: keeping Ukraine in Russia's orbit.

The next section reviews widely accepted narratives vis-à-vis the Ukraine crisis and outlines common research problems. The following section describes the background of the exposure of the Kremlin's complex plan of active measures operations, their targets and approaches, and the political environment in Ukraine (as assessed by the document's author and agreed by the Russian president). This section further details the implementation of specific influence operations targeting the Ukrainian president, parliament and government, churches, oligarchs, the media and the public, as well as the Kremlin's tireless efforts to nurture its own "candidate" for the Ukrainian presidential elections in 2015. The final section summarizes the outcomes of the influence operations in 2013 and further attempts to interpret Russian behaviors in late 2013 and early 2014.

Review of Narratives

Although policymakers and scholars alike have debated the Ukraine crisis at length in recent years, analysis of the genesis of the conflict remains relevant. Indeed, it may help to understand strategic narratives in conflicts: "how all aspects of a conflict are defined, constructed and understood"¹⁵ and "how states seek to mobilize narratives to seek influence and shape the behavior of third parties."¹⁶

Although several works have suggested that the groundwork for the Crimea operation was laid in 2013,¹⁷ most interpretations of Russian decision-making regarding the annexation of Crimea have not strayed far from Putin's own pronouncements, which have depicted Russia's radical move as a spontaneous, even improvised response to the ouster of Yanukovich.¹⁸

¹⁵ Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon, and Ben O'Loughlin. 2014. "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power." *Media, War & Conflict*. 7:1, 79.

¹⁶ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle. 2012. "Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations," 3. At <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/566d81e8d82d5ed309b2e935/t/56791d40c7e733efa42ab2eb/1326798495005/Forging+the+World+Working+Paper+2012.pdf>.

¹⁷ For example, citing the book of Russian journalist Mikhail Zygar, whose sources were not made public, Matsuzato describes that in December, chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea Vladimir Konstantinov met secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev in Moscow and voiced the Crimea's readiness to "leave for Russia" upon the overthrow of the Yanukovich regime. See Kimitaka Matsuzato. 2016. "Domestic Politics in Crimea, 2009-2015." *Demokratizatsiya*. 24:2: 240-241. It is also reported that the Russian Defense Ministry announced a tender for the production of medals (which were later distributed "For the return of Crimea") in mid-December 2013. Ivan Semirenko. 2017. "Kak medal' 'Za vozvrashchenie Kryma' pokazala vremia podgotovki vtorzheniia Rossii v Ukrainu" [How the medal "For the Return of Crimea" showed the time of preparation for the Russian invasion of Ukraine]. *Hvylyia*. November 1, At <http://hvylyia.net/analytics/politics/kak-medal-za-vozvrashchenie-kryima-pokazala-vremya-podgotovki-vtorzheniya-rossii-v-ukrainu.html>.

¹⁸ Putin said, "This had not been pre-planned or prepared. It was done on the spot, and we

Mearsheimer, an enthusiastic student of “realpolitik,” described the Kremlin’s behavior as “a spontaneous reaction to Yanukovych’s ouster,” arguing that, “[i]f Putin were committed to creating a greater Russia, signs of his intentions would almost certainly have arisen before February 22.”¹⁹ Likewise, in a discussion with CNN’s Fareed Zakaria, former U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates argued that “the ouster of Yanukovych was a defeat for Putin...[t]hat’s when Putin reacts and moves to seize Crimea.”²⁰ One of the most cited academic works on this topic, Andrei Tsygankov’s “Vladimir Putin’s Last Stand: The Sources of Russia’s Ukraine Policy,” similarly contends that “[t]o Putin, the collapse of Yanukovych’s government was the last straw” and the annexation “must be understood as a reflective reaction to what the Kremlin views as neglect of Russia’s values and interest and unjust treatment by the West.”²¹ Nor does Treisman’s “Crimea: Anatomy of a Decision” diverge substantially from this “realist” interpretation, arguing that “the initial intervention seems most likely to have been prompted by a panicked attempt to rule out the loss of the Black Sea base at Sevastopol [due to the possible demand of a post-Yanukovych government], with the potential risks and costs either poorly understood or disregarded.”²²

The array of arguments in favor of Russia’s spontaneous response, however, have common weaknesses in terms of their approach. To begin with, there have been few efforts to address and correct for the bias incurred by so-called “political technology.” Like Mearsheimer, some authors take the public statements and assessments of the Russian leader and his proxies at face value. Others may not do so overtly, but their judgments are nevertheless distorted due to intensive communication with Russian actors. In dealing with Russia, where professional spin doctors make every effort to stage “virtual politics”²³ and manipulate “Western

had to play it by ear based on the situation and the demands at hand.” “Direct Line with Vladimir Putin.” *President of Russia*. April 17, 2014, At <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796>.

¹⁹ John Mearsheimer. 2014. “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin.” *Foreign Affairs* 93.

²⁰ Such a narrative makes it easier for observers to subscribe to Moscow’s formula on the conflict resolution; Gates further suggests that a federalization of Ukraine with significant autonomy for the eastern region could be the formula for an acceptable compromise with Russia and a de-escalation of tensions. See “Russian and Chinese Assertiveness Poses New Foreign Policy Challenges.” *The Council on Foreign Relations*, May 21, 2014, At <https://www.cfr.org/event/russian-and-chinese-assertiveness-poses-new-foreign-policy-challenges-0>.

²¹ Andrei Tsygankov. 2015. “Vladimir Putin’s Last Stand: The Sources of Russia’s Ukraine Policy.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31:4.

²² Daniel Treisman. 2016. “Why Putin Took Crimea: the Gambler in the Kremlin.” *Foreign Affairs* 95:3; Daniel Treisman. 2016. “Crimea: Anatomy of a Decision,” At <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55510affe4b06afeca50df07/t/57d3917e3e00be430c4c5b4e/1473483134670/Crimea+FINAL+Aug+26.pdf>.

²³ Wilson, *Virtual Politics*, 33-48.

media and policy discourse,²⁴ not only official statements but also private "expert" opinions should be treated with extreme caution. What they tell us is usually what they want us to see or keep guessing about, but seldom what they actually see.²⁵ For example, Treisman, though fully aware that "Kremlin insiders could be dissembling," fails to correct the biased impression he gained from interviews with Putin and former Kremlin official Alexei Chesnakov.²⁶ (The Surkov leaks show that Chesnakov headed the Kremlin's media analysis and information operations during the Ukraine crisis.)

The second problem, in part a consequence of the first, is the extensive and discursive context in which the current crisis is projected and interpreted. No small number of researchers look to the collapse of the Soviet Union or the expansion of NATO in the 1990s (or even as far back as the Middle Ages) for the roots of the crisis. They also tend to lump all "Western" nations together as parties to the conflict. In so doing, they often pay little attention to the immediate context of the crisis: Ukraine's social and political conditions in 2013. For instance, Tsygankov's analysis is comprehensive, covering the decade leading up to the eruption of the crisis, but lacks attention to the Kremlin's insights into Ukraine in 2013.²⁷ It is true that Putin referred to the threat of NATO as the background of the annexation of Crimea, but note that Russian political technologists are good at "switching the points" (*perevod strelki*) to "confuse both time

²⁴ Peter Pomerantsev. "How Putin Is Reinventing Warfare." *Foreign Policy*. May 5, 2014. At <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/05/how-putin-is-reinventing-warfare/>.

²⁵ This point made political technologists different from diplomats; WikiLeaks (the leak of U.S. diplomatic cables) shows that "what U.S. diplomats said privately closely matched what they said publicly." See, for example, Daniel Drezner. "The Academic Universe is Indifferent to WikiLeaks." *The Washington Post*. July 30, 2015. At https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/30/the-academic-universe-is-indifferent-to-wikileaks/?utm_term=.00277d130432.

²⁶ Treisman refers to his personal conversation with Putin in Sochi in October 2015, who repeated that the Crimea operation was "spontaneous" and "not at all [planned long in advance]." The study further estimates that Putin did not expect the downfall of Yanukovich "until shortly before it happened" and "was still trying to save him" because, citing the interview with Chesnakov, "[h]ad Putin suspected that Yanukovich would be gone in two months, he would have found some pretext to delay the disbursement" of a \$3 billion loan to Ukraine in December. It is, however, worth pointing out that Russia did not provide any bilateral intergovernmental loans to Ukraine, but it purchased a secure Eurobond governed by UK law. With the benefit of hindsight, one might even speculate that this deal gave Russia more say in Ukraine's international fund-raising efforts as its biggest creditor. Moreover, according to Wilson, part of the injected money might have flowed back to Russia via fraud. Andrew Wilson. 2014. *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 79-80.

²⁷ Tsygankov attempts to interpret Russia's policy toward Ukraine within the frameworks of the three major periods after the Orange Revolution: the frozen ties with Yushchenko (2004-2010), the limited partnership with Yanukovich (2010-2013), and the Confrontation (February-August 2014), but out of 20 pages the article devotes only 13 lines to developments in 2013. See Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand."

and agency.”²⁸ Indeed, Nimmo’s careful chronological analysis of Russian rhetoric makes one doubt that the danger of Ukraine’s joining NATO was so imminent that the Kremlin was ultimately forced into the radical move. Nimmo’s analysis shows that “Russia only started a serious attempt to portray NATO as a party to the conflict four weeks after the decision to annex Crimea had been taken,”²⁹ a point that calls into question, for example, Treisman’s contention on Russian fears about the possible loss of the Black Sea base. Russian strategic narratives displayed the Ukraine crisis as “a struggle for influence between Russia and NATO” in the international arena.³⁰

Another all-too-common pitfall is, as exemplified in the aforementioned statement of the former U.S. defense secretary, treating Yanukovych as the Kremlin’s favorite, a habit formed during the Orange Revolution in 2004 that may be hard to break. However, as empirical works on Ukraine’s domestic scene suggest, although Yanukovych began his tenure “as the champion of Russian-speaking eastern and southern Ukraine” in 2010, he soon changed his rhetoric and began to voice Ukraine’s European roots and its ambition to join the EU.³¹ The “pro-Russian” president was heading for the EU, seeing the signing of the EU Association Agreement as “the main achievement, to disarm his opponents” for his re-election in 2015.³² In the meantime, Yanukovych “sought to navigate between the two integration offers,” trying to “balance the EU and Russia, and offer Ukraine to the highest bidder.”³³ The political situation on the peninsula was more complicated, embracing potential tensions between the so-called “Macedonians”—elites from Donetsk *oblast* loyal to Yanukovych—and indigenous Crimean elites.³⁴

How did the Kremlin perceive Ukraine’s domestic situation in 2013, prior to the crisis? What were its primary concerns? What actions did it take to address these concerns? And as a result, what did it achieve and lose? Answers to these fundamental questions can provide the basis for understanding the background of the Kremlin’s policy shift in Ukraine.

²⁸ Wilson, *Virtual Politics*, 90.

²⁹ In the film “Crimea: Way Back Home,” Putin says he gave the order to annex Crimea on February 22. See Ben Nimmo, 2016. “Backdating the Blame. How Russia Made NATO a Party to the Ukraine Conflict.” *NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence*, At <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/backdating-blame-how-russia-made-nato-party-ukraine-conflict-author-ben-nimmo>.

³⁰ Nimmo, “Backdating the Blame.”

³¹ Serhiy Kudelia. 2014. “The House that Yanukovych Built.” *Journal of Democracy* 25:3, 24.

³² Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 63-64.

³³ Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk. 2015. *Ukraine Between the EU and Russia: The Integration Challenge*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁴ Matsuzato, “Domestic Politics in Crimea.”

"The Complex of Measures"

Background of the Exposure

In August 2013, *Zerkalo Nedeli* (ZN.UA), a Ukrainian analytical newspaper, broke an exclusive story titled "the Russian plan, meaningful and merciless" containing the full text of the plan "On the Complex of Measures to Co-opt Ukraine into the Eurasian Integration Process" (hereafter "the Complex of Measures").³⁵ According to the article, the Kremlin sat back and hoped that there would be no chance of the EU signing the Association Agreement because Moscow was confident that Yanukovich would not release Tymoshenko, which the EU considered a prerequisite for signing the Agreement.³⁶ However, in early June, having received the stunning information from Berlin that German Chancellor Angela Merkel no longer saw the release of Tymoshenko as a prerequisite and was inclined to sign the Agreement, Putin supposedly called an emergency meeting in which he tasked Glazyev with developing a plan to prevent Ukraine from signing an Association Agreement with the EU at the Eastern Partnership Summit, which was to be held in Vilnius in November 2013. This news report reverberated within Ukraine as Russia's trade war against the country raged that summer, but as the *Zerkalo Nedeli* journalists did not disclose the source of the information,³⁷ it attracted only limited attention from researchers.³⁸

And then came the Frolov leaks. As we learned from the leaked information, in early February 2013, Sergei Tkachuk, project director of the Scientific Center for Eurasian Integration and a de facto assistant to Glazyev, informed Frolov that he had begun to negotiate with Victor Medvedchuk's political movement "Ukrainian Choice"³⁹ and asked Frolov to send "a list of organizations with a good and reliable network, which

³⁵ Yulia Mostovaia and Tat'iana Silina. "Russkii plan, osmyslennyi i besposhadnyi." *ZN.UA*. August 16, 2013, At https://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/russkii-plan-osmyslennyi-i-besposhadnyi-_html. The full text of the plan is at https://zn.ua/internal/o-komplekse-mer-po-vovlecheniyu-ukrainy-v-evraziyskiy-integratsionnyy-process-_html

³⁶ The imprisoned former prime-minister, his political rival Yulia Tymoshenko, whose release became the EU's "key demand in practice" and "by the summer of 2013, there seemed no way of getting round the EU's fixation on the Tymoshenko case." Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 63-64.

