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# **Ukraine at War: Symbolic Politics in Donbas Insurgency**

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## **Declaration**

I, Olena Telenyk, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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*“It gains strength by going”*

## **Abstract**

The events of the Euromaidan triggered an insurgent movements' emergence in the East of Ukraine to mobilise against the newly-organised authorities in Kiev. These insurgent movements shook the country in as much as Ukraine lost control over certain territory of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, lost control over the Ukrainian-Russian border line, lost over a million of Ukrainians who fled to Russian as well as has got about a million of internally-displaced people, economic decline etc. However, the apogee of the confrontation between the East and Kiev has led to a large-scale war in the East of Ukraine on territorial parts of Donetsk and Lugansk regions in which more than 10000 people died. The conflict quickly became one of the hot spot themes on the international arena having influenced the Ukraine's domestic and external politics, particularly Ukrainian-Russian relations.

However, what is the Donbas Insurgency about? and what methods the insurgent leaders used to gain support among the local population during the pre-insurgency period, this thesis will shed the light on as well in what way Russia is involved in the conflict.

# Ukraine at War: Symbolic Politics in Donbas Insurgency

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## CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Since the end of 2013, the political situation in Ukraine was developing in crisis parameters. The first large-scale protests became the events that opened a new page of modern history in Ukraine known as the Revolution of Dignity or Euromaidan. The events of the end 2013 and the beginning of 2014 led to a serious political turbulence: “Russian Spring” protests in south-eastern Ukraine, the Russian Federation’s (Russia) annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the emergence of an armed conflict<sup>1</sup> in Donetsk and Luhansk regions (having a collective name Donbas<sup>2</sup>) put Ukraine into the center of European political agenda as well as the world politics.

Firstly, it is important to mention while discussing the Donbas conflict that there is no a consensus on how to classify the following armed conflict in Ukraine. The discourse in Ukrainian and western (USA and EU) media differs substantially in contrast to the Russian one. While the Ukrainian authorities call an armed conflict in Ukraine a war against Russian aggression. Most of the western media calls this conflict a war between Ukraine and Russia. Russia itself stands against the mentioned above narratives, and it claims that Ukrainian authorities lead a “punitive operation” against the Donbas people.

In the beginning of Spring 2014, it was possible to observe that Ukrainian experts and media often used a term of a “hybrid war”<sup>3</sup> in connection to the political events that Ukraine faced with the start of Euromaidan’s escalation. Usually, it is not the only reason that leads to an armed conflict or a war, and Ukraine also did not become an exception of it. The multiple reasons studied by the researchers and “think tanks” conclude that political aspects of Donbas war are as follows:

*geopolitical aspect*, escalation of relations between Russia and the USA, as Russia claims to reformat a unipolarity of the world order<sup>1</sup> into multipolarity, where Russia aims to occupy one of the poles which is a center of orientation of all anti-Western forces;

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<sup>1</sup> Armed conflict, in this context, this thesis refers to a conflict existing “... whenever there is a resort to armed force between States or protracted armed violence between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State” (Gutan, 2016 p. 331).

<sup>2</sup> Donbas, in this thesis we refer to the Ukrainian transliteration of this region - *Donbas* - because often one may notice a Russian version of the region’s name “Donbass”.

<sup>3</sup> Hybrid war, a form of hostile action in which the attacker does not apply a classical military invasion, but suppresses its opponent via a combination of covert operations, sabotage, cyberwarfare, and often through support to the insurgents operating in the enemy territory (Murray and Mansoor, 2012).



*Socio-cultural parameters of regional Donbas identity*, a decline of social infrastructure and a number of Russian schools, increase of quantity of depressed areas, chronic wage delays, explicit and hidden unemployment, objectively predetermined people's worsened outlook on life which deprives confidence in the future;

*Religious aspect*, a change in the balance of power in the religious and ecclesiastical field of the country led to a battle between two major churches in Ukraine (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kiev Patriarchate and Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate);

*Ethnic aspect*, an ethnic conflict between Ukrainian ethnic majority with the Russian ethnic minority;

*Informational aspect*, an escalation of relations between Ukraine and Russian in 2013-2014 has led to an informational war for media content in which Russian propaganda machine succeeded due to large amounts of funding and the involvement of numerous specialists who accumulated the ideas of Ukraine's conflict as purely internal;

*Military aspect*, an armed warfare in Donetsk and Lugansk regions between Ukrainian regular armed forces and "DNR and LNR" quasi-states (Vasetskiy, 2015; IPIEND; 2015, Strasheim, 2016; Gutan 2016).

Based on this, an armed conflict in Donbas raises many questions about its typology within an international humanitarian law of modern armed conflicts. For instance, the UN reports and Uppsala Peace and Conflict studies (2015) suggest that the Donbas conflict is an internal civil conflict with an involvement of a foreign state in which the engagement of the Ukrainian government, non-state armed groups of "Donets People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic" ("DNR/LNR") and Russia are linked together.

Thus, the objectives this thesis employs to reach are: to study the emergence of the non-state groups in Ukraine, to understand what methods the insurgents used to organize its support and attract allies among the Donbas population as well as in what way Russia is involved in the Donbas insurgent movement that flourished in Ukraine in Spring 2014. In order to specify the vector of our investigation, the Symbolic politics theory as a political communication technology and a concept of insurgency as technology of military warfare will direct us while searching an answer to the research question: *What symbols, myths, emotions did the insurgent leaders use to foster separation from Ukraine?*

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<sup>4</sup> World order, here we refer to the definition generated by Baylis, Smith and Owens (2014) meaning a system of controlling events in order to maintain a political stability.

## CHAPTER 2. Analytical Framework

### 2.1 Insurgency as a point of departure

An insurgency has existed throughout history, however, before the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century it was not fully investigated until it blossomed due to the “golden age of insurgency”. Corrupt regimes, dictatorship and weak governments in the Latin America, Asia and periphery of Europe enabled inspired revolutionaries around the world to create a justification for armed struggle (Metz and Millen, 2004). What is insurgency? and why it has shaken the 20<sup>th</sup> century so that it occupies a decent place not only in our research but also a place in many other leading academic centres and world politics, in this paragraph we will try to shed light on.

An *insurgency* is a technology of military conflict characterized by from a relatively small number of armed groups which may reach to the size of conventional armies practising a guerrilla warfare<sup>1</sup> (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). The insurgency was deeply studied by many political scientists among whom Stuart Eizenstat devoted his studies to security issues in insurgencies, Daniel Bryman and Paul Davis investigated external support, Kirsti Stuvøy studied a “social order” and war economy of the insurgencies, Christopher Clapham studied African Insurgencies etc. who altogether made a significant contribution into the comparative analysis of insurgencies. The aim the insurgency seeks for is to get a control over economic resources by capturing power or establishing an alternative political agenda which requires a base for sustained and coordinated mobilisation and armed confrontation (Stuvøy, 2002). An insurgent administration develops all necessary procedures for armed struggle; it adopts a political agenda, creates a financial, military and tactic plan in order to keep control over seized territories and interactions with civilians. To various extent, the public inhabiting the insurgent territory may consider the insurgency legitimate, in this connection the legitimacy of the state and its appliance of physical force may be undermined (Clapham 1998 in Stuvøy, 2002).

With an attempt to present a typology of insurgencies we risk oversimplifying the classification of insurgencies by selecting and fitting one type into a specific case study as each of the category is nuanced and mixed and none of the insurgencies is identical. Though,

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, a *guerrilla warfare* refers to a definition developed by the Guide to the Analysis of Insurgencies (2012) “...a form of warfare in which small, lightly armed groups use mobile tactics against a stronger opponent” (p. 7).

some commonalities we can identify through characteristics, tactics, goals and organization which have already been investigated by the researchers. One of the most common ways to differentiate insurgencies is either by a goal or by a method the insurgencies employ (a principal of organization). According to the insurgency's goal, the researchers from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) developed five categories of insurgencies which they first published in the Guide to the Analysis of Insurgencies in 1980s. Barnd E. O'Neill developed seven types of insurgencies in the beginning of 1990s which Marks (2004) described in his work devoted to the ideology of insurgencies. Later, Clapham (1998) while analysing African insurgencies, generated the classification of four broad groups. Some categories of insurgency classification overlap in the resources mentioned above, and some complement each other. In this fashion, we can combine them and create one insurgency classification based on Clapham, CIA and O'Neill's studies which we think will be fruitful to look at and include into the analysis part of this paper.