³⁷ Pro-Russian bloggers in Ukraine such as Dmitri Skvortsov and Alexander Chalenko were quick to disseminate counterfeit information to deny the involvement of the Kremlin. Dmitri Skvortsov. "'Sliv' ot Kremliia ili Mostovaia prosto obdelalas'?" [The "leak" from the Kremlin or Mostovaya just messed up?]. August 18, 2013, At <https://t-34-111.livejournal.com/92838.html>.

³⁸ As one of the first works that paid attention to the Complex of Measures see Anders Åslund. 2013. "Ukraine's Choice: European Association Agreement or Eurasian Union?" *Policy Brief*, At <https://piiie.com/publications/pb/pb13-22.pdf>.

³⁹ "All-Ukrainian social movement" headed by Victor Medvedchuk. Its political platform includes accession to the Customs Union.

are advisable to link up with the ‘Ukrainian Choice.’”⁴⁰ Five minutes later, Tkachuk told Frolov to “act upon the following assumptions stated in our action plan for accession to the CU [Customs Union],” enclosing “excerpts” of the plan. The attached one-page Microsoft Word document includes only two items: “1.7 Work with religious organizations” and “1.8 Strengthening and expansion of network of pro-Russian organizations sharing the goals of the accession,”⁴¹ both of which are identical to the corresponding part of the Complex of Measures later published by ZN.UA. Tkachuk added, “This plan was supported by the President, but, having descended to the floor below, fell asleep in the Lord [*sic*].” The authenticity of the leaked document, including its possible author, was confirmed when Frolov forwarded ZN.UA’s article to Glazyev with the title “*Zerkalo Nedeli* published a text similar to yours” and added, “ZN—NATO’s newspaper. Apparently there was a leak. Either directly from Moscow or through the embassy. Well, let this be an excuse not for self-justification, but for the ATTACK.”⁴² Frolov sent the same message to the security service officer assigned to the Institute for CIS Countries, who replied, “This is not a leak, this is a real document!”⁴³ The Frolov leaks thus confirmed that the Complex of Measures was not a counterfeit and revealed that it was developed at the beginning of 2013, half a year earlier than the journalists had assumed—and, more importantly, that it had been approved by Putin personally.⁴⁴ These observations underline the importance of scrutinizing the Complex of Measures in the light of a series of events in 2013.

Targets and Approaches

The Complex of Measures starts from “objective necessity and subjective factor” based on “econometric estimates,”⁴⁵ claiming that Ukraine’s participation in the Customs Unions (CU) and Single Economic Space (SES) will ensure “1.5 times increase of the macroeconomic effect of its establishment” and provide opportunities “for the development of high-tech

⁴⁰ serg1784@mail.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “ot S.Tkachuka,” 2013-02-05, 10:42:04 +0400.

⁴¹ serg1784@mail.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “ot S.Tkachuka,” 2013-02-05, 10:48:35 +0400.

⁴² frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glaziev@bk.ru, “ZErkalo Nedeli opublikovalo tekst, pokhozhi na Vash,” 2013-08-18, 18:10:36 +0400. In this paper, styles of original email texts (e.g. use of capital letters for emphasis) are maintained.

⁴³ svv@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “Re: Nedeli opublikovalo tekst, pokhozhe na utechku,” 2013-08-19, 14:18:42 +0400.

⁴⁴ While Frolov has mythomaniac tendencies, exaggerating his Orthodox ideas, Tkachuk is much more like a sober-minded expert trusted by Glazyev for his accuracy; he carefully sent Frolov only those “excerpts” of the plan in which the latter was involved directly.

⁴⁵ Åslund criticizes Russian economic arguments for failing to share their methodology and calculations, in contrast to those of the Ukrainian and European institutions: “It appears more like propaganda than research.” Åslund, “Ukraine’s Choice,” 5-6.

industries created within the single national economic complex of the USSR." The document maintains that, "despite the obvious economic gains of Ukraine in the CU and SES, its political leadership continues the European integration course, having finalized the draft agreement with the EU on the establishment of a free trade zone (FTZ)."⁴⁶ These factors, the document contends, combine to portend doom and gloom for Russia:

The extreme urgency of this work [the Complex of Measures] is dictated by Ukraine's signing of the Association Agreement with the EU—expected in November of this year—with clauses on the establishment of the FTZ, which excludes the entry of Ukraine into the CU. After this act, the possibilities of Ukraine's accession to the CU will be closed, and its dependence on Brussels will sharply increase. We will lose a promising goal, and the Ukrainian leadership will pass the initiative to the pro-Western forces. We will have to wait for the collapse of the current political regime and prepare for the next "orange" coup.

The fear of losing Ukraine, an indispensable part of Putin's Eurasian integration project, and possible repetition of the Orange Revolution pushed the Kremlin to set the goals of the Complex of Measures as follows: prevent Ukraine from signing the Association Agreement; formulate a influential network of pro-Russian social and political forces; neutralize the political and media influence of Euro-integration supporters; and create a favorable environment for Ukraine's accession to the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space by 2015.

The fundamental approach of the Complex of Measures is "concentrated and comprehensive influence on decision-making centers with support of friendly and pragmatic forces in government, parliament, business circles, and the scientific and journalistic community." As a result of these influence operations, the Kremlin expected to see the formation of a "powerful pro-Russian political force capable of nominating its candidate for the forthcoming presidential elections in 2015 and imposing the concept of accession [to the Customs Union] to the Ukrainian leadership." The Kremlin also wanted to present the public choice in favor of Eurasian integration as "a modern analogy of the historical movement of

⁴⁶ In March 2012, the text of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU was initialed, and later that year the EU Foreign Affairs Council reaffirmed its commitment to signing the Agreement conditional on Ukraine's "determined action and tangible progress" in electoral, judiciary, and constitutional reforms by the Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in Vilnius in November 2013.

B. Khmelnytsky for reunification with Russia.”⁴⁷ The document nominates Victor Medvedchuk’s “Ukrainian Choice” as “the most important partner in this project” and “the Council of Slavic Peoples,” headed by Igor Druz, as coordinator of events. The Frolov leaks reveal that Frolov was the agent connecting Glazyev to the latter organization.⁴⁸

Most important, however, is the part exhibiting the common features of active measures: the comprehensive action plan encompasses not only “government, business, parliamentary, scientific, cultural, spiritual, and regional” channels but also “shadow” ones, and the plan was to be “implemented by the Ukrainian public so as not to give cause for suspecting ‘Moscow’s hand’ in this activity.”

In July 2012, at the summit in Crimea, Putin proposed that Ukraine join the Customs Union, but Yanukovich rejected this invitation, instead proposing a sectoral approach to integrating the Ukrainian economy into the Customs Union. The Complex of Measures takes due account of the failed attempts to persuade the Ukrainian leadership and argues that explanatory work “shall be backed up by comprehensive pressure to create a sense of inevitability of accession [to the Customs Union] for survival of the current ruling elite.” Such pressure, it says, shall be exerted “concurrently from business, the clergy, the public, the media, the expert community, and also from Yanukovich’s closest entourage, including his family and court oligarchs.”

Yanukovich

Yanukovich restored the “superpresidentialist model” by overturning the December 2004 constitutional changes that had shared power with the parliament. This led not only to the concentration of executive powers but also to the “near-total subordination of the judicial branch” to the president.⁴⁹ As a result, the decision on the EU Association Agreement “was taken by Yanukovich himself with input from an extremely narrow decision-making circle.” In effect, “the private interests of the regime had taken precedence over the national interests of Ukraine.”⁵⁰

Yanukovich was therefore the first and foremost target for Moscow’s influence operations. The Complex of Measures tries to interpret the reasons Yanukovich began to distance himself from Eurasian integration as follows:

⁴⁷ The historical memory of Ukrainians, especially those in the South-Eastern regions, is not as simple as the Kremlin thought it to be. See Sanshiro Hosaka. Forthcoming. “Measuring Post-Euromaidan ‘Historical Memories’ in Ukraine: A Key to the Nation (Re)building is ‘Hybrid.’” *Europe-Asia Studies*.

⁴⁸ In spring 2014, Russia-oriented Ukrainian citizen Igor Druz joined the detachment of Igor Girkin (Strelkov) in Crimea and participated in the battles in eastern Ukraine.

⁴⁹ Kudelia, “The House that Yanukovich Built,” 21-23.

⁵⁰ Dragneva and Wolczuk, *Ukraine Between the EU and Russia*, 88.

Yanukovych's ignoring of the Russian proposals for accession to the Customs Union is due to his fear of being dependent on Russia, drawing sanctions from the US and the EU, and provoking a large-scale protest movement by the pro-Western population. In many ways, these fears have been amplified by oligarchs close to Yanukovych and highly dependent on their Western partners and possibly intelligence agencies.⁵¹

The author of the plan went on to analyze the domestic predicament of the Ukrainian president in the context of the upcoming elections:

Given the negative attitude of the overwhelming majority of voters, it will be extremely difficult to keep Yanukovych in power with only administrative and criminal resources. Any external impact can overturn him.

Having seen "the critical drop in people's trust in the President of Ukraine,"⁵² the Complex of Measures argued that Yanukovych could restore relative trust among eastern voters only by beginning economic integration with Russia. Meanwhile, Moscow was well aware of the weak position of pro-Russian forces in Ukraine:

Moreover, while pro-Western forces are ideologically and organizationally ready to seize power, the pro-Russian trend remains unorganized and disoriented. What is worse, the current consolidation of the Ukrainian public against Yanukovych contributes to the growth of anti-Russian sentiments because his regime is perceived by many Ukrainians as imposed by Russia. Objectively, this increases the threat of power seizure by forces hostile

⁵¹ The document author's pathological suspicion about "Western intelligence agencies" was observed in the articles written by him earlier. For example, in 2008, Sergei Glazyev asserted that "the US intelligence services control and direct the apparatus of the Ukrainian president and himself, as well as the activities of the Security Service of Ukraine, in fact manage the activities of the ministries of foreign affairs and defense, and influence key issues of economic policy." Sergei Glazyev. 2008. "Napravlenie glavnogo udara: ukrainskaia karta v geopoliticheskoi igre SSHA" [Direction of the main blow: the Ukrainian card in the U.S. geopolitical game]. *Zavtra*. October 1. At <http://zavtra.ru/blogs/2008-10-0113>.

⁵² The Complex of Measures offers the following analysis: "The number of citizens supporting Yanukovych has declined threefold *over the past two years*. Now he is fully supported by only 13% of Ukrainians against almost 40% in May 2010" [author's emphasis]. The emphasized section would have sounded like "over the past three years" if the Complex of Measures had been developed in June 2013, as was originally reported by ZN.UA.

to the Russian Federation, regardless of the national orientation of Ukrainian voters. The repetition of the “orange” revolution in Ukraine, if the prevailing trends continue, is highly likely.

Thus, another frustration the Kremlin felt was that in the public mind Yanukovich’s regime was often associated with Moscow’s support,⁵³ even though this link was less and less real. Such a stereotype could mean that people’s anger toward Yanukovich was easily interchangeable with anti-Russian sentiments. The author of the document came to the hasty conclusion that anti-Yanukovich forces coming to power would be anti-Russian in nature, prompting the following recommendation:

In case of the continuing drift of Yanukovich toward the West and the surrender of the sovereignty of Ukraine to the EU, the result of this work [the Complex of Measures] should be the victory of our candidate in the upcoming presidential elections in 2015.

The Kremlin was seeking an alternative to Yanukovich. From open-source information, it is safe to assume that the Kremlin pinned its hopes on Victor Medvedchuk as the most feasible “our candidate.” Medvedchuk was chief of Kuchma’s presidential administration, and Putin is the godfather of his daughter, who was born in 2004. Moreover, although Putin’s official meeting with President Yanukovich in Crimea in July 2012 was delayed by four hours, the Russian president nevertheless stopped by Medvedchuk’s private *dacha* on the way back to the airport. Experts took Putin’s visit to Medvedchuk to be a signal that Moscow might be able to nominate its own candidate in the coming 2015 Ukrainian president elections, or at least show its readiness to turn the pro-Russian electorate away from Yanukovich and block his re-election.⁵⁴

Parliament and Government

At the beginning of 2013, the political spectrum of the Ukrainian national parliament reflected the results of the October 2012 elections. The Party of Regions (30.0%) topped the ranks, followed by Fatherland (25.5%), UDAR (14.0%), the Communist Party (13.2%), and Svoboda (10.4%). The Complex of Measures admitted that the majority of Parliament, including

⁵³ The similar Yanukovich-pro-Russian association is observed in the narratives of some international observers discussing the Ukraine crisis. See the “Review of Narratives” section.

⁵⁴ Sergei Vysotskii. “Bunt prikazchikov. Zachem Putinu Medvedchuk v Ukraine.” *liga.net*. July 20, 2012. At http://news.liga.net/articles/politics/700512-bunt_prikazchikov_zachem_putinu_medvedchuk_v_ukraine.htm.

the Party of Regions, was in favor of European integration, but retained some hope that it could change the attitude of individual deputies through personalized treatment:

As a rule, Ukrainian parliamentarians hold a flexible position, guided by their sponsors and leaders. As they were not systematically influenced in the direction of integration with Russia, while there are constant pressures from Western agents of influence, the majority of the Verkhovna Rada [Parliament], including the Party of Regions faction and all the committees, has so far expressed support for European integration. Changing their direction requires personal work, in which we should engage businessmen, journalists, voter associations, and authoritative individuals who are sponsoring them. At the same time, we should provide for the formation of an interparty deputy group lobbying for the purpose of the accession [to the Customs Union].

The Complex of Measures noted the vulnerability of the ruling party and predicted the behavior of its members upon the collapse of Yanukovych regime:

Yanukovych's loss of power will result in the immediate decomposition of the Party of Regions. Its oligarchic top, maintaining ties with both the "orange" and its Western partners, will immediately run to the winners' side, and the demoralized party caucus will collapse.

It is further noted that the Party of Regions exerted pressure on pro-Russian movements, suggesting that there were not any serious political forces in Ukraine on which the Kremlin could count in early 2013:

Since the Party of Regions has suppressed any pro-Russian movements independent of itself, the collapse of the Yanukovych regime will leave us in a "burnt desert" situation without any influential political forces on which we can rely. We will be confronted with the ramified network of influence agents infiltrated by Western intelligence agencies, which have already taken deep roots in all branches of power, the media, the educational system, the expert community, and law enforcement agencies.

The Surkov leaks provide still more evidence of Yanukovych's pressure on pro-Russian forces. Pavel Broide was a political technologist who served the so-called "shadow vertical power"⁵⁵ in Zaporizhia region, heading "the shadow technology center" of the Party of Regions, which monitored, analyzed, and intercepted the activities of the opposition and business rivals. In his resume, submitted to Surkov through his agent in July 2014, Broide reflected on the political circumstances in Zaporizhia in spring 2013, when he found himself in an ideological predicament:

Also, from June 2013, relations with the management of the "shadow vertical" in Zaporozhye [Zaporizhia], which entered into conflicts with other branches of the same group (Ivanushchenko's group), developed rather ambiguously, gradually escalating the conflicts both inside and outside the system. With the change in the foreign policy vector in Kyiv from pro-Russian to Euro-Atlantic, they began to charge the system I headed with suppressing the public activity of pro-Russian groups in the Zaporozhye region, which was not my responsibility and contradicted my convictions. In June, for this and other reasons, I prepared my resignation (...).⁵⁶

Broide's secret testimony suggests that the criminal authority in Zaporizhia was instructed by the powers-that-be in Kyiv to press pro-Russian organizations in the region. In other words, as early as June 2013, preemptive measures were already in place to intercept possible pro-Russian campaigns against the EU Association Agreement.⁵⁷ This notion also fits the Kremlin's pessimistic view on pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. Yanukovych's covert political maneuvers were, however, perhaps sensed by Russian political technologists such as Gleb Pavlovsky, a point that will be discussed later in this paper.

⁵⁵ According to Broide, some functions of many regional authorities were unofficially delegated to the so-called "shadow vertical power," which the opposition called "institute of the watchers." Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, and Odessa were given to Yuri Ivanushchenko, a friend of Viktor Yanukovych, whose interests were pursued in the criminal world as well as in the shadow economy. For example, his interests in Zaporizhia were protected by "watcher" Evgeny Anisimov, a local criminal authority. Broide admitted that the criminalization of power became a source of frustration for society and led to protest moods even in the South-East of the country. brusovg@mail.ru, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru, "Fwd: Vcherashnie predlozheniia," 2014-07-10, 15:56:20 +0300.

⁵⁶ brusovg@mail.ru, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru, "Fwd: Orientirovka," 2014-07-09, 13:07:27 +0300. Broide fled Ukraine in autumn under the threat of death from his employer as well as rivalry groups.

⁵⁷ Even in Crimea, where ethnic Russians comprise a majority of the population, the Party of Regions authorities were less willing to permit meetings of Russian parties compared to the previous regime. See Matsuzato, "Domestic Politics in Crimea," 239.

The "Government" part of the Complex of Measures stated that "the majority of the Ukrainian bureaucracy has long been heavily influenced by Western intelligence services, funds, and experts to be co-opted and used in Western interests," although it noted that "of particular importance is work with the leadership of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which takes a controversial position, wavering in its actions and statements depending on the pressure from different sides." At the CIS summit held in Minsk at the end of May 2013, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, who was occasionally criticized by opposition groups for having a pro-Russian stance, signed the non-binding memorandum, in which Ukraine simply expressed a desire to become an observer of the Eurasian Economic Union in the future.⁵⁸ Some might hastily interpret this move as Kyiv's vacillation between the EU and Russia. Yet as the suppression of pro-Russian forces suggests, Yanukovich was still fully geared toward Europe.

Nevertheless, the Kremlin attempted to turn the tide. One of the documents Tkachuk sent to Frolov in preparation for the Patriarch's July 2013 visit to Kyiv envisaged that:

Yanukovich can get out of this situation, relying on democratic procedures that the West cannot object to. He may agree to hold a referendum or to appeal to the Constitutional Court, postponing the signing until the completion of these procedures.

Yanukovich turned a deaf ear to Moscow's advice, but a handful of Party of Regions parliamentarians co-opted by the Kremlin began to publicly voice their discontent about the party's line by raising "constitutional" controversies. On August 7, Oleg Tsarev published the so-called "legal opinion on the compliance of the Constitution of Ukraine with the draft Association Agreement," in which he maintained that it would be impossible to sign the Agreement without amending the Constitution.⁵⁹ On August 20, Vadim Kolesnichenko proposed abandoning European integration, registering a bill to amend the basic laws that define Ukraine's foreign policy goal as obtaining membership in the European Union. According to the deputy, "the opinion of the Ukrainian people [on the vector of the state foreign policy] was divided approximately 50/50, often even in favor

⁵⁸ Tat'iana Silina. "Intrigatsiia." *ZN.UA*. May 31, 2013, At https://zn.ua/internal/intrigaciya-_.html.

⁵⁹ "Independent Ukrainian Center for Legal Initiatives and Expertise 'Constitutional State,'" which reportedly issued this legal conclusion, had Victor Medvedchuk as chairman of the board. The former center director denied his participation in this work. See "Vyvody po ES Tsarevu pisal sam Medvedchuk bez Zadorozhnogo" [Conclusions on the EU for Tsarev written by Medvedchuk without Zadorozhnyi]. *Comments.UA*. August 8, 2013, At <https://comments.ua/politics/417762-vivodi-es-tsarevu-pisal-medvedchuk.html>.

of joining the Customs Union” and defining the foreign policy vector in the legislation without regard for public opinion was “a violation of the Constitutional principle of people’s sovereignty.”⁶⁰

Some parliamentarians’ views on integration were affected by their personal business interests. Vyacheslav Bohuslaev, a Party of Regions member and president of the Motor-Sich Enterprise, mentioned in Frolov’s email to Glazhev on August 18 as a “big name” among recommended speakers in the anticipated autumn rallies against Euro-integration,⁶¹ expressed concerns about the possible consequences of introducing EU standards, as his company’s exports are closely tied to the Russian market.⁶²

In response to this turbulence from within the party, Yanukovich convened a meeting on September 5, where he made it clear that Ukraine would not turn from its Euro-integration course, while trying to alleviate the frustration of some party members by assuring them that some provisions of the Customs Union would still be implemented. Citing examples of Moscow’s unwillingness to fulfill obligations, including the gas price discount allegedly promised during the 2010 Kharkiv summit, Yanukovich reportedly said that partnership and respect from Ukraine’s northern neighbor should not be expected. He also warned that if Moscow continued to exert pressure on Ukraine in the form of economic sanctions, trade turnover might drop by half. This damage, in his opinion, should be softened by Brussels, which would take compensatory measures, including opening European markets to Ukrainian manufacturers.⁶³ Nobody seriously argued with the president, and the participants unanimously agreed to vote for the laws necessary for EU association. Following the party assembly, Oleg Tsarev commented to journalists that “three to five” colleagues would vote against the proposed legislation.⁶⁴ The euro-skeptics thus remained marginalized within the ruling party; any deputy groups lobbying for the kind of Eurasian integration envisaged in the Complex of Measures were

⁶⁰ “Kolesnichenko reshil pokonchit’ s evrointegratsiei odnim udarom” [Kolesnichenko decided to end European integration with one blow]. *Comments.UA*. August 20, 2013, At <https://comments.ua/politics/420107-kolesnichenko-reshil-pokonchit.html>

⁶¹ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glazhev@bk.ru, “mitingi kampaniia proryv”, 2013-08-18, 20:11:27 +0400.

⁶² “Efremov priznal, chto v PR est’ oppozitsiia k Prezidentu” [Efremov admitted that in the PR there is opposition to the President]. *Comments.UA*. September 2, 2013, At <https://comments.ua/politics/422392-efremov-priznal-pr-est-oppozitsiya.html>.

⁶³ “Tak kakim budet vash polozhitel’nyi otvet? Kratkii otchet o vstreche prezidenta s primknvshimi tovarishchami” [So what will be your positive response? A short report on the meeting of the president with the adjoining comrades]. *ZN.UA*. September 6, 2013, At https://zn.ua/internal/tak-kakim-budet-vash-polozhitelnyy-otvet-_html.

⁶⁴ Irina Kas’ianova. “Yanukovich nastraival regionalov na Evropu 2004-m godom i slovami ob iskluchenii” [Yanukovich set the regionals on Europe 2004 and words about exclusion]. *Vesti*. September 5, 2013, At <http://vesti-ukr.com/politika/15709-janukovich-nastraival-regionalov-na-evropu-2004-m-godom-i-slovami-ob-iskljuchenii>.

not formed on the eve of the Euromaidan.⁶⁵

Church

In January 2013, the Orthodox expert Frolov sent to Patriarch Kirill's assistant the talking points for a meeting between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian president scheduled for February. According to Frolov, the Ukrainian authorities were trying to turn the celebration of the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of the Rus, which was slated for late July, into "a triumph of [church] separatism" by giving the floor to Patriarch Filaret, who had parted ways with the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1990s, establishing the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate. Frolov argued that Russia should take over this celebration and use the Russian Orthodox Church, "the sole undivided structure in the post-Soviet space," to sway the Ukrainian and Belarusian publics toward Eurasian integration.⁶⁶

Frolov's ambitions fit well with the Kremlin's plan. The author of the Complex of Measures did not forget to include a section on religion, which begins with the observation that "the most active supporters and opponents of accession [to the Customs Union] are often parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and nationalistic Ukrainian churches (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church etc.), respectively." The document recommends that Moscow leverage the Ukrainian clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate, whose "participation can play an important role, both for Yanukovych personally and for public opinion."

The correspondence between Frolov and Igor Druz, leader of the Council of Slavic Peoples, shows how the Kremlin prepares "cultural events" by hiring local collaborators. On June 5, Frolov complained to Glazhev about the Kyiv authorities, who were, according to his account, trying to block the concert, saying, "Here in this Patriarch concert rally we will raise hysteria against the association with the EU. I will lead the orthodox public, but assistance is required from Medvedchuk with all his activists."⁶⁷ Three days later, a cost estimation of the event was sent from Druz to Frolov with a proposal to mobilize a thousand selected

⁶⁵ Even the communists, who were officially against EU integration, discreetly voted for some laws necessary for Ukraine's Euro-integration alongside the Party of Regions. "German pokhvalila kommunistov za pomoshch' v evrointegratsii" [German praised the Communists for their help in European integration]. *Censor.NET*. October 11, 2013. At https://censor.net.ua/news/256086/german_pohvalila_kommunistov_za_pomosch_v_evrointegratsii.

⁶⁶ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to kuksov@patriarchia.ru, "Tezisy dlia obsuzhdeniia (v tom chisle zakrytogo) k vstreche Prezidenta Rossii Vladimira Putina s uchastnika Arkhiereiskogo Sobora Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi. Dopolnennyi variant," 2013-01-27, 21:00:12 +0400.