Thus, the first type, *a liberation insurgency* aims to achieve freedom from a colonial rule. Anti-colonial movements transfer into insurgency through opposing the state regime and calling on the majority of people to join the armed struggle. This type of insurgency is one of the classics of African conflicts. *A separatist insurgency*, seeks to present aspirations and identities of certain regions or ethnicities within an existing state either by causing a danger of secession from the state or by pressing on a special autonomy within the state. The UPA (Ukrainska Povstanska Armia or Ukrainian Insurgent Army) can serve as a vivid example of this kind of insurgency when after the WWII the UPA tried to challenge the Ukrainian Soviet state by its secession. *A reformist insurgency*, aims to make the national government alter social, political or economic reforms without changing a political order. To the contrary, *a revolutionary insurgency* seeks to re-shape an existing political order with an entirely new one, often promoting a transformation of social and economic structures. Many states of the East and South Asia such as Myanmar, South Thailand, the Philippines fully experienced this kind of insurgency during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *A resistance insurgency* aims to force an existing political leadership to leave a certain territory. *A commercial insurgency* aims to acquire access to material resources, a political power serves as a tool for capturing and controlling the wealth. Finally, a *warlord insurgency*, sets out to change a leadership, and it has nothing to do with a creation of a new state system different to which this insurgency seeks to withdraw. The change of the leadership in Liberia and Somalia, partially Angola may be the cases of this group insurgencies. It is important to mention that many researchers disagreed with Clapham about the 'warlord' group's name, and called it controversial, though admitted

its uniqueness for the political analysis (Clapham, 1998; Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; O’Neill in Marks, 2004).

From the insurgency classification presented above, we can see that each type of the insurgency is different and shaped by a specific goal. The factors promoting insurgency may vary through the stage of the insurgency’s life cycle (stages of insurgency’s development). As an insurgency moves from one stage into another one, the factors from early stages will remain relevant as well as the methods on which these factors are built on. For instance, the Guide to the Insurgency Analysis highlights four separate insurgency’s stages: *pre-insurgency*, *incipient conflict*, *open insurgency*, and *resolution stage* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Since this thesis focuses on the symbolic elements that fostered separation from Ukraine in the Donbas conflict, we find it necessary to look at the characteristics of the pre-insurgency stage and include them into the analysis part.

From the first site, the pre-insurgency stage can be difficult to determine because the insurgency’s activities are hidden, and the armed struggle has not come to the surface yet. Though, on this stage, the insurgency works on the organizational basis: establishes leadership, develops grievances and group identity, recruits and trains members, and cumulate military equipment (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Same as the typology of the insurgency previously mentioned, not every insurgency will include all the elements of the specific stage, likewise the amount of time needed to progress through all these elements in the pre-insurgency stage is likely to vary. In order to have a general understanding of what common indicators are peculiar to the pre-insurgency movement the table below presents in the form of summary.

Pre-existing conditions	<i>Historical</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Societal</i>
The organizers of insurgency may use historical, political, economic or societal factors to raise displeasure among certain segments of society, to gain support for the insurgency. These factors which may often be exacerbated include: →	Historical myths that have left grievances against the government or created hostility among sub-groups where violence becomes an accepted means to resolve political disputes	Discriminated state policies towards some segments of society on the basis of religion, region ethnicity, language, class, etc. foster the insurgency to reinforce its group identity	Economic crisis and continuous poor economic conditions generate the government’s dissatisfaction among the public and trigger it to join the insurgency especially among the unemployed and underemployed youth	Government’s inability to provide basic societal needs: security, justice, education, health-care, corruption etc. simply add to the atmosphere of vulnerability
Grievance				

Insurgents create a publicized narrative aiming to gain legitimacy and justify their actions among certain population. The indicators that work for insurgent's mobilisation around grievance may include:	Emergence of any kind of media publications on the grievance issue	Emergence of websites, circulation of flyers and materials that raise a popular discourse among the public	Support of the grievance by legitimate political or social organizations	Protests and demonstrations where the grievance plays a supporting role
<b>Group Identity</b>				
Insurgency seeks to create an identity different from a state identity. The "other" identity may centre around ethnicity, regionalism, political affiliation, religion, language etc. The indicators that insurgents may exploit are:	Propaganda that focuses on special narratives about a sub-group's history which separates it from the rest of the nation.	Use of language that makes the government be "occupier"	Increased emphasis on historical, cultural, religious, or ethnic symbols that set the subgroup apart from the rest of the nation.	
<b>Recruitment and Training</b>				
Among first indicators that detect the insurgency's involvement in public cooperation are:	Increased number of people travelling abroad on a cross-border territories especially men from 25 to 60 years old.	The emergence of nongovernment military training sites such as sports clubs with a focus on paramilitary style training		
<b>Arms and Supplies</b>				
On this stage, the insurgents have usually limited amount of weaponry. Therefore, they seek to supply themselves with necessary war material. The indicators the analysts include are:	Seizure of military departments, equipment, uniforms, caches of weapons and explosives etc.	External support from a neighbouring or an allying state. It may be provided through consultations, military equipment or even diplomacy		

(Information adapted from Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; Lynn, 2005; Davis et al, 2012)

The data from this table above we can use as a framework for analysing insurgency. It does not provide a full plethora of all possible indications of pre-insurgency stage, however, it introduces us common features. For instance, the pre-existing conditions of the insurgency can direct us in investigating how/what historical, political, economic or social markers contribute or shape the conflict. Common characteristics and real actions such as organising principles, methods of engagement with the public and allies, group identity and myth-

making, external support, propaganda etc. will direct us and form a basis for analysis in the case study.

## 2.2 Symbolic Politics Theory

A phenomenon of symbolic politics is as old as politics although, the research on this topic started only in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, what states about its relatively recent academic study. Analysis of research and publications devoted to the symbolic politics show that most actively this domain was developing among western scientists from USA, Germany, Norway etc. Furthermore, the interest to this topic attracted scientists' attention from other parts of the world such as the Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine etc.). Therefore, in this paragraph, we will describe a range of important approaches to studying symbolic politics, from the time of its emergence to recent time proposed by versatile researchers.

### Origins of Symbolic Politics and the Emergence of its Founder

Analysing written records devoted to the symbolic politics, the works studied by us of e.g. Kaufman, Laitin, Meyer, Kowalevski, Potzeluev etc. point at Murray Edelman's books: *Symbolic Uses of Politics* (1964), and *Politics as Symbolic Action* (1971) as a point of departure of a new theoretical approach in politics. The achievements of political psychologists, socio-anthropologists, philosophical studies of symbolic forms became the foundation for the Edelman's concept of symbolic politics. Primarily, a symbolic<sup>1</sup> aspect of politics or more precisely the impact of symbolic function on the behaviour of elites and the masses became the scientific backbone of Edelman's (1971) research. That is why we could not omit his academic contribution in terms of studying the research field of this thesis. However, what does the author see by symbolic aspect and function in politics? Firstly, the scientist stresses our attention on two important concepts: a symbol and a symbolic act<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> symbolic, Edelman refers to the connotation of the symbolism definition developed by Edward Sapir in Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (1934) in which it states that "...in its original senses symbolism was restricted to objects or marks intended to recall or to direct special attention to some person, object, idea, event or projected activity" (p. 492).

<sup>2</sup> symbolic act, Edelman refers to the definition of symbolic act developed by a Swedish sociologist Himmelstrand (1960), who sees a symbolic act as actions directed on purely symbols even if they are not connected with the subject and referents (Edelman, 1971).

Edelman (1985) explains that a *symbol* is an element that stands for something other than itself (e.g. anthems, coats of arms, flags, myths etc.), which evokes an attitude, a set of impressions or a pattern of events associated through time, space, logic or imagination. The author distinguishes between two kinds of symbols: *referential* and *condensation*. The difference between them is that referential symbols evoke logical thinking whereas condensation symbols evoke emotions. If the first kind of symbols refer to objective elements in certain situations e.g. economic statistical data, which may be perceived either through logical understanding or, also as an element of manipulation. The second kind of symbols condense into one symbolic event, where some one or all of the elements may be presented such as patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness etc. (Edelman, 1985). Both concepts are of an ambivalent character according to the author. The reason they are ambivalent, Edelman explains that, symbols either stimulate and maintain the masses' conciseness or trap the delusions. In terms of symbolic acts, on the one hand, they serve as positive anthropological means, necessary for political organization and management. On the other hand, the scientist emphasizes their negative aspects, because of which the "real politics", as such, is replaced by a game in politics, a pseudo-theater spectacle which often leads to a social alienation (Edelman, 1985). In this fashion, things that we (people) consider as a political event often occurs to be a symbolic spectacle, because the masses (in their nature) are not able to analyse real political processes, or what more to have a control over them.

However, why can political symbolic acts be effective in terms of mobilizing people? Edelman (1971) assumes that any symbolic act consists of two actors; firstly, a limited by a number, well-organized group of people seeking their specific interests. Secondly, poorly-organized masses of spectators who tend to think by stereotyping, personalizing and symbolically simplifying the situation – this helps them to cope with difficult social situations. Any political act causes either a threat following with a fear, or quiescence bringing a hope. Hence, we may note an important pattern: it is possible to put people out of temper or vice versa comfort them only with the help of the symbolic acts. As for the means used in the symbolic act, Edelman (1977) sees language rather a form of political act than a tool of describing politics. In this sense, language is an integral facet of the political scene and a whole part of the event, which shapes meanings and roles of a public play.