⁶⁷ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glaziev@bk.ru, "PRAVOSLAVNAIA ISTERIIA PROTIV EVROINTEGRATSII UKRAINY," 2013-06-05, 22:34:44 +0400.

“photogenic and strong guys” from the military sports and Cossack organizations of South Ukraine that had previously participated in the dispersal of the “gay parade” in Kyiv.⁶⁸ This proposal seems to have been approved by Glazyev; his assistant Tkachuk further inquired about logistics for procuring activists.⁶⁹ Frolov asked Druz to revise the proposal to mobilize ten thousand locals in Kyiv and bring two thousand from the regions, adding that “the decision on the rock concert was taken at the highest level.”⁷⁰ What does this mean? In another email later that day, Frolov shared his excitement with his friend Victor Voronin, former first deputy head of National Archive Agency of Ukraine, saying, “Tsar personally found me (!). And through the minimum number of intermediaries told me to gather a mass Orthodox rally against the Ukraine-EU Association and honor the 1025 years on the eve of the PK [Patriarch Kirill] visit and that such speeches shall be delivered at a rock concert with the participation of the PK.”⁷¹ In Frolov’s jargon, “Tsar” means none other than Putin.

In the course of preparation for the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of the Rus, Tkachuk wrote to Frolov on July 18, “Together with Medvedchuk’s people, I am making efforts for good and positive coverage of the visit of Patriarch Kirill.”⁷² His task was to make “the face of the Patriarch enter every Ukrainian home through TV.”⁷³ One of the documents attached to Tkachuk’s email was titled “List of Participants of the Extraordinary Forum of the ‘Ukrainian Choice’, July 27, 2013, Kyiv.” The forum actually took place that day, attended by Putin and Medvedchuk (a point that I will return to later). The list first enumerates 20 delegates from “the Russian Federation,” including Glazyev, Frolov, and Tkachuk, and only then mentions eight Ukrainians, among them Petr Tolochko (a pro-Russian historian), Vadim Kolesnichenko, and Oleg Tsarev as “recommended participants on the topic—agreed with S. Yu. Glazyev.” This shows the concealed nature of Ukrainian Choice, which looks more like a

⁶⁸ niagara93@yandex.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “smeta,” 2013-06-08, 17:44:01 +0400.

⁶⁹ serg1784@mail.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “Re: smeta 1 Miting 25 iulija protiv vstupleniia Ukrainy v Assotsiatsiiu s ES,” 2013-06-08, 18:20:39 +0400.

⁷⁰ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to serg1784@mail.ru, “Re: smeta,” 2013-06-08, 18:17:05 +0400.

⁷¹ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to sirius1919@mail.ru, “Re[2]: Rodina,” 2013-06-08, 21:29:37 +0400. According to the investigation by InformNapalm, the account “sirius1919@mail.ru” belongs to Victor Voronin, an ally of Ukrainian education minister Dmytro Tabachnyk. “FrolovLeaks: Goebbels of the Patriarch, Recruitment of Ukrainian Generals and Baptism by Fire in Syria. Episode IV.” *InformNapalm*. April 14, 2017, At <https://informnapalm.org/en/frolovsleaks-goebbels-patriarch-recruitment-ukrainian-generals-baptism-fire-syria-episode-iv/>.

⁷² serg1784@mail.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “ot S.Tkachuka,” 2013-07-18, 17:10:51 +0400.

⁷³ serg1784@mail.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “ot S.Tkachuka,” 2013-07-18, 19:52:02 +0400.

front for the Kremlin than an independent organization.

Other documents attached to the same email, Tkachuk indicated, "have been handed over by S.Yu. [Glazyev] to his Holiness [Patriarch Kirill]," possibly for briefing the Patriarch before his visit to Ukraine. Tkachuk asked Frolov to kindly delete the files from the mailbox after copying them to the desktop—a step that, to all appearances, was not taken by the latter. The document "On the Final Separation of Ukraine from Eurasian Integration," written in the vocabulary typical of Glazyev, states:

Thus, it [the Association Agreement] implicitly obliges Ukraine to fully legalize the activities of sexual minorities and their representative organizations, which will lead in the long term to the legalization of same-sex marriages and other manifestations of sodomy.

Such an argument, however out of touch with reality, drove the Russian Orthodox Church, a bastion of conservative values, to take a firm position against Ukrainian integration into the EU.

The same document, with which Patriarch Kirill, reportedly Yanukovych's "spiritual father,"⁷⁴ became acquainted prior to his visit to Kyiv, describes the possible consequences of signing the Agreement for the Ukrainian leader, using extremely harsh language and rich imagination:

Yanukovych naively believes his Western advisers. In fact, they are luring him into a trap. After signing the Agreement, he will cease to be needed. The United States and the EU will willingly pass him into the hands of their henchmen, commanding them to bring down Yanukovych. In the absence of our support, he and his son will end up in prison, their property confiscated and eternally shamed. This has already been the case with Hussein, Milošević, Mubarak, and many other dictators who trusted Western consultants.

Such a turn of events is extremely disadvantageous to us. Ukraine will be isolated from our integration, the orange will return to power and re-draw it [Ukraine] into NATO.⁷⁵ It is extremely important to dissuade

⁷⁴ "Patriarch Kirill Was Yanukovych's Spiritual Father." *RISU*. June 19, 2017, At https://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/religion_and_policy/67350.

⁷⁵ In this essay addressed to Patriarch Kirill, the author (Glazyev) ideologically mixes up the EU with NATO without any arguments from the security viewpoint, just as he links the EU to "sodomy." But the Complex of Measures, the more fundamental document approved by Putin, does not refer to the threat of NATO, while it mentions at most the possible repetition

Yanukovych from signing the Agreement—this will be an economic catastrophe for Ukraine and his political suicide.

On July 27, Yanukovych met Patriarch Kirill in the presidential residence and “discussed various issues of church-state relations in the country.”⁷⁶ That same day, another high-ranking bishop within the Moscow Patriarchate took to the stage at the concert and addressed the thousands of Ukrainians who had gathered on Khreshchatyk street, the heart of the capital, stressing the significance of Rus Baptism for the Russian Church in uniting “the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and other peoples.”⁷⁷

“Tsar” Putin, who joined in the anniversary events organized by the Ukrainian government, as usual cut short a meeting with his counterpart Yanukovych, and hurried to the conference on “Orthodox-Slavic Values: The Foundation of Ukraine’s Civilizational Choice” organized by Ukrainian Choice. Putin, who occupied the seat between Glazyev and Medvedchuk, stated in his keynote address:⁷⁸

Here at this site, at the baptismal site on the Dnieper River, a choice was made for the whole of Holy Rus, for all of us. Our ancestors who lived in these lands made this choice for our entire people. When I say “for our entire people,” we know today’s reality of course, know that there are the Ukrainian people and the Belarusian people, and other peoples too, and we respect all the parts of this heritage, but at the same time, at the foundations of this heritage are the common spiritual values that make us a single people.

Putin characterized the Baptism of the Rus as “a great event that defined Russia’s and Ukraine’s spiritual and cultural development for the centuries to come” and urged participants to “remember this brotherhood and preserve our ancestors’ traditions,” which “built a unique system of

of the Orange Revolution. Despite the delusions of separate Russian hawks, NATO was added to the Kremlin’s expressed fears later to justify the illegal annexation. See also Nimmo, “Backdating the Blame.”

⁷⁶ “Sostoialas’ vstrecha Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla s Prezidentom Ukrainy V.F. Yanukovichem” [The meeting of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with the President of Ukraine V.F. Yanukovych]. *The Russian Orthodox Church*. July 27, 2013, At <https://mospat.ru/ru/2013/07/27/news89384/>.

⁷⁷ “V tsentre Kieva proshel konsert po sluchaiu 1025-letii Kreshcheniia Rusi” [In the center of Kiev was a concert on the occasion of the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus]. *The Russian Orthodox Church*. July 28, 2013, At <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3130724.html>.

⁷⁸ “Orthodox-Slavic Values: The Foundation of Ukraine’s Civilisational Choice Conference.” *President of Russia*. July 27, 2013, At <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18961>.

Orthodox values and strengthened themselves in their faith." He then stressed that "after the reunification with Russia, Ukraine developed very rapidly in the 17 and 18th centuries"—a time period to which the Complex of Measures referred as "the historical movement of B. Khmelnytsky for reunification with Russia"—and enumerated industrial, economic, and cultural benefits Ukrainians enjoyed during the Russian empire and the Soviet era, as well as noting the common transport and energy systems and other economic ties that had remained following the collapse of the USSR.

The concerted efforts by the state and the church to remind Ukrainians of their "common spiritual values" were suddenly brought to nothing. On September 30, ten representatives of Ukrainian churches and religious organizations signed a joint statement supporting Ukraine's European course. "In our opinion, the future of Ukraine is naturally conditioned by our historical roots: to be an independent state in the circle of free European peoples," the appeal reads. "This choice is not and cannot be considered as the opposition of Ukraine to our historic neighbor—Russia." It goes on to call on Russia to respect that choice.⁷⁹ For Moscow, the most shocking part was that the document was signed not only by the heads of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyivan Patriarchate and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, but also by Metropolitan Volodymyr [Vladimir], who leads the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate and with whom the author of the Complex of Measures had expected to ally to influence public opinion in favor of Eurasian integration. Next morning, an apparently panicked Tkachuk wrote to Frolov, citing the news article: "Kirill, have you seen this and why is Vladimir's signature there? Did you know that this paper had been prepared? Urgently contact me or SYu [Glazyev] to discuss actions."⁸⁰ That afternoon, Frolov disseminated his expert opinion which called the churches' statement "a shameful Mazepa's paper." The presence of Vladimir's signature on the document was denied by Frolov with disinformation: "According to sources in Kyiv, His Beatitude [Vladimir] is sick and it's just that someone signed it instead of him. Either the 'auto-cephalisers of the UOC [Ukrainian Orthodox Church]' or the officials of the AP [Administration of the President] of Ukraine."⁸¹ Glazyev further instructed Frolov to make "someone authoritative from the Ukrainian Church of Moscow Patriarchate state that this [Vladimir's signature] is a

⁷⁹ "Rukovoditeli 10 tserkvei: Evroput' Ukrainy ne mozhet protivopostavliat'sia Rossii" [Leaders of 10 churches: Ukraine's Euro-path cannot be seen as being in opposition to Russia]. *Pravda*. September 30, 2013. At <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2013/09/30/6998965/>.

⁸⁰ The original message Frolov received from Tkachuk is missing, but its content remains in Frolov's answer. frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to serg1784@mail.ru, "Re: Ot s Tkachuka," 2013-10-01, 15:10:25 +0400.

⁸¹ Kirill Frolov. "Pozornaia mazepina bumazhka" [Shameful Mazepa's paper]. *Votserkvolnii politiki*. October 1, 2013. At <http://kirillfrolov.livejournal.com/2709710.html>.

fake.”⁸² There are no signs that other clumsy projects Frolov proposed to Glaziev, including the use of Metropolitan Agafangel in Odessa, influenced Ukrainians in favor of Eurasian integration.

Oligarchs

One proven method for the Kremlin to influence Kyiv’s decision-making was to target Ukrainian business, which is heavily dependent on Russia. In 2011, Russia was the destination for 28 percent of Ukraine’s trade, whereas Ukraine received less than 5 percent of Russian exports. This “trade asymmetry” had long given Russia “coercive power” over the smaller Ukraine.⁸³ The Complex of Measures therefore proposed the following tactics:

Together with “Ukrainian Choice,” it [the Association “Suppliers of the Customs Union”] can organize a series of thematic conferences, round tables, workshops inviting the structures of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and representatives of the Russian ministries and departments responsible for regulating access to Customs Union markets (Rosselkhoznadzor, Rospotrebnadzor, Rosoboronazakaz, Federal Customs Service, Ministry of Industry and Trade and Economic Development of the RF, Russian Railways, and specific departments of the EEC) to influence the Ukrainian business community in order to consolidate forces in favor of the integration. At these events, appeals to the leadership of Ukraine and political parties can be accepted...

Working with business structures, it is necessary to be ready to meet Ukrainian partners in making decisions on issues of their interest in exchange for direct support for the integration process.

Carrots were given, for example, in the form of business conferences targeting specific industrial sectors. On January 30, the Ukrainian Choice organized a conference devoted to “Problems and prospects of restoration and development of economic integration of shipbuilding complexes of Ukraine and countries of the Customs Union” with the participation of the Russian officials in charge of the relevant sectors and the Eurasian

⁸² glaziev@bk.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “Re[2]: po Tserkvi,” 2013-10-02, 12:28:32 +0400.

⁸³ Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk. 2016. “Between Dependence and Integration: Ukraine’s Relations with Russia.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 68:4: 680-681.

Economic Commission.⁸⁴ During the meeting, Medvedchuk explained to the managers of shipbuilding companies in Mykolaiv and Kherson that accession to the Customs Union and access to the Russian market could save the troubled Ukrainian shipbuilders. Nevertheless, Moscow preferred sticks to carrots in its policy toward Ukraine. The Complex of Measures continues:

And, vice versa, resort to sanctions against companies whose owners or leaders support political forces opposed to the accession [to the Customs Union] or openly campaign for European integration...