In general, Edelman sees symbolic politics as a powerful tool for not only manipulating public opinions in terms of the interests of the ruling groups - but more as an effective instrument facilitating the masse's recognition of the existing political order. The

main scientist's contribution highlighted by the scientists (Kowalevski, 1980; Potzeluev, 1999; Kaufman, 2017) is that Edelman outlined the research field of symbolic politics, generated a conceptual framework, and methodology for analysing specific empirical cases where symbols serve as linguistic means of formation of political identities. For Edelman (1971), symbolic politics is a form of political communication with the public that by the means of staging of political acts it provides suggestions/illusions about ruling groups government, agenda etc. Therefore, the aim of symbolic politics is to create a resonance in the society, media or attract a certain group through a spectacle.

### **Further Approaches to Symbolic Politics**

Thomas Mayer, a scientist from Germany (in Yaroshenko and Prisyazhnenko, 2014; Nagorniak 2010), following the Edelman's approach developed his own classification of "symbolic political acts" consisting of four categories: *symbolic actions* – addressed for the masse's opinion making. In this case, the symbolic actions of the leaders are not more than a cynical form of communicative manipulation, organized with the help of visual illusions. Tetiana Nagorniak (2010), analysing Ukrainian politics through Mayer's approach said that musical concerts on the squares promoting one of the politician or a party is an ordinary example of *symbolic actions* in Ukraine. The second one, a *symbolic legislation* – a production of legislative norms (acts, laws, legislative collisions) that are impossible to implement. Here, another Ukrainian scientist, Evseev (2014) said that the Law of Ukraine about "The Ratification of the European Charter of Regional Languages or Languages of National Minorities" adopted in Ukraine in 2003 was purely "symbolic" collision. The scientist grounded his opinion by stating that Ukraine simply has not enough financial budgeting to implement the second part of this law, which obliges Ukraine to provide, educational, mass media and executive domains in all the listed languages in the law. Hence, the politicians new that this law would not be fulfilled in beforehand, however still voted for making a "waxwork" or simulation of a law adoption. The third, *symbolic personalization* – Weber (1968) said (in Stuvøy, 2002) that a potential political leader "...is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional power or qualities" (p. 241). On this basis, a creation of an image with an over-exaggerated charisma suitable for a particular societal context is exercised for influencing a group of people. The last, *symbolic ideology* – uses the logic of political struggle, competition that motivates the party's ideologues to create constant contradictions that artificially divide a



political field (Yaroshenko and Prysyazhnenko, 2014). To sum up, the Mayer's classification focuses our attention on symbolic elements of political processes in the context when there is a lack for a real political background. Symbolic actions, legislation, personalization and ideology are considered as a potential for the leaders to fulfil a goal.

Another German scientist and a follower of Edelman's approach, Sarcinelli (in Potzeluev, 1999), sees linguistic means in a broad sense as an analogue to "symbolic political action". The focus of his research is political campaigns during which the elites seek to legitimize their politics through democratic procedures. In such cases, the elites resort to utilize symbols for getting support from the masses. To be more specific, the concept of symbolic politics is used here by the elites as a communicative base which helps to explain their posters, justification, and excuses.

### **Contemporary Approaches to Symbolic Politics**

Contemporary approaches to symbolic politics theory is a symbiosis of findings from political psychology, ethnic studies and a social mobilization theory. Antony Smith (in Kaufman, 2017) a scientist who generated the "ethno-symbolist" concept, made an attempt to combine the ideas taken from different adjacent theories. For instance, his "myth-symbol-complex", a set of meaning-laden narratives and symbols about a group's heroes, enemies, allies etc. includes historical, ethnical and identity studies. From this perspective, we can see that Smith's concept partially echoes Edelman's statement mentioned above about using manipulative methods by the leaders in order to gain support from the masses but complements it with new ideas.

Further, Kaufman (2001) following Smith's ideas, expanded the "myth-symbol-complex" with the issue of ethnicity and integrated it into the studies of symbolic politics. Some of the statements of Kaufman's logic are: the more symbolic elements (myths, symbols, fears and opportunities) are preserved in the society or group's identity, the likeliness of a conflict emergence rises especially when the issue of ethnicity plays one of the central roles. If the ethnic myths and identities are weak in times of government crisis or even breakout of it, the violence is likely to occur on non-ethnic issues. Apparently, in this case, the leaders require to strengthen such myths before they will call on the mobilization group to fight. To the contrary, if the myths are strong, any slightest political opportunity may be a catalysator for hostility emergence (Kaufman, 2001). Interestingly, that Kaufman deepened the symbolic politics by prioritising feelings/emotions over linguistic means in contrast to previously

presented approaches. In this fashion, we can see that symbolic politics extends to embrace new forms of the influence on individuals and masses' consciousness: on par with visual, linguistic, and political acts, it includes emotional sphere.

In sum, the symbolic politics is a special kind of political communication, which is based on various instruments: mass media products, ideology, artefacts, political messages etc. These instruments create a complex symbolic environment where the influence on public's opinion/decision/conciseness is a target. As it was mentioned before, the symbolic politics is not oriented for a rational thinking, it is more about inspiring or suggesting sustainable meanings through symbolic effects. Interestingly, that "symbolic political action" is not just an act with the symbol's usage, but an action serves as a symbol itself. However, why can symbolic politics be a valuable theory for analysing insurgency or insurgent leader's actions? and what relevance does it have for IR? On the basis of the information presented so far, we can see that the symbolic politics is an empirically grounded theory which can be especially applicable for analysing human decision making/ reactions/ choices through manipulative tools of the leaders. Since our task is to investigate symbolic elements the insurgent leaders used in the Donbas conflict, we assume that the symbolic politics will be suitable and helpful for us in terms of detecting what symbolic elements the insurgents used, in what way, and whether they used any of them at all. Strictly speaking, we think that the symbolic politics promises us to generate explanations that is closely connected with the politics on the ground.

In terms of the IR relevance, firstly, all the intrastate wars outnumber the international wars, raise a risk of spreading out of the borders, and often (or sometimes primarily) are of ethnic nature. Considering this statement, and the case study we chose for this thesis "...symbolic politics theory can serve as a general theory of conflict in world politics that provides an overarching explanation for much of what we already know, tying many existing findings together with a single logic" (Kaufman, 2017, p. 18). Secondly, looking at the insurgency as an element of analysis in the world politics<sup>1</sup>, it may give us a capacity to count the impact of non-state actors taken from the liberal institutionalist theory. For instance, if various world actors such as: NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), multinational corporations and organized crime groups appeal to humanitarian symbolic predispositions

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<sup>1</sup> World politics, here we refer to the definition of world politics adapted from *The Globalization of World Politics* (Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2014, p. 2) meaning an inclusive word for International Studies, International Relations and International Politics.

causing “fear and greed” among their supporters to strengthen power and generate resources, in such a case these actors can be treated as “pure players in symbolic politics” (Kaufman 2015, p. 264). Based on this, symbolic politics theory can be applicable for studying international conflicts and cooperation, with a diversity of actors, motivations and logic of behaviours that the world politics is crammed with.

### **2.3 Methodology**

This Master thesis employs a qualitative method of research which is suitable for making a desk-study and working with large amount of various kinds of materials. This method focuses rather on words than numbers by expanding meanings and contextual understandings of inter-connected currents. Also, a qualitative method enables researchers to discuss versatile social patterns and processes which create and maintain a social reality (Berg, 2001). Data collection and analysis in qualitative research is processed through an inductive approach in which the principal of generation of theories and concepts stand at heart (Bryman, 2012).

A central theory of symbolic politics will guide our case study analysis accompanied with a participant observation (audio-visual materials) and content analysis (transcripts of speeches) which will be used as strategies that will help us to find answers to our research question. The choice of methodological strategies was driven by a goal to test a symbolic politics theory on practice. Since “the symbolic politics theory offers the most useful way of understanding what sort of rhetoric is likely to be politically successful in what circumstances, while taking into account the centrality of social organization for translating ideas into collective action” (Kaufman, 2017, p. 21). We assume that to analyse recorded audio-visual materials, in particular, recorded speeches proclaimed by the insurgent leaders during the pre-insurgency period of the Donbas conflict will shed the light on the symbolic elements used/not used by the insurgents (see more in detail paragraph 4.2).

Advantages of the content analysis are: transparency and feasibility of the research due to the coding scheme and sampling procedures, and flexibility, allowing the researcher to apply this method to any type of human communication: written documents, field notes from participant observations, letters, novels, transcripts of recorded communications (such as T.V shows, interviews, etc.) (Bryman, 2012). Among merits of a participant observation is the researcher’s possibility to draw attention on a certain social phenomenon/group of people

behaviours, customs, conversations through personal observation and applying it in further investigations. Among limitations of the observation method is the analysis of audio-visual materials which is not structured and systematized. Even within sociological research, audio-visual methods do not constitute a separate, established group of methods.

Furthermore, both participant observation and content analysis methods may complement each other, while the first one, allows the researcher to demonstrate its personal reflections on social realities. The second one enables the researcher to focus on words' meanings that usually serve as a median of expression for participants. We suppose, that the integration of these methods will expand our capacities by interpreting the context in which the speeches were generated, the potential to provide multiple meanings, and will/not show a relative significance between the images and words.

A sampling in this thesis is a purposive and strategic choice of written and video records: academic books and articles, newspapers, analytical reports published by various scientists, journalists and "brain centres" in different languages: English, Russian and Ukrainian. These form a data base for thesis topic and discussion.

In sum, we hypothesize that the use of the mentioned approaches will help us in studying the symbolic politics in the Donbas insurgency as well as will help us to understand people's reflections/choices/considerations inhabiting this region, the insurgent's motives and international influence on this region coming from Russia.

### **CHAPTER 3. Identity in Ukraine and the Donbas.**

From the previous chapter, we already know that symbols become the most effective when they maintain in our society. The main government's symbolic actions lie through habitual public activities, not through exotic ceremonial acts of the state. Therefore, it is thanks to symbols that have impact on the masses it is possible to keep a sustainable identity in politics and society. The following chapter seeks to present an identity portfolio of the Donbas region and Ukraine in general in order to form the reader's understanding of major aspects what identity of ordinary Ukrainian citizen/Donbas resident consists of.

#### **3.1 Ethnical Composition**

Ukraine same as the majority of states in the world is a multinational state in which political and ideational preferences are strongly linked to the region of living, ethnicity and

language of usage (Katchanovski, 2016). Considering the Donbas composition, Wilson (1995) states that it has always been multinational, including the periods of various tribes inhabiting this region before and nowadays.

“...the Donbass has since antiquity served as home to dozens of peoples territory of what is now the Donbass has been part of the Khazar Khanate, the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khanate, the Russian empire, the Donetsk-Krivoi Rog Republic and [finally] the Ukrainian state... the Donbass is the centre of a unique multinational culture.”  
(Programma Interdvizhenia Donbassa in Wilson, 1995 p.278-279).

The ethnic composition of the Donbas in the twentieth century included two ethnic groups: Ukrainians and Russians as shown from the table below.

**The ethnic composition of the Donbas in the 20th century**

	1897	1926	1959	1989
Ukrainians	379.000 (55.2%)	1.222.000 (60%)	3.784.000 (56.4%)	4.176.000 (51.1%)
Russians	180.000 (26.2%)	639.000 (31.4%)	2.551.000 (38%)	3.595.000 (44%)

(table adapted from Wilson, 1995)

The inflow of Russians to the Donbas region was rapid during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as its number almost doubled from 26% in 1897 to 44% in 1989. During this time, the number of Ukrainians living in this area was constantly reducing, from 60% in 1926 to 51% in 1989. The reason for Ukrainians leaving the Donbas was a limited access to Ukrainian schools, mass media and culture. Due to the massive industrialization of the Donbas from early 1950s, which involved the import of labour, this led to Russian's repopulation in major cities. This trend affected the language policy at schools as it resulted in changing the Ukrainian language into Russian. Only 2-3% of local children in the Donbas were studying in Ukrainian, however, all in rural areas (Wilson, 2006).

The political scientist Kolossov (1999) states that Ukraine is a good example of a striking difference in identities, ethnicity, hierarchy and structure between the regions. The table (Table 1.) below shows the results of a national survey conducted by the “Democratic Initiatives Centre” (Kiev) in 1995 concerning the affiliation of a particular population group. The results confirmed the scientist's statement about the Ukraine's regional differences, as only one third of people from the East align with being Ukrainians, whereas the majority of people from the West (75%) consider themselves Ukrainians. Interestingly, almost half of the

Eastern population (42%) lean on the CIS or former Soviet Union and one fifth of the population (20%) associate themselves with the region. These numbers significantly differ with the Western region, nationwide indicator or Kyiv.

**Table.1. Identities of the population of Ukrainian regions**

To which population group do you feel most closely aligned?	Nationwide	“West”	Kiev	“East” (Donetsk)
Ukrainian	48.3	75.4	64.9	29.6
Russian (i.e. - Russian Federation)	2.0	0.5	0.2	2.0
CIS or former Soviet Union	27.2	12.3	20.1	42.0
Regional	14.5	8.0	8.0	20.4

(Table adapted from Kolossov, 1999)

According to the *last* national population census conducted in 2001 by the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, two major ethnic groups maintain in Ukraine: Ukrainians (77,8%) and (Russians 17,3%). The remaining ethnic groups are not taken into consideration because of their little relevance as any of them makes less than one percent of the whole population. The Ukrainian group dominates in all regions of Ukraine except the Crimea and city of Sevastopol. Meanwhile, in the Donbas region, the Ukrainian percentage is much lower in contrast to other regions of Ukraine (where it is about 90% or above). Here it constitutes only 55%, Russians make 40% - stating about the highest rate of Russians living in Ukraine (excluding Crimea) (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2017). Referring to the 2001 census, it became easier for Ukrainians to identify themselves either ethnically Russian or Ukrainian. On the other hand, scholars MacDuffee Metzger et al. (2016) disagree on the number of ethnic groups to focus on. They suggest three: Ukrainians speaking Ukrainian, Ukrainians speaking Russian and ethnic Russians. The language of daily practice is in fact a politically important reflection of identity with a community as MacDuffee Metzger et al. state (2016).

The situation with the ethnic groups in post-Soviet Ukraine before 2014 was assessed by MacDuffee Metzger et al. (2016) as largely peaceful, but with significant cleavages and a permanent conflict raised around the national identities. Barrington and Harron (in MacDuffee Metzger et al., 2016) assume the situation around ethnicity in Ukraine as “dogs that did not bark” considering the existing ethnic cleavages and absence of a violent conflict. The scholars point that the Ukrainian national identity lacks clarity about how to define it, as well as what role the elites play in promoting conflictual narratives among ethnic groups.

There are potentially three factors that explain the Ukrainian ethnicity and simultaneously complicate its understanding: ethnicity or nationality, language and religion (MacDuffee Metzger et al., 2016). All of them are deeply embedded into the history of Ukraine. Previous empires' borders have crosscut Ukraine and established different historical myths which will be taken into consideration and presented in the next paragraph.

### **3.2 Historical Impact**

The Ukraine's territory generally is divided into the East and West where Donbas presents the East and Lviv or Galicia stands for the West. The Donbas region - standing on the Don river basin and occupying its currently 85% of the territory - was under the rule of the Russian Empire from the end of the eighteenth century, then by the Soviet Union during the twentieth century until the independence of Ukraine from the Soviet Union in 1991. The interruptions of the Russian and Soviet rules were short in historical and time dimensions. These interruptions were mainly caused by the war, for instance, by the Nazi occupation of 1941-1943 (Katchanovski, 2006).

In the late 1980s, the historical argument about the Donbas region emerged when Ukrainian historians from the Western Ukraine and Kiev tried to claim the Ukraine's historical heritage to this region (Wilson, 1995). On the other hand, the leaders of various pro-Russian political parties in the Donbas have learnt to use these debatable historical interpretations created by local ideologues for their own benefits. The political scientist Wilson (1995) states that history plays a particularly important role in the mobilization of ethnic insurgencies as historical myths emerging from history may be potentially used by the leaders of ethno-nationalist movements.

There are two schools of historical myths about the Ukrainian history, Ukrainian interpretation (emerged from the Western Ukraine) and so-called "Russophile" or pro-Russian which is more spread in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. These schools in Kolosov's (1999) view give a brilliant example of how efficient the use of old historical myths can be used in the construction of ethnical/national, political and social identity of people living within one state.

*The first myth* concerns the origin of Ukrainian nation and its statehood. The Ukrainian school sees the chronicles of the Galicia-Volhynian principedom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the only inheritors of Kievan Rus and incarnation of Ukrainian statehood, also this school promotes this view to the level of state ideology. A clearly opposite point of view

a pro-Russian school supports, it states that Vladimir-Suzdal, and later, the Moscovy were the inheritors of Kievan Rus, and the Kievan Rus is considered a common motherland for all East-Slavic nations: Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. Ukrainian historians conclude that Ukrainians are purely ancient European nation, whose historical ties are exceptionally connected with Europe, while the Russian trace has been documented only in the fourteenth century which is doubtfully seen as Slavic (Kolossoff, 1999).

*The second myth* Kolossoff (1999) says is based on the Zaporizhian Cossacks. The Ukrainian historical school claims that their polity was an independent state, the most democratic in Europe and the area of inhabitation was including all Southern and Eastern Ukraine. The Cossacks were purely ethnic Ukrainians and they inherited the traditions of the Kievan Rus. In contrast, the Russian school states that the South area of the whole European part of the former Soviet Union belonged to the Russian Empire, and was colonized by Catharine II.