Given the commercialization of the Ukrainian ruling elite, the most significant [resource] is the economic channel of influence that affects the personal interests of the most influential people in the Ukrainian ruling elite. Preliminary analysis of Firtash, Akhmetov, Pinchuk, Poroshenko, and other key figures defining Ukrainian politics (mainly anti-Russian and pro-Western in their orientation) indicates their critical dependence on Russian creditors, markets, and sources of raw materials.

The first manifestation of a Russian trade war appeared on July 17, when the Russian government decided not to extend the customs-free export of steel pipes from Ukraine, causing severe damage to Victor Pinchuk's Interpipe and Serhiy Taruta's Donbass Industrial Union. At the end of that month, Rospotrebnadzor announced a ban on the import of chocolates from Petro Poroshenko's Roshen, alleging that they had found in the company's confectionary a toxic substance prohibited in Russia. It also turned out that 40 major Ukrainian companies had been registered in the Russian Customs Service database as "risky," as a result of which all of these enterprises' exports became subject to thorough inspection. The target companies belonged to, in addition to the tycoons mentioned in the Complex of Measures, influential entrepreneurs and politicians close to the powers-that-to-be: Igor Kolomoisky, Boris Kolesnikov, Andriy Klyuyev, Yury Boyko, etc. On August 14, the list was extended to apply to all Ukrainian exports.⁸⁵

At the European Strategy Forum held in Yalta in mid-September

⁸⁴"Ukrainskii vybor". *Kruglyi stol v Nikolaev* ["Ukrainian choice." Round table in Nikolaev]. *Iybor.ua*. February 5, 2013, At <http://vybor.ua/video/economika/ukrainskiy-vybor-kruglyy-stol-v-nikolaev.html>.

⁸⁵Sergei Shcherbina and Sergei Liamets. "Rossiia nachala pogloshchat' Ukrainu" [Russia began to absorb Ukraine]. *Pravda*. August 20, 2013, At <http://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/publications/2013/08/20/390584/>.

and attended by both the Ukrainian leaders and elites and their European counterparts, the Russian guest, Glazyev, reportedly stated that the signing of the Association Agreement would mean Ukraine's violation of "the treaty on strategic partnership [*sic*] and friendship with Russia." He even implied that Russia could no longer guarantee the status of Ukraine as a state and could intervene if pro-Russian regions directly appealed to Moscow. He further threatened that the Agreement would inevitably lead to political and social turmoil, saying, "the living standard will decline... there will be chaos." In response, another speaker in the same session, former trade minister of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, ironically expressed gratitude to Glazyev, noting that for the first time in Ukrainian history more than 50 percent of the population supported European integration, while less than 30 percent was in favor of closer ties with Russia.⁸⁶ In October, a nationwide survey showed that the number of those awaiting the signing of the Association Agreement had increased from 39 percent to 49 percent over the course of a month.⁸⁷ Another survey showed that almost half (47 percent) of the Party of Regions' potential electorate supported the Association Agreement, while 20 percent preferred joining the Customs Union.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Kremlin later cited other opinion poll results to argue that Ukrainians supported acceding to the Customs Union.⁸⁹

On September 13, it was reported that Vladislav Surkov would be appointed aide to the Russian president in charge of Russia-Ukraine relations.⁹⁰ That same day, Glazyev asked Frolov if he "still had a desire to

⁸⁶ Shaun Walker. "Ukraine's EU Trade Deal Will Be Catastrophic, Says Russia." *The Guardian*. September 22, 2013. At <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/22/ukraine-european-union-trade-russia>. For the opinion poll Poroshenko possibly had in mind (although the publicized result shows 49% Ukrainians support Euro-integration), see "Evropeiskii vybor Ukrainy v kontekste ukrainsko-rossiiskikh otnoshenii" [The European choice of Ukraine in the context of Ukrainian-Russian relations]. *Research & Branding Group*. September 4, 2013. At <http://rb.com.ua/rus/projects/omnibus/8813/>.

⁸⁷ "Uverennost' ukrainsev v podpisanii assotsiatsii s ES rezko vyroslo" [Confidence of Ukrainians in signing the association with the EU has grown dramatically]. *ZN.UA*. October 16, 2013. At https://zn.ua/POLITICS/uverennost-ukraincev-v-podpisanii-associacii-s-es-rezko-vyroslo-131016_.html.

⁸⁸ "Polovina izbiratelei Partii regionov—za assotsiatsiiu s ES, i tol'ko 20%—za Tamozhennyi soiuz" [Half of the voters of the Party of Regions for the association with the EU, and only 20% for the Customs Union]. *ZN.UA*. November 12, 2013. At https://zn.ua/POLITICS/polovina-izbirateley-partii-regionov-za-associaciyu-s-es-i-tolko-20-za-tamozhennyi-soyuz-132687_.html

⁸⁹ In late November, Tkachuk sent to Frolov and other colleagues the results of the opinion poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology earlier the month. The results show that "Ukrainians ready to vote for joining the European Union turned out to be almost as many as those ready to vote for joining the Customs Union—about 38%." Tkachuk wrote, "Please use these figures of one of the few objective sociological services, which gives real and not provocative questions." See serg1784@mail.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru; anpavlov77@gmail.com; schirov-mse@yandex.ru, "ot S.Tkachuka," 2013-11-27, 15:45:22 +0400.

⁹⁰ Varvara Zelenina. "Ukraine podobrali kuratora: Vladislav Surkov zaimetsia rossiis-

work in the Administration (this time for Surkov under my supervision)."⁹¹ Frolov, though suspecting Surkov's covert support of anti-Patriarch positions, replied: "YES, OF COURSE. UNDER YOUR SUPERVISION I WILL WORK EVEN FOR SURKOV, IF IT IS ASSIGNED BY THE MOTHERLAND."⁹² Despite the "insider" opinion that Glazyev did not have much contact with Surkov,⁹³ this shows that he was under the command of the Kremlin's ideologue from the beginning.⁹⁴

The Media

According to the Complex of Measures, the Ukrainian media space was "full of lies, falsifications, inciting hatred towards Russia." The Kremlin therefore had to "plan an effective propaganda campaign" that would clarify the benefits of Ukraine's participation in the Customs Union as well as defuse the widespread fears regarding integration with Russia. To remedy the situation, it was expected to achieve "personal agreements" with TV channel owners as well as anchorpersons regarding the access of the Kremlin's favorite experts to airtime, create "a journalist pool," and develop a series of programs for regional television. The Complex of Measures states:

Efforts for the on-air promotion of our experts and journalists require substantive and consistent pressure on the owners of the main Ukrainian TV channels (Firtash, Levochkin, Kolomoisky, Akhmetov, Poroshenko, Pinchuk) and corresponding instructions to Russian channels available on satellite TV in Ukraine.

ko-ukrainskimi otshoseniiami v dolzhnosti pomoshchnika Vladimira Putina" [For Ukraine was selected the curator: Vladislav Surkov will deal with Russian-Ukrainian relations in the post of assistant to Vladimir Putin]. *Gazeta.Ru*. September 13, 2013, At https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/09/13_a_5652077.shtml.

⁹¹ glaziev@bk.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, "Re[3]: OCHEN' VAZHNO," 2013-09-13, 09:45:23 +0400.

⁹² frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glaziev@bk.ru, "Re[4]: OCHEN' VAZHNO," 2013-09-13, 22:24:22 +0400.

⁹³ For Glev Pavlovsky's comment published in the Russian media in March 2014, see Elizaveta Surnacheva, Aleksandr Gabuev, and Sergei Sidorenko. "Mnogoglavyy orel: Kto vliial na ukrainskuiu politiku Kremliia" [The multi-headed eagle: Who influenced the Ukrainian policy of the Kremlin]. *Kommersant.ru*. March 3, 2014, At <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2416461>.

⁹⁴ Frolov submitted his CV through Glazyev's secretary and had an interview with a Surkov aide in December. It seems, though, that the Surkov team did not think too highly of Frolov's performance in Ukraine, and the church expert eventually failed to get an official job in the Kremlin. See prm_glaziev@gov.ru, e-mail to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, no subject, 2013-11-18, 10:55:59 +0400. Glazyev asked Frolov to prepare a paper on religious instruments for Surkov. See frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to sergl784@mail.ru, "Vazhno," 2013-11-21, 17:04:10 +0400.

The plan further argues that the most effective measure is “the adoption of economic and legal sanctions” on the television tycoons, who are sensitive to Russian pressures. But as we saw in the reaction to the trade war, efforts to coerce Ukrainian oligarchs were not entirely effective. Surkov, appointed presidential aide on September 20, learned lessons from the debacle of Glazyev, who tried to impose Russian views on Ukrainians with high-handed attitudes and explicitly assertive words, for example describing European integration as “catastrophe” or “suicide.” Experienced in the manipulation of public opinion, Surkov probably attributed the setback of Russian policy in Ukraine to the lack of an information strategy; Russia failed to convey its messages to the target audience in Ukraine.

Surkov began to recruit local political technologists and influential media figures through Vitaly Leybin, the Donetsk-born journalist based in Moscow who was editor-in-chief of “Russkii Reporter” and the news site *polit.ru*.⁹⁵ On October 17, following consultations with Ukrainian media experts such as Igor Guzhva, director general of the media holding company “Vesti,” and his colleague Iskander Khisamov,⁹⁶ Leybin proposed to Surkov “some theses on the expansion of the Russian position”⁹⁷ that criticized the explicit pro-Russian propaganda that was in place prior to Surkov and suggested making more use of historical and ideological components:

1. “Pro-Russian policy” is always marginalized quickly because it is too rigid and too straightforward in its theses; we must stop betting only on “the blatant” and engaging in explicitly rigid agitprop.
2. In addition to the practical and pragmatic theses (economic benefits and damage) [promoted] by Sergei Glazyev, who is almost the sole speaker from Russia, there must be historical and ideological concepts, indicating the special role of Ukraine in our common destiny (“Europeans praise Ukraine, but we just scare”).

Unlike the Complex of Measures, which resorts to intimidation of media magnates to disseminate pro-Russian views, Leybin’s prescription

⁹⁵ From the end of the 1990s, Leybin engaged in speechwriting and public relations for election campaigns in Russia, which perhaps gave him opportunities to get close to Surkov, who oversaw domestic politics in the Presidential Administration.

⁹⁶ Both later engaged in covert anti-Ukrainian propaganda by creating such pseudo-Ukrainian websites as *ukraina.ru* and *strana.ua*.

⁹⁷ *leybin@expert.ru*, email to *prm_surkova@gov.ru*, “Dlia V.YU. ot Vitaliia Leibina,” 2013-10-17, 14:38:45 +0300.

is more sophisticated: lull the “stubborn” Ukrainian audience into a false sense of equality and emphasize Russia’s comparative advantage in, for example, living standards:

3. It should be borne in mind that the national character [of Ukrainians] has stubbornness and pride, and we must be able to create at least an illusion of free choice, equal partnership, but not subordination.

4. (...)

5. We are not aware of this, but Russia has successful management cases in the eyes of Ukrainians; we need to be able to present to them many reforms, etc., including the experience of business organizations (“the best agitation for the Customs Union is information on the difference in salaries of teachers and doctors between our countries”).

To improve the image of Russia in Ukraine, Leybin proposed—paradoxical though it sounds—imitating the “European experience,” such as small grants for free press, urban programs, and small business, as well as academic exchanges. Some of the suggestions apparently interested Surkov; he sent an inquiry to the minister of education and science on the current conditions of education cooperation between Ukraine and Moldova, Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Crimea. The ministry replied with detailed information on each entity, but the separate report on Crimea emphasized (in boldface type) that the ministry “does not directly cooperate with the bodies of state administration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea,” while mentioning some events to be implemented within the framework of Russia-Ukraine bilateral cooperation.⁹⁸

Warning from the Political Technology Guru

At the end of October, less than a month before the Vilnius Summit, Surkov appeared to consult multiple experts about the political situation in Ukraine and the prospect of Ukraine signing the Association Agreement. On October 30, Konstantin Zatulin, director of the CIS Institute, reported the intensified interactions of high-rank officials over the past week with continuing efforts to negotiate a compromise over the issue of Yulia Tymoshenko, thus suggesting that “the likelihood of signing the Association Agreement remain[ed] very high.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ moryakova-ma@mon.gov.ru, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru, “spravochnaia informatsiia ot MINOBRNAUKI Rossii,” 2013-10-22, 17:25:54 +0300.