*The third myth*, is probably the most explosive and a controversial one in Ukrainian contemporary society. This myth concerns the perception of World War II and the role of Stepan Bandera in Ukrainian history. In 1939, the Soviet Union annexed Western Ukraine, this was perceived by the Galicia people as a substitution of Polish dictatorship into another one - Soviet. While the most of Ukrainian territories including the Donbas fought in the Soviet Army against the Nazi troops during 1941-1945, the Galicia region was the only region showing an anti-Soviet resistance and in some periods collaborated with the Germans (Kolossoff, 1999). The fight of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA, *Ukrainska Povstanska Armia*) against the Soviet Army started during World War II and lasted till the beginning of 1950s. The leader of the UPA was Stepan Bandera, he declared Galicia as a Ukrainian independent state in 1941. For this, he was arrested the same year, sent to a concentration camp, and later killed by the KGB agent (Soviet Security Agency) in 1959 in Munich, Germany (Marples, 2006). In 2010, a pro-Western President of Ukraine, Viktor Yuschenko, in the end of his presidency term, awarded Stepan Bandera a title of the "Hero of Ukraine" which was highly negatively perceived by the majority of Ukrainians, but extreme indignation was shown by the people from Donbas region and Crimea. In Lviv, Stepan Bandera is a national hero after whom one of the central squares has been named and a big monument depicting him was installed. In Donetsk, Stepan Bandera is the epitome of evil, treachery, and a collaborator of the Hitler regime. He regarded Russia as a principal enemy of Ukraine and showed little respect to other ethnic groups living in Ukraine (Marples, 2006).



The attempts of the Ukraine's government in the end of the 1990s to reconcile the veterans from each of the sides simply failed as well as the attempts to incorporate a fair idea of the UPA's fight against the Soviet Communists among Ukrainians and fresh soldiers in the army (Kolossova, 1999).

During the "Orange revolution" in 2004, political experts from Ukraine and abroad vividly discussed Ukraine's possible split and its high probability of civil war emergence. However, their assumptions turned out to be false, as during the political crisis of 2004-2005, Ukraine escaped such a disastrous scenario, but this revolution attracted a special attention to the issue of more than "one Ukraine" existing (Katchanovski, 2016).

School directors, teachers/lecturers and politicians are aware of regional differences in Ukraine, and the level of sensitivity the issue of history raises (Rodgers, 2006). In particular, most of Easterners usually affiliate themselves with all things which are considered as Russian or Russia as a state. For them, Lenin's monument is a part of "their" history reminding them about "where they are from" and they should not be blamed for their associations. Rodgers (2006) claims the Ukrainians from the East and West have different reflections on history. For about seventy years, Ukraine has been one country for both Easterners and Westerners, however, previously these people lived in the territories of other states. Therefore, the perception of what historically matters for Ukrainians and what it means to be Ukrainian differ from the East to the West and simultaneously leave a trace on their mentality and character.

The role of historical myths in post-Soviet Ukraine cannot be accepted without criticism Kolossova (1999) states, as the Kievan Rus was neither Ukrainian nor Russian. Though, the historical myths the same as religion contribute to the formation of the basis of Ukrainian identity and national symbols and the Donbas in particular.

### **3.3 Religious Affiliation**

Ukraine as a former state of the Soviet Union and being in status of a transitional society faces a number of problems in building a national identity. Religion plays not the last role in it, because religion serves as an element in ethnic, political and regional determination or differentiation. The problems of church lie on the surface of three main spheres: government, ethnicity and church itself (Krindatch, 2003). In Ukraine, there are almost 33977 churches, religious organizations and communities, 97% of which are Christian. Yelensky (2008) claims that Ukraine represents the case of religious plurality due to several religious

denominations working in Ukraine. The biggest church in Ukraine in number of registered communities and parishioners is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This church is divided into the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). Ukraine also has two national Catholic Churches and one Armenian church: the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and Armenian Apostolic Church. Also, one can find various communities among the Protestant and neo-Protestant denominations as well as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and other non-traditional contemporary movements.

From the start of Ukraine's post-Soviet period, three fourths of adult Ukrainians declared themselves as religious people attending church services more than once a month. This number places Ukraine exactly in the middle of the Central-Eastern European statistics staying behind Catholic Hungary but ahead of Russia, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Estonia (Yelenski, 2008).

On the one hand, the church in the beginning of the 2000s became the most trusted institution in Ukraine according to the survey conducted by the Democratic Initiatives; sixty percent of Ukrainian citizens said that the church can be trusted in contrast to thirty percent who shared an opposite opinion. It is important to note that percent of trust in public organizations in Ukraine did not exceed 32%, while the distrust in them exceeds more than 50%. Yelenski (2008) explains this phenomenon by referring to the undermined reputation of the Ukrainian government as one of the most corrupted in Europe with manipulated media, state-controlled trade and indistinguishable political parties. In the light of this, religion has taken one of its central places in Ukrainian society and made it one of a comparatively high standard of achievement in terms of religious freedom according to the U.S. annual religious freedom reports.

On the other hand, Yelenski (2008) believes that religion has always been as a "stumbling block" rather than a reliable resource of nation-building process in Ukraine. Tensions between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, and a split between the Orthodox church became not only a "stumbling block" between religious denominations, it started to reflect a conflict of different identities, political and cultural contradictions within Ukrainian society and historical narratives.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991, Ukraine evidenced a higher wave of religious separatism than its neighbours such as Russia or Belarus due to much greater religious plurality. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), having used this

period, established itself as the successor of the independent Ukrainian Church formed in 1918. However, the emerged Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) quickly took the rule over the UAOC in 1992. The UOC-KP became the strongest among two, and the main competitor of the Russian-based Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) (Kozelsky, 2014).

Throughout the last two and half decades, the Orthodox Church became involved in the question of national identity. Parishioners of the UOC-MP used to show their sympathy to Russia as compared with the parishioners of the UOC-KP, UAOC and UGCC. Lines of belief are also separated geographically: UOC-KP, UAOC, UGCC and UCC attract more Ukrainian believers from the Western and Central Ukraine, while the UOC-MP historically find more of its believers in the Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. The problem of conflicting regional identities in Ukraine overlaps with the question of the identity of five mentioned churches (Krindatch, 2003). The problem of identification resulted in radical changes happening in society when the church's role was marginalized, forcefully split from the social life and the church did not have a word to respond. Turiy (in Krindatch, 2003, p. 50) said about it:

“The absence of a positive response to the question ‘Who are you?’ leads to attempts to emphasize self-identity by separation from others with the formula ‘We are not them’, which often is stated more categorically ‘only us and not them’”.

Krindatch (2003) explains that in unstable transitional societies, a symbiosis of different regional identities and ecclesial identities give rise to tensions and conflicts based on inter-church relations. One of such tensions are seen in Ukraine through ongoing strained relations between the UOC-KP and UOC-MP.

Firstly, the origin of this rivalry started with a contentious question about religious property right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to the Ukrainian Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations, it states that “...religious institutions should have access to their former religious property, whether by direct ownership or free access for services” (Kozelsky, 2014, p. 227). However, in practice, local communal authorities took the right to adjudicate among competing claims from the various Orthodox churches. This means that in regions with the pro-Russian population such as the Donbas, the UOC-MP took under its jurisdiction most of the religious monuments there. Also, a big

impetus was put on historical and cultural value associated with these monuments and holy places (Kozelsky, 2014).

Secondly, a stroke among two major Orthodox churches in Ukraine concerns the visit of Patriarch Kirill to Kiev in 2009 in a newly-elected status of the Patriarch of the whole Rus of Orthodoxy. During this visit, he presented his vision of the Russian Orthodox Church's future based on the *Russkiy Mir* initiative. Three main points to be highlighted from this initiative:

- 1) An attempt to collect people whose values come from the heritage of the Holy "Rus" and who wish to live in a multinational global community;
- 2) Kyiv is the mother of all Russian cities and its role is to embrace all the peoples from multiple cultures and regions for the sake of the initiative's success;
- 3) The Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate is the only possible church for the *Russkiy Mir* in which *par excellence* takes place (Denysenko, 2014).

Patriarch Kirill's visit was assessed by Tonoyan and Payne (in Denysenko, 2014) as pastoral. The main motto was to strengthen the role of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad and to emphasize the role of religion in the contemporary world. Noticeably, the major cities Patriarch Kirill visited were located in Eastern Ukraine. On the one hand, some treated this as a provocation, however, he viewed it as an attempt to revive Christian faith there, as the church life is more active in Western Ukraine. On the other hand, the leaders of the Ukrainian church assessed the initiative presented by Patriarch Kirill negatively and publicly. The bullet point about Kyiv as a symbol of Russian roots, statehood, church and faith triggered the most explosive discourses among Ukrainians and academics. Patriarch Filaret of the competing UOC-KP criticised Patriarch Kirill's words for explicit political message stating the renaissance of the Russian Empire, "empire in a nice package" and a "spiritual mask for Putin's Custom's Union" (Kozelsky, 2014).

Lastly, the role of the Orthodox Church in the Ukrainian crisis 2013-2014 should not be underestimated. Kozelsky (2014) claims that taking the speeches of religious leaders for analysis during the Euromaidan, the Crimea annexation and the conflict in the Donbas, this could easily become the focus of extended research. Thus, this thesis is not able to embrace a lot, however, to skip vivid speeches illustrating the crossing of religion and politics it also cannot.

The bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate in the days approaching the Crimean referendum (16 March 2014) publicly condemned the Russian

Orthodox Church in spreading agitation towards separatism. In one such statements they said (in Kozelsky, 2014, p. 234):

“...a series of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, including those closest to Patriarch Kirill, publicly justified and approved aggression against Ukraine, calling the invaders ‘peace-makers’. Therefore, the responsibility in front of God for the consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine also resides with the Russian Orthodox Church”.