⁹⁹ galina@materik.ru, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru, “spravka Ukraina ot Zatulina,” 2013-

Another expert consulted by Surkov was Gleb Pavlovsky, known as the guru of Russian political technology and one of the major campaign strategists sent by Moscow to Yanukovich in the 2004 presidential elections. At almost the same hour as Zatulín's message, he sent to Surkov a file titled "How dangerous is the further development of the situation around Ukraine?"¹⁰⁰ His analysis proceeds from the following assumption:

From Russian statements and publications it can be understood that Kyiv is making a choice between a "pro-Russian" and a "pro-Western orientation"; this is not the case. In Kyiv, they are choosing the best way to ensure the extension of the presidency of Victor Yanukovich (in the 2015 elections).

Pavlovsky thus proposed to interpret the backroom politics of Bankova as revolving around the upcoming presidential elections. In his opinion, the incumbent president had nothing to do but seek re-election in 2015 to protect the interests of his own "family." However, Yanukovich's traditional election thesis, "friendship with Russia," would not guarantee him victory, and so he added the slogan of "Euro-integration" as an effective means of winning additional votes in the western and central parts of the country. On the other hand, as was the case with the 2004 elections, "developing a polar picture, we [the Kremlin] are unintentionally working for Yanukovich's campaign as an inevitable 'last choice' for opponents of extreme nationalism." Furthermore, the summer Russian trade war against Ukraine had subtly changed the picture in favor of Yanukovich. As Pavlovsky continued, "the picture of 'pressure from Moscow' turns the president into what he was not—the all-Ukrainian national leader," which is a "too-expensive free gift for future elections."

Pavlovsky also saw a pro-European consensus among the so-called "*politikum*," the Ukrainian elite community of "political, public, and educated circles, deputies, and high-profile journalists" that is activated in times of crisis:

The "consensus regime" established in Ukraine creates the basis for the consolidation of any oppositional force from Klitschko, Yatsenyuk and even Tymoshenko with the current authorities.

Even the confrontation of financial-political groups is temporarily postponed—although it is determined

10-30, 18:19:45 +0300.

¹⁰⁰ gleb@fep.ru, email to prn_surkova@gov.ru, "Ukr-tezisy-GP," 2013-10-30, 17:48:28 +0300.

by an objectively extant conflict of business interests that has not disappeared. Irreconcilable opponents in business, Akhmetov and Kolomoisky, come forward with identical positions in favor of association with the EU, although each is based on its own motives.

The consensus of the elite is, Pavlovsky argued, backed by the rapid change of the nation's preferences: "For the first time in all twenty years of the new Ukrainian statehood, the number of supporters of the European drift of Ukraine has attained an absolute majority." Perhaps he had in mind the same opinion poll that Poroshenko cited at the European Strategy Forum. The political technologist thus recommended:

Yanukovich is going to the bluff, sacrificing—as he is aware—Russia's strategic interests in Ukraine. He cannot, under any circumstances, be a reliable partner of Russian politics. We need to help him lose future elections.

It is worth noting that Pavlovsky's assessment was tailored to his old colleague Surkov, contrary to those he deliberately released for mass consumption in order to manipulate public opinion.¹⁰¹ The Kremlin was extremely frustrated with "the sole candidate for the Russian-speaking electorate of the East" and did not see him as a trustworthy ally as early as the end of October 2013.

Medvedchuk Project

Meanwhile, Medvedchuk continued to monopolize the favor of the Russian president. It was not Yanukovich but Medvedchuk who took a seat in the same row as Putin, Medvedev, and Nazarbayev at an international sambo tournament held in Sochi on August 17.¹⁰²

On August 19, Frolov sent to Glaziev an email titled "the campaign rallies breakthrough" with a list of pro-Russian agitators.¹⁰³ Glaziev told

¹⁰¹ For example, in March 2014, Pavlovsky explained to the Western press that Putin decided on the annexation of Crimea because of Yanukovich's flight that ended "the Russian system of influence on Ukraine," which seems contradictory to his own analysis for Surkov four months earlier. See Shaun Walker, "Ukraine and Crimea: What is Putin Thinking?" *The Guardian*, March 23, 2014, At <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/23/ukraine-crimea-what-putin-thinking-russia>.

¹⁰² "Medvedchuk s"ezdil k Putinu i Medvedevu" [Medvedchuk went to Putin and Medvedev]. *Pravda*, August 18, 2013, At <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2013/08/18/6996239/>

¹⁰³ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glaziev@bk.ru, "mitingi kampaniia proryv," 2013-08-18, 20:11:27 +0400. Frolov asked Glaziev not to share the information with Medvedchuk's people so he "could write something critical about them."

Frolov to contact Vladimir Granovsky,¹⁰⁴ a Ukrainian political technologist then working for Medvedchuk, regarding the events in Kyiv.¹⁰⁵ Frolov then wrote to Granovsky, introducing himself as “coordinating the rally and the concert (with Karamazov’s ‘wave’ against the Association of Ukraine with the EU)” and bragged about “having embraced all possible Orthodox, pro-Russian groups in the regions of Ukraine.” Frolov asked Granovsky for “advice on the maximum effectiveness, scale, and media coverage of each event.”¹⁰⁶

In September, when the Kremlin decided Surkov would supervise Ukrainian issues, Glaziev prompted Frolov to submit a cost estimate for an “agitation concert tour in Ukraine.”¹⁰⁷ Frolov told Oleg Karamazov, the leader of the Ukrainian rock band group The Karamazov Brothers that the idea had been given a green light and requested that the musician prepare the estimate swiftly.¹⁰⁸ Preparation of this concert, however, revealed ideological frictions between Frolov and Granovsky. Frolov and Druz were anxious to display “Orthodox Ukraine against ‘Euro-sodom’” (critics of homosexuality) as a major slogan of the event, while “master of political technology” Granovsky categorically opposed any exposure of Orthodox and anti-EU elements, and proposed replacing them with more moderate phrases like “support for the Eurasian Union.”¹⁰⁹ Druz complained to Frolov that he had barely persuaded Granovsky to accept “Russia Ukraine Belarus—together Holy Rus.” Frolov requested that Glaziev, not so much as an economist but as a firm Orthodox believer, intervene in the conflict,¹¹⁰ and the latter ruled, “let them do that at their own discretion, the slogan against Eurosodom is a must, it is not necessary to agree [that] with Granovsky.”¹¹¹

In parallel with the preparation of the concert, on September

¹⁰⁴ Granovsky is known for inventing the infamous meme “We will not allow Ukraine to split into three grades” to help Yanukovich win during the presidential election campaign in 2004. See “25 let donbasskogo separatizma. Chast’ vtoraya,” *Real’naia gazeta*, March 24, 2016, At http://realgazeta.com.ua/25-let-donbasskogo-separatizma_-chast-vtoraya/

¹⁰⁵ glaziev@bk.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “Re: Vystupaiushchie na mitingakh i kontsertakh. Raz’iasnenie. Assotsiatsiia s ES budet sorvana, chego by eto ni stoilo!,” 2013-08-21, 19:09:37 +0400.

¹⁰⁶ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to V.granovski@granovski.com, “po pros’be S. Glaz’ye-va”, 2013-08-22, 17:01:43 +0400.

¹⁰⁷ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glaziev@bk.ru, “Re[4]: OCHEN’ VAZHNO”, 2013-09-13, 22:24:22 +0400.

¹⁰⁸ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to olegkaramazov@mail.ru, “SROCHNO.,” 2013-09-13, 22:26:21 +0400.

¹⁰⁹ According to local pro-Russian political technologists, the Ukrainian Choice is “against direct support of Orthodox events, as well as events openly opposing the policy of the authorities”. See eurasian.initiative@gmail.com, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “S nailuchshimi pozhelaniiami,” 2013-10-05, 11:23:36 +0300.

¹¹⁰ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glaziev@bk.ru, “Vazhno,” 2013-11-08, 15:04:27 +0400.

¹¹¹ glaziev@bk.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru, “Re: Vazhno,” 2013-11-08, 21:53:40 +0400.

20, the Russian delegation headed by Glazyev landed in Luhansk by charter aircraft¹¹² to join the conference titled "Economic and Legal Consequences of Ukraine's Signing of the Association Agreement with the EU for Industrial Enterprises of Ukraine" organized by Ukrainian Choice. Medvedchuk and invited "economists" from Russia stressed that with the signing of the Agreement, the text of which had been approved a few days earlier by the Cabinet of Ministers, Ukraine would lose sovereignty and fall into colonial dependence on the EU, and threatened that the Customs Union would close markets to Ukrainian products. The conference was, however, ignored by local elites such as Oleksandr Yefremov and gathered only fringe politicians. One local journalist even mocked Frolov, who argued at the meeting that Euro-integration had little to do with the economy but it was about the de-Christianization of Ukraine and the introduction of same-sex marriages, for "selling religious-conservative obscurantism and economic cooperation in one package."¹¹³

The agitation concert tour "We are One!" took place from October 19 through November 9, traveling across ten major cities in eastern and central Ukraine, from Sevastopol to the grand finale in Kyiv. The free-of-charge concerts with Russian and Ukrainian popular music groups were organized with the active support of Ukrainian Choice. The central themes were "70th Anniversary of Liberation of Ukraine from Fascists" and "Triune Russian people" (Putin's cliché "Russians and Ukrainians—a single people") and were intended to develop "youth patriotic feeling and love for the Motherland"¹¹⁴ on the principle of "public diplomacy." Initially, Medvedchuk was expected to participate in the concert, but he later cancelled it, citing pressure from the authorities. Some Ukrainian artists refused to participate as soon as they sensed Medvedchuk's involvement. Nevertheless, the grand finale in Kyiv filled Independence Square with the flags of Slavic nations, as many Ukrainian flags as Russian ones,¹¹⁵ as though carefully arranged to demonstrate "equal partners."

Although the concert was prepared under the direct supervision of Glazyev, the latecomer Surkov also showed an interest in its results. On October 30, Alexei Chesnakov, director of the Center for Current Politics, reported the progress of the concert tour—including Medvedchuk's

¹¹² serg1784@mail.ru, email to glazyev@bk.ru, frolov_moskva@mail.ru and others, "VYLET 20 sentiabria v Lugansk," 2013-09-18, 18:28:22 +0400.

¹¹³ frolov_moskva@mail.ru, email to glazyev@bk.ru, "luganskii rezonans. Nas nenavidiat, no pri etom obil'gno tsitiruiut. Nam povezlo s takimi opponentami. Luchshaia repressiia-umolchaniia. Znachit, moei metod 'pravoslavnogo rok-n- rodna' rabotaet," 2013-09-22, 12:41:58 +0400.

¹¹⁴ In this discourse, the word "motherland" [*rodina*] was used to remind many Ukrainians of the deceased Soviet Union, or the Russian Empire.

¹¹⁵ For example, see "Vystuplenie veterana, osvobodzhdavshego Kiev. 09.11.2013" [Speech by a veteran who liberated Kyiv]. At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0jE6dVaY7k>.

decision to drop out—to Surkov.¹¹⁶ On November 12, Chesnakov reported the result of media analysis, which suggested that the negative coverage (23 percent) was exceeding the positive (11 percent).¹¹⁷ The approval ratings of Medvedchuk and Ukrainian Choice also remained low (under 1 percent) in opinion polling, making it highly unlikely that he would get back to major politics, much less be a viable presidential candidate in 2015. One of the largest Russian political technology projects in Ukraine—and one possibly orchestrated by Putin himself—ended up having no significant political impact on the eve of the Euromaidan. Putin’s popularity in Ukraine did not help his proxy’s ratings; for many Ukrainians, Ukrainian Choice was not a Ukrainian choice, but the Russian choice.

That being said, Medvedchuk’s close relationship with Putin seemed to offer special value to the Kremlin. It was later recommended that he be maintained as a possible “coordinator of pro-Russian candidates for the next presidential elections,” with his Ukrainian Choice “as a basis for a ‘separate political project.’”¹¹⁸ Putin prefers to mask his important conversations with sporting events; in late November 2013, he invited Medvedchuk to the sambo world championship in St. Petersburg, where they supposedly discussed reformatting relations between Ukraine and the Customs Union.¹¹⁹

Again, Yanukovych

The Complex of Measures stresses the importance of “influencing the business of the President’s family (Alexander Yanukovych)” to strengthen its dependence on Russian structures as well as “take into account the personal economic interests of Yanukovych.” After the trade war in summer 2013, Russia shifted to negotiating behind closed doors. Putin and Yanukovych had reportedly at least two secret meetings between late October and mid-November, in which Moscow resorted to measures “exploiting Yanukovych’s weak spot to the full.”¹²⁰ Russia “understood the Ukrainian leader’s greed and lack of ‘European values’ perfectly well.”¹²¹ It was thus Yanukovych alone who “capitulated” to Moscow’s blackmails. The sudden decision of the Ukrainian Cabinet to suspend preparation of the Association Agreement on November 21 did look like a backslide and

¹¹⁶ alalchesn@gmail.com, email to prm_Surkova@gov.ru, “pervyi fail,” 2013-10-31, 16:30:41 +0300.

¹¹⁷ alalchesn@gmail.com, email to prm_Surkova@gov.ru, “Dlia VYU,” 2013-11-12, 12:01:33 +0300.

¹¹⁸ galina@materik.ru, email to Prm_surkova@gov.ru, “ot Zatulina,” 2014-02-04, 13:09:23 +0300.

¹¹⁹ “O chem pogovorili Putin i Medvedchuk?” [What did Putin and Medvedchuk talk about?]. *Gazeta.ua*. November 26, 2013, At https://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/politics/_o-chem-pogovorili-putin-i-medvedchuk/528232.

¹²⁰ Dragneva and Wolczuk, *Ukraine Between the EU and Russia*, 87.

¹²¹ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 63-64.

deeply disappointed supporters of Euro-integration, but it did not at all mean that Putin's Eurasian project had won the hearts of the Ukrainian leadership. Yanukovich showed up in Vilnius to confirm Ukraine's unchanged European vector, as well as call for economic assistance from the EU. On the first days of the Euromaidan rallies, triggered by his own decision, Yanukovich even "applaud[ed] those who came out for European integration" as long as the demonstration would not challenge his political ambitions for the 2015 elections.¹²² Furthermore, Yanukovich reportedly complained to the Lithuanian President about "economic pressure and blackmail by Russia."

The decision on the suspension, albeit made under great pressure from Russia, seems like a tactical respite for Yanukovich (he called it a "time out," while Azarov described it as a "tactical" break), who engaged in bargaining between the EU and Russia, expecting, in particular, that Russia would offer loans and a discounted gas price to ensure his re-election in 2015. Strategically, however, Yanukovich was still oriented toward Europe. During Ukraine-Russia bilateral meetings in December, the Ukrainian government only reiterated its readiness to join certain agreements of the Customs Union, but its full entry into the Russia-led economic integration was not put on the table.¹²³ At the same time, by blocking the signing of the EU association agreement, Russia had gained time to readjust its failed policy toward Ukraine.

Implications and Discussions

Taking Stock of the Complex of Measures' Achievements

If we assess the general performance of the Complex of Measures, we can say that by the middle of November 2013, the Kremlin appears to have exhausted almost all the political, economic, cultural, and religious resources envisaged in the Complex of Measures—except Putin's leverage over the personal weakness of the Ukrainian leader (see Table 1).

The Kremlin's efforts to create "an influential network of pro-Russian social and political forces" did not pay off; pro-Russian forces were marginalized both in parliament and government. This trend was aggravated by hostile maneuvers on the part of the "shadow vertical power," i.e. the administrative and criminal resources of Yanukovich's family, which suppressed pro-Russian activities in the east.

¹²² "Yanukovich 'poaplodiroval' mirnym Evromaidanam"[Yanukovich "applauded" the peaceful EuroMaidan]. *Pravda*. November 26, 2013, At <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2013/11/26/7003149/>.

¹²³ Tat'iana Silina. "Dve shagi nalevo, dve shagi napravo..."[Two steps to the left, two steps to the right...]. *ZN.UA*. December 13, 2013, At https://zn.ua/internal/dve-shagi-nalevo-dve-shagi-napravo-_html.

Table 1. Taking Stock of the Performance of the Complex of Measures
(as of the end of November 2013)

Performance is graded on the scale Excellent—Good—Limited—Poor.

| Instrument | Performance | Observations |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Yanukovych | Limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Postponed EU integration ✓ No commitment to Eurasian integration ✓ “Sacrificing Russian strategic interests” for his reelection ✓ Turns into “All-Ukrainian national leader” resisting Russian pressures |
| Government | Poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ukraine expressed a desire to become an observer of the Eurasian Economic Union in the future ✓ The majority of bureaucrats support EU integration |
| Parliament | Poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The majority supports EU integration ✓ No serious lobby groups for Eurasian integration |
| Church | Poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All churches, including the Moscow Patriarchate, expressed support for EU integration ✓ “Common spiritual values” did not turn the public away from EU integration ✓ Patriarch Kirill did not change Yanukovych’s mind |
| Oligarchs | Limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Trade war inflicted a huge loss on oligarchs as well as the country’s economy ✓ Consolidated rival oligarchs in favor of EU integration |
| Media/Public | Poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Too straightforward “pro-Russia” propaganda ✓ Trade war enhanced the negative image of Russia ✓ Support for EU integration gained an absolute majority |
| Regions | Poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Western and central regions support EU integration ✓ South-Eastern regions less supportive of EU integration, but pro-Russian forces are marginalized (suppressed by Kyiv) |
| Medvedchuk | Poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by less than 1% of the population |

Putin’s advisor Glazyev engaged in defamation of Ukraine’s Euro-integration aspirations using geopolitical and conservative religious arguments rather than describing the economic benefits of Eurasian integration for Ukraine. The visits to Kyiv by the “Tsar” and Patriarch to commemorate the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of the Rus had a special mission: to remind Ukrainians—who, they believed, were being

lured to Europe—of the common historical and cultural ties that would make them “a single people” with Russians. In parallel, “the elder” brother did not hesitate to discipline the younger: Russia mobilized its regulatory authorities, imposing economic sanctions to punish Ukrainian oligarchs.¹²⁴

After the undeclared trade war, however, opinion polling registered unprecedentedly high support for EU integration, with every second respondent backing it. It was obvious that the punitive Russian measures were counterproductive, creating a harsh backlash from Ukraine. No “effective propaganda campaign” was developed under Glazyev, whose aggressive remarks only increased distrust toward Russia, both among the elite and in the population as a whole. Similarly, the Kremlin-backed concert tour calling for the unity of the Slavic nations did not achieve its concealed political aim of turning Putin’s proxy Medvedchuk into a viable pro-Russian presidential candidate. On the eve of the Vilnius summit, the scenario of “the victory of our candidate in the upcoming presidential elections in 2015” was practically invalid, nor were there any other pro-Russian political forces in Ukraine on which Moscow could reasonably pin its hope.

Russia knew that Yanukovich was never truly devoted to European values, and assessed his pivot to Europe as tactical one. But after the summer trade war Yanukovich started to speak openly about pressure from Russia, and Moscow began to realize that the Ukrainian president planned to run his 2015 election campaign not only on a platform of EU integration, but also as “a national leader resisting Russian threats” in the eyes of the Ukrainian electorate. This is perhaps close to the truth; Yanukovich certainly clandestinely suppressed pro-Russian activities in the country.

For Moscow, Yanukovich lost his previous “pro-Russian” value and turned out to be harmful, jeopardizing its “geopolitical interests” in Ukraine. Although Putin managed to dissuade Yanukovich from signing the Association Agreement at the last minute, the Russian president became increasingly frustrated by his Ukrainian counterpart, who kept flirting with him without making any commitment to Eurasian integration.

It is noteworthy that the position in which Moscow found itself on the eve of the Euromaidan was totally different from that of the Orange Revolution. In 2004-2005, Moscow was still sure that it was able to “co-opt Yushchenko by mobilizing Russia’s soft power and the two nations’ economic, cultural, and institutional interdependence,”¹²⁵ while by November 2013 it had run out of all these resources. The Russian policy toward Ukraine was thus at an impasse; their hands were tied.

¹²⁴ By using regulatory bodies, Russia manages to disguise political revenge as economic and administrative issues to avoid attention from the international community. See Wilson, *Virtual Politics*, 84.

¹²⁵ Tsygankov, “Vladimir Putin’s Last Stand,” 290.

To sum up, firstly, Yanukovych would betray Moscow at any time. Secondly, there were no alternative pro-Russian political forces left in Ukraine. Finally, as argued in the Complex of Measures, Moscow was primed to see that any subsequent “anti-Yanukovych” regime would be destined to be “anti-Russian,” which would corner helpless Moscow into “a burnt-desert situation.” That is when Russia remembered its last resort: Crimea.

A Turn in Russian Policy Toward Ukraine

The observations made in the assessment of the Complex of Measures further allow us to construct a nuanced interpretation of Russian behavior in late 2013 and early 2014. These behaviors suggest a possible review and change of its policy toward Ukraine. Firstly, it is perhaps no coincidence that some of the earliest manifestations of the preparation of the Crimea operation appeared in November 2013, when the Kremlin found itself without any other means of controlling Ukraine’s behavior. According to the Surkov leaks, the Kremlin’s extraordinary attention to Crimea was first exposed on November 29, when his close aide Boris Rapoport intriguingly reported to Surkov about the election system of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.¹²⁶ Earlier that day, Surkov had received from Alexei Chesnakov the daily monitoring of Ukrainian media, from which he learned that Yanukovych would not sign the Agreement during the Vilnius Summit, but it was still possible that the Agreement might be signed at the Ukraine-EU summit scheduled for February-March 2014.¹²⁷

The Frolov leaks also registered the activation of Russian actors in Crimea during the same period. The expansion (or establishment) of the Simferopol office of the CIS Institute was first considered in late November 2013. Anatoly Filatov, deputy director for the scientific work of the Ukrainian branch, sent to CIS Institute director Zatulin resumes of candidates for spokesperson and office manager.¹²⁸ The relatively moderate agenda for the round table on “the Role of the Republic of Crimea in Eurasian Integration” on November 23 in Simferopol was radicalized to instigate separatist sentiments as well as advocate historical ties between Crimea and Russia.¹²⁹ According to the Simferopol office

¹²⁶ prm_rapoport@gov.ru, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru, “Spravka,” 2013-11-29, 13:07:34 +0300.

¹²⁷ prm_rapoport@gov.ru, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru, “monitoring dlia VYU,” 2013-11-29, 09:06:04 +0300.

¹²⁸ institute@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru;geomant-rus@yandex.ru, “ofis_Krym-kandidaty,” 2013-11-29, 10:10:14 +0400.

¹²⁹ institute@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru;geomant-rus@yandex.ru, “dlia direktora - k utverzheniiu,” 2013-11-21, 15:10:09 +0400. Cf. institute@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru;geomant-rus@yandex.ru, “Kruglyi stol,” 2013-11-21, 10:05:03 +0400.

activity report, "the political campaign on the Treaty on the Delimitation of Powers between the Republic of Crimea and the State of Ukraine" was implemented "from December 2013 to March 2014," together with a "sociological survey of Russian compatriots" conducted "from January to March 2014."¹³⁰

Why did Russia zero in on Crimea? In 2013, Russia did not have significant political instruments in Crimea, as is the case with the rest of Ukraine.¹³¹ The political scene on the peninsula was, however, subtly different from that of South-Eastern regions; as Matsuzato argues, there were potential tensions between the "Macedonians" (elites from Donetsk *oblast*) and indigenous Crimean elites.¹³² Although experts doubt that the Kremlin was well-versed in the local political context, it was at least obvious that the Crimean Supreme Council, chaired by Vladimir Konstantinov, was among the quickest to express support for the suspension of the EU integration process—and moreover, possibly beyond the control of the party's headquarters in Kyiv,¹³³ it did not hide its pro-Russian sympathies and held a rally in support of "the development of trade relations with the Russian Federation."¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the pro-government meetings organized by the Party of Regions in Kyiv limited themselves to stressing the prematurity of Euro-integration for Ukraine without giving any notion in favor of Eurasian integration.¹³⁵ On December 5, from 8pm, Surkov held a meeting on "Perspectives on the social-economic development of Crimea," inviting deputy minister of economic development Alexey

¹³⁰ institute@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru;geomant-rus@yandex.ru, "Filatov-otchet1kvartal2014", 2014-04-03, 10:07:48 +0400. Similar social surveys were not proposed in the plan for 2013. Cf. i-sng@yandex.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru; geomant-rus@yandex.ru, "dlia direktora", 2013-02-06, 17:09:14 +0400.

¹³¹ According to the CIS Institute's internal report in mid-December, "political and financial groups associated with the Russian Federation" did not exert "significant influence on the political life in Crimea," while "the dominant financial and political groupings in the Crimea are external, Ukrainian, Party-of-Regions-related, competing with each other." Furthermore, pro-Russian force existed "in the form of a large number of fragments," which were "in a state of permanent hostility between themselves." See institute@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru; geomant-rus@yandex.ru, "analitika," 2013-12-16, 14:43:10 +0400.

¹³² Matsuzato, "Domestic Politics in Crimea."

¹³³ It is still not clear why Konstantinov remained silent upon the Ukrainian government's approval to the Association Agreement in mid-September, but started to oppose it with the suspension decision in November. The official chronology of "the Crimean spring" is silent about this two-month gap. See "Krymskaia vesna: argumenty i fakty" [The Crimean spring: arguments and facts]. *Crimea.gov.ru*, At <http://crimea.gov.ru/vesna>.

¹³⁴ "Krymskii parlament podderzhal Azarova i Rossiiu" [Crimean parliament supported Azarov and Russia]. *ZN.UA*. November 23, 2013, At https://zn.ua/POLITICS/krymskiy-parlament-podderzhal-azarova-i-rossiyu-133477_.html.

¹³⁵ "Na Evropeiskoi ploshchadi prokhodit mnogotysiachnyi miting storonnikov Partii regionov" [Many thousand supporters of the Party of Regions rally on European Square]. *Korrespondent.net*. November 29, 2013, At <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3272886-na-evropeiskoi-ploshchady-prokhodyt-mnogotysiachnyi-mytynh-storonnykov-partyy-rehyonov>.