In this address, Kozelsky (2014) thinks that the bishops of the UOC-KP directly accused the Russian Orthodox Church in the crisis involvement. Three days after the Crimean referendum, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church made an official statement concerning the event in which Patriarch Kirill said (in Kozelsky, 2014, p.234):

“The mission of the Church and the sacred duty of all the faithful are to strive for peace in the land inhabited by the peoples of Holy Rus’ and to call for the abandonment of the language of hatred and enmity. Whatever happens in the relations among the states and whatever development the political confrontation takes, the unity in faith and brotherhood of people baptized in one and the same baptismal font cannot be deleted from their common past”.

The main motto of this address was to recognize the Ukraine’s failure to strive for an identity different from Russia. In addition, Patriarch Kirill was numerously criticized for a relative silence during extraordinary events in the Ukrainian crisis and its repercussions.

In sum, religion remains to be a significant factor in Ukraine’s domestic tensions as well as international especially concerning the relations among Ukraine and Russia. Regional identities, holy places with monuments give grounds to internal pretensions and inter-church contradictions which directly and indirectly influence politics in Ukraine. The Ukrainian crisis added fuel to the fire between two Orthodox hegemons which spread religious nationalism and apply religion in political affairs. The language of the church service as well as a language of common practice also does not stand aside from the question of Ukrainian identity and the people from the Donbas.

### 3.4 Language of Communication

Language, Frye (2015) states, is a key element in Ukrainian politics, but its relevant significance, impact under different circumstances, and precise meaning of this nuanced concept remains a subject of a debate. While scientists like Frye (2015), Rodgers (2006), Barrington and Faranda (2013), Dominique Arel etc. documented the Ukraine's linguistic cleavage, fewer researchers have examined whether and how the concept of language influences the policy orientation of Ukrainian peoples and the Donbas in particular.

The Ukrainian language is the only official language in Ukraine. However, the Russian language is regarded a serious competitor to Ukrainian in the Eastern and Southern regions. Considering major regions of Ukraine: West, Centre, South and East, the table below demonstrates that half of Ukrainians from the South (50.5%) and only one fifth of the East (22%) consider Ukrainian as their mother tongue. In practice, almost half of the Southern region (46%) and the majority of the Donbas (73%) speak Russian on a daily basis at home.

#### Region of living and linguistic self-identification of Ukraine's population in 2014 (%)

##### Mother tongue

	West	Centre	South	East/Donbas
Ukrainian	95.9	93.9	50.5	22
Russian	3.5	5.4	46.4	74.4
Other	1.4	0.7	3.1	3.6

##### Language of communication at home

Mostly Ukrainian	87.5	75	17.5	3.2
Mostly Russian	3.5	6.8	46.4	73
Situationally Ukrainian or Russian	7.4	18.2	34.5	23.8

(Table adapted from Panchuk and Degterenko, 2015)

Further, this table illustrates that the mother tongue and the language usage at home often do not correspond to the national identification of Ukraine's peoples, mostly in the Donbas. While the bigger part of Ukraine determined Ukrainian as the mother tongue, the Donbas region gives priority to Russian language over Ukrainian, 73% to 22% respectively. Only, 3.2 % of the Donbas people use Ukrainian as a language use at home. Depending on the situation - 23% of the Donbas population use either Russian or Ukrainian. From the table

above, it is obvious that the Donbas region demonstrates certain linguistic differences to other regions of Ukraine.

The indication of Ukrainian language as a state language in 1989 has changed it from “low” status and Russian language from “high” but, in practical terms, those who spoke Russian during Soviet times, continue to use Russian and treat it as their mother tongue as the table above shows. Barrington and Faranda (2013) claim that the language use in Ukraine is an important factor reflecting attitudes towards the national identity. Likewise MacDuffee Metzger et al. (2016) state that language is “about who you are, not what you speak” (p. 20). In such a fashion, language has the potential to create its own identity. Perhaps, Arel’s claim that “language in Ukraine is co-terminous with regional politics” (Barrington and Faranda, 2013, p. 238) would explain best the language cleavage in Ukraine. Besides historical memories which make part of it *per se*, similar point, MacDuffee Metzger et al. (2016) support saying that people view their self-identification through “native” language which can be either their language of thinking, parent’s language, national identification rather than a language they interact in the world.

Also, the idea of language may be driven into the fact that both ethnicities living in Ukraine are bilingual at least passively and often actively. Therefore, they can rely themselves to both linguistic groups (Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians) and identities. Under such conditions, they prefer the language that best fits their ethnic and political identity referring to and confirming the status of language daily use.

Notably, these linguistic identities can be transferred into political issues. The research conducted by Frye (2015) found that there is no correlation between language preference and ethnicity regarding the candidate to vote for, however, a significant discrepancy between Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers over the policy orientation was identified (MacDuffee Metzger et al. 2016). Also, the research done by the Institute of Sociology of Ukraine has found that in the question relating to the survey about the worst fear for Ukrainians, the number of respondents thinking that pressure on linguistic issue could be the worst for them constituted 2.5% (Panchuk and Degterenko, 2015). This suggests that in Ukraine there is no ethnic or linguistic discrimination, but an ethnic differentiation in politics orientation exists. Moreover, it is typical for politicians’ preferences to reflect the ethnic preferences, for instance, Russian-speaking candidate maps on to the Russian-speaking Ukrainians or ethnic Russians’ preferences, *de-facto* the voting is likely to be based on ethnic and linguistic preferences.

It is also worth highlighting also existing linguistic myths/stereotypes about how the Ukrainians from the West are hostile to the Russian language, and the Donbas population is hostile to the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians. In reality, Rodgers (2006) states these perceptions of language use are “artificially constructed” and cannot be in fact wholly truthful perhaps, only partially. For instance, after the exchange programme among the schoolchildren from Luhansk (East) to Lviv (West), the students shared their thoughts and experiences.

“Yes, we were told that in L’viv, if you ask directions in Russian, then they will give you the wrong directions. This wasn’t the case. If you speak with local people in Russian, they also will speak back in Russian so you can understand them. Maybe in some deep villages, where the level of civilisation is very low, then maybe this is the case, but I personally haven’t encountered this” (Rodgers, 2006, p. 162).

“Lots of people in western Ukraine think that they are more Ukrainians than we are as they speak Ukrainian. They are proud of their country, not all but the majority and as for our region (Luhansk), I think we have failed. I’m sure that there are people who love their country who live here, but it is difficult for them to speak in their native language here because very often people argue and say, ah, you are Banderites. I have heard such things. I mainly speak Russian but when I meet with some of my friends, we speak Ukrainian. When we speak Ukrainian in the cafes and transport, people behave in a strange way. They blame us for all crimes” (Rodgers, 2006, p. 164).

These students’ experiences cannot prove Frye’s (2015) findings about the absence of linguistic discrimination in Ukraine wholly, as it is obvious that people from Eastern Ukraine behave less tolerant concerning language interactions than in Western one. Meanwhile, as seen from the quote above, the language shapes and complicates the attitudes towards identity. People from Western Ukraine consider themselves more citizens of Ukraine than people from Eastern Ukraine, because of language. Ukrainians speaking Russian in the Donbas create a concept of *chuzhyi* “foreign” for the Western Ukrainians, though all are living in the same country.

In sum, the language in Ukraine remains a long-lasting discourse which influences the identity formation of Ukrainians and is often used as a marker for policy orientation.



### 3.5 Political Orientations

Political regionalism in Ukraine is linked to ethnic, religious, historical and cultural attitudes. The term “regional political culture” refers to values and norms shared by the majority of residents inhabiting a particular region (Katchanovski, 2006). The scientist stresses that political culture is not the same as ideology, however, often, political values and views are expressed through liberal, conservative or nationalist orientations in one country or a region. Political culture is measured by general political preferences/orientations over a long period of time. Political orientations, in contrast to values, are much more changeable as a support of a particular political leader or party may be not stable, and not all individuals from a certain region share a political culture of that region. Katchanovski (2006) claims that people vote based on different reasons: out of personal interest, because of politician’s charisma, for economic reasons etc. The emergence of new issues in the society sometimes leads to electoral reconstruction of support for certain politicians and parties.

Historical heritage is one of the main sources of political culture. Shared history shapes the values and norms of people in the same direction, while different historical experiences create the opposite. Socialization serves as a satellite of transmitting these values and norms from one generation into another one within family, school, church or circles of friends. Critical situations such as a break up or unification of a state give a major impulse for the formation of political culture (Katchanovski, 2006).