Likhachev and director of the Department of Economic Cooperation and Integration of CIS Countries Andrei Tsemakhovich.¹³⁶ A strange coincidence is that Crimea parliament speaker Konstantinov was on a visit to Moscow on that day.¹³⁷ Within the Surkov leaks, however, we are not able to confirm any follow-on meetings on “the social-economic development of Crimea,” whereas similar meetings on “interregional cooperation” with eastern Ukrainian *oblasts* bordering Russia were held by Surkov at least four times between November 2013 and February 2014.¹³⁸ A possible explanation is that the Crimean social-economic issue, originally part of Ukraine’s curator Surkov’s competence, was stripped away from the *de facto* “directorate for breakaway republics” in late 2013 and early 2014 with a view to its subsequent official incorporation into Russia.¹³⁹

The Rubicon was crossed when the Ukrainian government riot police cracked down on peaceful demonstrators in Independence Square. On December 1, a reported 200,000-250,000 people took to the streets in Kyiv to protest against the attack on students and journalists. The violence made the process increasingly irreversible, and the demand of the protesters shifted from European integration to the resignation of the president and the government. The Kremlin probably detected early signs of the collapse of Yanukovich regime; the media monitoring report sent to Surkov on the morning of Monday, December 2 starts with the “Results of protest rallies on December 1,” describing the event as “the most massive rallies against the authorities in the past nine years” (i.e. since the Orange Revolution in 2004), followed by such headlines as “Lviv region announced mobilization in support of Maidan,” “The split in power—the departure of Levochkin [Head of the Presidential Administration] and several deputies from the PR[Party of Regions] faction,” “Ukraine is about to resume talks on Euro-integration,”¹⁴⁰ etc. As Pavlovsky warned, the Kremlin perhaps saw a “consensus regime” taking shape once the national crisis unfolded, consolidating the Ukrainian *politikum* under the slogan of Euro-integration. Indeed, what the insightful political technologists feared was not so much

¹³⁶ prm_rapoport@gov.ru, e-mail to prm_surkova@gov.ru, “Spisok,” 2013-12-05, 11:20:50 +0300. The final version of the document replaced “Crimea” with “Autonomous Republic of Crimea.”

¹³⁷ The ostensible purpose of Konstantinov’s visit to Moscow was to participate in a conference titled “Regional Lawmaking: Theory, Experience, and Practice.” See “Zakonodatel’sтво regionov: teoriia, opyt, praktika.” *Gosudarstvennyi soviet Respubliki Krym*. December 5, 2013, At http://www.crimea.gov.ru/news/05_12_13_6.

¹³⁸ Surkov’s directorate continued only monitoring of implementation of the intergovernmental agreement on the construction of the Kerch Strait bridge.

¹³⁹ On April 20, a month after the annexation of Crimea, Putin signed a decree to establish a ministerial-level state commission for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

¹⁴⁰ alalcheshn@gmail.com, email to prm_surkova@gov.ru; boris.ra@icloud.com, “monitoring dlia VYU,” 2013-12-02, 11:17:54 +0300.

the disintegration of Ukraine but its cohesion; the more Russia becomes aware of this inconvenient truth, the louder it must shout that Ukraine is "an artificial state," "its split is inevitable," and so on.

That is why, in late January and early February, when Yanukovich was still in power, not only pro-Kremlin Ukrainian politicians such as Medvedchuk and Kolesnichenko but also Glazyev and the Russian CIS Institute reinvigorated the well-worn topic of the "federalization" of Ukraine to add fuel to the escalating political confrontation, even to the detriment of Yanukovich¹⁴¹ (the issue was dismissed by the Ukrainian president at the time¹⁴²). On February 6, Zatulin reported to Surkov on "the great circle of Cossack Atamans of Crimea and Sevastopol conducted by the CIS Institute in Sevastopol on February 5." Addressing the conference, Zatulin made a hurried conclusion that "what is happening in Ukraine, no doubt, is an attempt of a coup d'état," and argued that federalization was "the only peaceful way to keep Ukraine from disintegration."¹⁴³ Nevertheless, according to the CIS Institute's internal assessment in mid-February, there were not yet any notable political forces in Crimea willing to discuss the federalization or revision of the status of Crimea in their political programs.¹⁴⁴

During the same period, the Kremlin twice attempted to contact and co-opt Anatoly Mogilev, prime minister of the Crimea Autonomous Republic. The first delegation—ostensibly for religious purposes (the tour of the Gifts of the Magi)—included Russia Duma deputy Dmitry Sablin as well as Russian orthodox magnate Konstantin Malofeev. Mogilev's deputy, Rustam Temirgaliev, later said in an interview that he felt some "center of management" was behind them.¹⁴⁵ The Frolov leaks suggest that Malofeev was expected to visit Surkov on "Orthodox issues in Ukraine" in mid-November.¹⁴⁶

When an agreement on settling the political crisis was finally brokered between Yanukovich and opposition leaders on February 21, Putin did not allow his envoy Vladimir Lukin, who witnessed the negotiation together

¹⁴¹ "Sergey Glaz'ev: federalizatsiia - uzhe ne ideia, a ochevidnaia neobkhodimost'." [Sergei Glazyev: federalization is not an idea, but an obvious necessity]. *Kommersant.ru*. February 6, 2014, At <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2400532>.

¹⁴² "Prezident schitaet, chto vopros federalizatsii seichas ne aktualen, no podlezhit izucheniiu" [The President believes that the issue of federalization is not relevant now, but it must be studied]. *ZN.UA*. February 14, 2014, At https://zn.ua/POLITICS/prezident-schitaet-chto-vopros-federalizatsii-seychas-ne-aktualen-no-podlezhit-izucheniyu-138825_.html.

¹⁴³ alla@materik.ru, email to Prm_surkova@gov.ru, "ot Zatulina," 2014-02-06, 12:38:01 +0300.

¹⁴⁴ institute@materik.ru, email to frolov_moskva@mail.ru; geomant-rus@yandex.ru, "takzhe direktoru," 2014-02-11, 16:41:29 +0400.

¹⁴⁵ Matsuzato, "Domestic Politics in Crimea," 241.

¹⁴⁶ Frolov suggested that Glazyev seize the opportunity to recommend Malofeev to Surkov directly. See frolov_moskva@mail.ru, e-mail to glaziev@bk.ru, "Re[2]: dlia V. Surkova prosimoe," 2013-11-20, 19:10:08 +0400.

with European colleagues, sign the document,¹⁴⁷ simply because Putin did not want to endorse any “consensus regime” in Kyiv. On the contrary, he actively intervened to help his Ukrainian counterpart to flee the country “for humanitarian considerations”¹⁴⁸ instead of persuading him to cling to power and defend Russian interests in Ukraine. Within a few days after Yanukovich’s loss of power, the demoralized Party of Regions structure collapsed, with dozens of its deputies having left its ranks,¹⁴⁹ just as predicted in the Complex of Measures.

Some observers argue that Surkov’s task was to keep Yanukovich in power, a task he obviously failed to fulfill.¹⁵⁰ But this is hard to believe if Moscow did not trust Yanukovich at all. On the contrary, the Kremlin’s political technologists perhaps needed the ouster of the “legitimate” president, which would become the last piece of their grand narrative on the “coup” to justify the planned annexation of Crimea as well as the demand for federalization, effectively neutralizing international criticism. It is illustrative that multiple Kremlin “experts” and political technologists exposed in the leaks, such as Chesnakov and Pavlovsky, orchestrated a series of narratives that the Crimea annexation was responsive, spontaneous, even improvised action by Putin, who was “infuriated” at the crisis escalation in Kyiv during the Sochi Olympics, in the Western mainstream media outlets in March 2014,¹⁵¹ which set the tone for Russia-led interpretation of the contested phenomenon from the very beginning.

As an aside, when Surkov was put on the US sanction list immediately after the annexation of Crimea, his henchmen—including Sergei Markov and Robert Schlegel—spoke in concert to an American news website to deny and obscure Surkov’s role in Ukraine.¹⁵² But the fact that

¹⁴⁷ Asked by a journalist about the reason to refuse signing, Lukin questioned Yanukovich’s capability to implement the agreement. “Lukin: RF ne stala podpisivat’ ukrainskoe soglashenie iz-za prisutstvuiushchikh v nem neiasnostei” [Lukin: RF did not sign the Ukrainian agreement because of uncertainties in it]. *TASS*. February 22, 2014, At <http://tass.ru/politika/995185>.

¹⁴⁸ “Putin spas Yanukovicha ot rasprav.” [Putin rescued Yanukovich from the reprisal]. *Vesti.ru*. March 4, 2014, At <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1345533>.

¹⁴⁹ “Party of Regions faction becomes opposition.” *Kyiv Post*. February 24, 2014, At <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/party-of-regions-faction-becomes-opposition-337488.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Treisman, “Why Putin Took Crimea,” 51. Regarding Surkov’s role, Treisman accepts the testimony of the Russian journalist Mikhail Zygar, who says, citing the Kremlin insider, that Surkov was allegedly sidelined temporarily before the Crimea annexation because he disappointed Putin by failing to fulfill his task of keeping Yanukovich in power.

¹⁵¹ Compare their public statements and assessments in the leaks. For the comments by Alexei Chesnakov and Sergei Markov, see Steven Lee Myers. “Russia’s Move into Ukraine Said to Be Born in Shadows.” *The New York Times*. March 7, 2014. At <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/08/world/europe/russias-move-into-ukraine-said-to-be-born-in-shadows.html>. For the comments by Gleb Pavlovsky and Sergei Markov, see Walker, “Ukraine and Crimea: What is Putin Thinking?”

¹⁵² Anna Nemtsova and Eli Lake. “Is This the Mastermind Behind Russia’s Crimea

Chesnakov bothered to report this English-language article to Surkov¹⁵³ suggests that this is so-called *dzhinsa* (placement of ordered articles) and that the opposite of their comments is closer to the truth. Surkov's reaction to the U.S. sanction—"It's a big honor for me (...) I lose nothing"—seems nothing more than a bluff.¹⁵⁴

Strategy vs Tactical Opportunism?

The Crimea operation seems to have been a well-considered and proactive move to secure what Russians call their "geopolitical interests": keeping Ukraine in Russia's orbit. It was far from improvisation by Putin or Russia's seizing of a tactical opportunity during the escalation of the Ukraine crisis. The crisis was, on the contrary, artificially escalated by Moscow. It is, however, also hard to believe that the Crimean scenario was devised and incubated for years, because the Kremlin pursued the lines envisaged in the Complex of Measures, including vain attempts to nurture a pro-Russian political force and their favored presidential "candidate," until November 2013 (although this does not preclude the parallel existence of Plan B somewhere in the security services). The initial idea of engaging in Crimea perhaps belongs to Surkov, who took over the position of Ukrainian curator in the autumn.

The findings suggest that when Russia found it impossible to achieve its strategic goal, it did not stick to flawed tactics and was quick to take another tack—in this case, taking a piece of its neighbor's territory hostage.¹⁵⁵ One might describe Russian policy toward Ukraine as "strategic opportunism":¹⁵⁶ remain focused on long-term strategic objectives (keeping Ukraine in its "sphere of influence"), while staying flexible enough to solve day-to-day problems and recognize new opportunities (Holy Rus, Crimea, "federalization," "protection of Russian speakers,"

Grab?" *The Daily Beast*. March 19, 2014, At <https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-this-the-mastermind-behind-russias-crimea-grab>.

¹⁵³ pavlov.as.one@gmail.com, e-mail to prn_surkova@gov.ru, "Fwd: Ch," 2014-03-20, 11:24:01 +0300.

¹⁵⁴ Natal'ia Rozhkova. "Vladislav Surkov rad sanktsiiam SSHA: 'Eto bol'shaia chest' dlia menia!'" [Vladislav Surkov is pleased with the U.S. sanctions: "It's a great honor for me!"] *MK*. March 17, 2014, At <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2014/03/17/999473-vladislav-surkov-rad-sanktsiyam-ssha-eto-bolshaya-chest-dlya-menya.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Starr and Cornell (2014) argue that when Russia finds itself without any other means of influencing the foreign policy orientation of its neighbors in the so-called "sphere of influence," it simply takes a piece of their territories hostage, just as it took Abkhazia and South Ossetia "as spoils to complicate Georgia's future development." See Frederick S. Starr and Svante E. Cornell, eds. 2014. *Putin's Grand Strategy: The Eurasian Union and Its Discontents*. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program, 76. At <https://www.silkroadstudies.org/publications/silkroad-papers-and-monographs/item/13053-putins-grand-strategy-the-eurasian-union-and-its-discontents.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Isenberg. 1987. "The Tactics of Strategic Opportunism." *Harvard Business Review* 87:2.

“Novorossiia,” etc.). Political technology has been exceptionally effective at the latter.

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