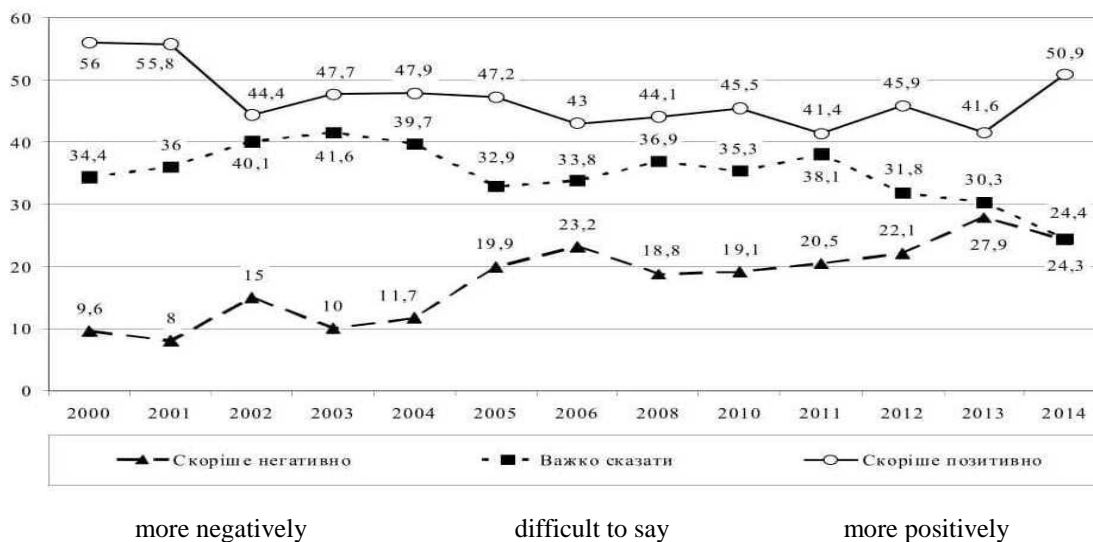
Referring to practical issues, a popular discourse emerged in 2013 in contemporary Ukrainian society about policy orientation toward Europe or Russia. From this perspective, this is the choice of Ukraine’s future with either Brussels or Moscow that prevailed in political divisions. Interestingly, what Darden and Way said about it (in Frye 2015):

“if 20 years of scholarship and surveys teach us one thing, it is that Ukraine is a country that is deeply divided on virtually every issue pertaining to relations with Russia or the West, with very deep historic divisions that continue to bear on contemporary politics” (p. 249).

Frye states, (2015) that building policy orientation on a choice between Europe and Russia depends on deep economic, cultural and political significance which reflect ethnic and linguistic identity. The research conducted by the Ukrainian Institute of Sociology in 2014 about “Views of Ukraine together with the Custom’s Union or the European Union” found

that the orientation towards the EU has increased. The graph below shows that the level of the EU's support raised almost 10% in one year from 2013-2014 from 41.6% to 50.9% among the Ukrainian population for one thousand respondents from 43 cities and villages, regions and ethnicities.

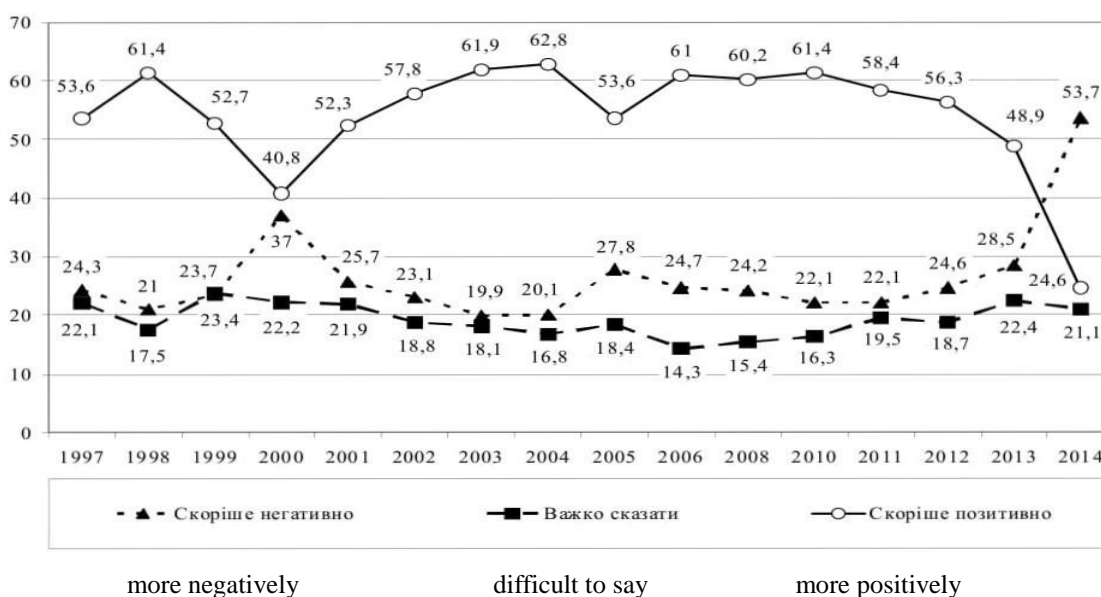
*What is your attitude towards Ukraine's joining the European Union? (% number of respondents)*



(Graph taken from Reznik, 2014)

Considering the Custom's Union, the graph demonstrates a reverse dynamic from 2010 when the level of support was at its peak at 62% in contrast to 24% in 2014. There is nothing surprising in this assessment, as the Euromaidan, the Crimea annexation, and an armed conflict in the Donbas affected the level of support for the Custom's Union negatively.

*What is your opinion about Ukraine's joining the Custom's Union? (% number of respondents)*



(Graph taken from Reznik, 2014)

However, regional differences concerning both mentioned alternatives remain quite substantial. Traditionally, the South and East (especially Donbas) are among the biggest supporters of the Custom's Union. The dynamic of the Donbas orientation in 2014 was as follows. In May 2014, when the support of the Custom's Union has dropped in the whole of Ukraine, the Donbas was the only region where the Custom Union's support was expressed by the majority of the Donbas population (68%) and continued to be stable. In contrast, the support for the EU is the smallest in this region – (13%) (Panchuk and Degterenko, 2015).

The research done by the “Democratic Initiatives” and the Centre for sociological studies “Razumkova” from 22<sup>nd</sup> till 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015 has found that general orientations of the Donbas region continue to sustain previous trends, however some new accents emerge. On the one hand, the preference with the EU has risen to 31.5% from 13% - a year earlier (the survey was conducted in the Donbas territory under the Ukraine's control). On the other, 34.4% - those who think that Ukraine's future should be with the Custom's Union, states its continuing preference.

From the questions listed below concerning the EU's and Russia's closeness with Ukraine and their influence on Ukrainian culture, the Donbas region demonstrated the lowest level of trust towards the EU among Ukrainian regions. Meanwhile, towards Russia, the Donbas remains the most devoted adherent of this orientation as seen from the answers below (Panchuk and Degterenko, 2015).

Number of respondents tested from the Donbas region (%)

	
<p><i>What is your position towards Ukraine's possible closeness with the EU: does the EU understand the Ukraine's needs?</i></p>	<p><i>What is your position towards Ukraine's possible closeness with Russia: does Russia understand the Ukraine's needs?</i></p>
<p>26.8% “Yes” – the lowest number in the country 40.4% “No” – the highest number in the country</p>	<p>43.5% “Yes” – the highest number in the country 25.1% “No” – the lowest number in the country</p>
<p><i>May the EU bring harm to Ukrainian culture?</i></p>	<p><i>May Russia bring harm to Ukrainian culture?</i></p>
<p>32.5% “Yes” - the highest number in the country 36.6% “No” – the lowest number in the country</p>	<p>17.5% “Yes” – the lowest number in the country 43% “No” – the highest number in the country</p>

(data taken from Panchuk and Degterenko, 2015)

Mentioning other issues widely discussed in the Ukrainian political discourse are: whether the Ukrainians support the idea of double citizenship, and whether they are proud of

being citizens of Ukraine. Referring to the first, the Donbas region takes the lead with 50.5% over the West (21.3%), Centre (14.3%), North (16.6%) and South (40.9%) in sharing support for double citizenship. As for the second – how proud Ukrainians are of their state – the Donbas occupies a completely opposite position. 11.3% of the Donbas respondents state “not proud at all” rating the highest in the country, 4.4% for “very proud” – the lowest rate in the country, and 56.5% stated “difficult to say” making the highest rate again.

More generally, residents of eastern regions of Ukraine, the Donbas in particular, support closer ties with Russia at far higher rates than residents of other regions. Ethnical, cultural, and linguistic preferences often go hand in hand with the policy orientation. Katchanovski (2006) states historical experiences have the biggest effect on pro-Communist and pro-Russian policy over other factors mentioned. The Russian-speaking Ukrainians and ethnic Russians predominantly inhabiting the Donbas region strongly stand against latest contemporary trends in Ukraine by showing its explicit “other” position in the country. The Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians oppose the Custom’s Union because of a bias on Russia’s more autocratic government, in contrast they give preference to the EU by putting more high value on democracy (Frye, 2015).

## **CHAPTER 4. Case Study. Symbolic Politics Approach in Donbas Insurgency.**

### **4.1 Conflict History**

According to various studies like the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme and political researchers such as Katchanovski (2016), Kudelia (2015), Robinson (2016) etc. the Donbas conflict originates from the Euromaidan 2013-2014. A series of large-scale protests firstly supported by students and then led by pro-European forces in the central square of Kyiv resulted in political escalation and crisis. These anti-government protests emerged from President Viktor Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association and Free Trade Agreements with the European Union. The escalation of the Euromaidan protests reached its apogee in as much as it led to: one hundred killings of the protestants committed by snipers on 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> February 2014; a seizure of the Trade Union Building in Kyiv City; increasing wave of separatism in Crimea, and a spreading number of opposition to the Yanukovich-led government such as the emergence of the radical nationalist movements - the Right Sector and the Maidan Self-Defence.

The consequences of the Euromaidan: mass killings of the protesters, Yanukovich's overthrow, his runaway to Russia and the Crimea annexation were assessed by Katchanovski (2016) as a juncture for the rebellious Donbas to emerge. The absence of the leader of pro-Russian party "Party of Regions" – Viktor Yanukovich – and simultaneously the absence of the President of the state created favourable conditions in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions for seizure of regional administrations, security service offices (SBU), and police buildings by unarmed and armed insurgents in major cities and towns. Igor Strelkov, a Russian retired officer arrived in Ukraine from Russia via Crimea with his group and seized police and SBU in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2014 (both cities are from the Donbas). The police and SBU either refused to apply an armed resistance to Strelkov's group or joined them to various degrees. The Strelkov-led group with local insurgent forces took control over telecommunication systems and local airport in Donetsk and nearby cities. First the Maidan-led government made a trial to negotiate with the separatists, however these negotiations did not result positively. The insurgents demanded an extended autonomy of the Donbas region through a referendum, Kyiv that time did not take them seriously as for the Ukrainian government, the separatists looked like a group of marginals who seized local strategic objects (Kudelia, 2015). Due to the absence of consensus in the emerged situation, the government of Ukraine launched an Anti-Terroristic Operation (ATO) on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2014 because it did not see a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Initially, the ATO included military forces, special police and SBU special units, however, these government forces were not eager to follow the orders to use force against the separatists. On the first day of the ATO, the head of SBU special unit was killed in Sloviansk.

As a result, pseudo-military<sup>1</sup> units such as special military battalions, radical nationalist and neo-Nazi formations organized and paid by the oligarchs showed their readiness and motivation to use force against insurgents (Katchanovski, 2016). Since then, the Ukrainian military forces constituted a minority among fighting contingent as the pseudo-military formations substituted the national forces.

Initially, the insurgent forces included local separatist activists, however, with the escalation in the Donbas, the chief of "Alfa" and some officers from "Berkut" - SBU special units - sided with them, also ex-Afghanistan warriors and activists of "Anti-Maidan" became a base for insurgency forces. Most of the people participating on the insurgent side were from

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudo-military units, in this context means private military battalions such as "Azov", "Dnipro" etc. organized and supported by Ukrainian oligarchs.

the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, only the minority who joined them were from other regions of Ukraine, Russia and other post-Soviet countries or far abroad (Kudelia, 2015). Noticeably, the radical formation of the Right Sector was perceived by the Donbas residents as a direct danger to their safety to the highest degree in contrast to the rest of Ukraine that two thirds of local population organized the Self-Defence unit, which was to control the streets and the roads by establishing check-points.

Conditionally, the Donbas insurgency may be divided into following stages:

- 1) *from March 2014 till mid. April 2014; pre-insurgency stage*
- 2) *from mid. April 2014 till August 2015; incipient stage*
- 3) *from August 2014 till February 2015; open insurgency*
- 4) *from February 2015 till present; (on-going conflict).*

On the first stage, from Kudelia's (2015) words, the government of Ukraine hoping to solve the conflict locally through the Donbas' military capabilities did not count two important factors. First, the seizure of local governmental buildings in Lugansk and Donetsk by insurgents became a decisive impetus for regional police to stop subordinating Kyiv (Maidan-led government) and, the police personal started working for the insurgents (at least most of them). This gave access to weapons warehouses, formed armed battalions, and left Luhansk and Donetsk regions without their former governors – by the last it means Kyiv lost any source of influence. Second, newly self-proclaimed leaders of the Donbas have established cooperation with local deputies who became a linking element in cooperation between the leaders and population who promoted the idea of independent republics. At the very beginning of this stage, there was no confirmation of Russia's direct participation in it as stated by Shelest (2015), though the Ukrainian government and media condemned Russia in direct aggression. During this stage, the fighting was intensifying gradually and reached its peak in July 2014, when about 400 Ukrainian soldiers were encircled and killed by the separatists in Illovaysk (Donbas region).

The second stage started from the enlargement of insurgent forces and a direct Russian aid from the end of August 2014. This aid was expressed in the form of "...at a minimum, military advisers, operators of advance weapon systems, and military reconnaissance and intelligence units" (Katchanovski, 2016, p. 482). From various live broadcasts, videos, and media reports, Katchanovski and Kudelia (2016: 2015) state that a significant number of volunteers and mercenaries who arrived in the Donbas during that period were Russian nationalists, Russian Cossacks, Chechens, Ingushes, and Ossetians. During this second stage,

the Ukrainian regular forces and pseudo-military formations suffered greatly from the insurgent forces in encircles, retreats and losses in Debaltseve in January 2015 same as in Illovaysk. The success of the separatist forces in military affairs leads to the supposition of indirect Russian military evidence in the Donbas conflict (Katchanovski 2016, Kudelia 2015).

The third stage of the conflict is the longest and relatively peaceful compared to previous both. The President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, having realized in the end of the second stage that there was no military solution to the conflict as the Ukrainian national forces and radical battalions continued losing soldiers, called on the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. The aim of these Agreements was to de-escalate the rebellious Donbas region, end the fighting, bring back control over the Russian border to Ukraine and regulate a status of the pseudo-states (Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics) inside the Ukrainian political landscape. Generally, the Minsk agreements did not bring an immediate peace, as fighting continued (though at much reduced level). Russia continued to supply military support to the insurgents and they insisted on their autonomy (Robinson, 2016). Kyiv continued to call the insurgents "terrorists", thus everything concerning casualties was directed to their address and Russia, and the negotiations with them were totally absent from Kyiv's agenda as talks with terrorists were impossible.

So far, from 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 till 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017, the hostilities in the Donbas have resulted in 130 conflict-related civilian casualties: 23 deaths and 107 injuries according to the UN Reports on Human Rights Situation in Ukraine (2017). The deterioration of the conflict between 29<sup>th</sup> January and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017 equalled the human losses of 2016's monthly average. The conflict continues causing extensive damage to civilian infrastructure, and has deprived tens of thousands of people of life-saving services and basic necessities.

From the analysis of Katchanovski (2014: 2016), Kudelia (2014: 2015: 216), Robinson (2016) and Shelest's (2015) works devoted to the Donbas conflict, this we may characterize in three stages: 1) a protest – the mobilization of local separatists against the Euromaidan and demand for its "special" status; 2) a collapse of statehood in most territory of the Donbas – gave opportunity to its separation and isolation; 3) a military escalation – use of heavy weapons of various calibres resulted in mutual civilian casualties, flows of refugees and internally displaced people, ruined infrastructure, economic blockade, violation of human rights and strengthened separation. How the first phase emerged and what methods were used to mobilize people against the pro-European government during it, the next paragraph will look at.

## 4.2 Pre-insurgency stage analysis

From the theoretical chapter, we already know that the pre-insurgency stage seeks to establish leadership and to find grounds for mobilising people by non-violence means. In the Donbas case, the time frame of this stage is the end of February – middle of April 2014, before the start of ATO when the use of heavy weaponry was detected by the OSCE. The very beginning of the pre-insurgency stage started from a series of *pro-Russian protests* in South-Eastern Ukraine: Donetsk, Lugansk, Kharkiv, Odessa, Mykolayiv. 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014 is considered a starting date for the “Russian Spring”<sup>1</sup> or a separatism wave in Ukraine and in Donbas in particular. This day, in Donetsk and Lugansk from 7 to 15000 people (according to various assessments) took part in the meetings in front of the Oblast Administration Buildings (Deutsche Welle, 2014). At this meetings people demonstrated their negative attitudes towards newly-formed Ukrainian government, they chanted “Donbas is with Russia”, and demanded a federation of the Donbas region within Ukraine or in case of ignoring their preferences a secession from Ukraine. Among activists noticed by the journalists from Rian.ua (2014) were representatives of “Donetsk Republic”<sup>2</sup>, “Russian Bloc”<sup>3</sup>, and Pavel Gubarev, the latter not known till that day at least in broad terms, who was appointed as a public’s governor. He presented himself as a head of the “Donbas People’s Militia” – a volunteer armed organization operating in the East of Ukraine. However, who is this Mr. Gubarev? Why exactly he headed the “People’s Militia” movement?

### *About Gubarev and the emergence of “People’s Militia Movement”*

In the interview to Lenta.ru (2014b), in the beginning of March 2014, Gubarev said how he managed to change an occupation from an advertisement agent into the “Governor of

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<sup>1</sup> “Russian Spring”, a collective name given to pro-Russian protests in South-Eastern Ukraine in 2014 developed by a Russian famous analyst and nationalist philosopher Alexandr Dugin (BBC, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> “Donetsk Republic”, a public-political organization of pro-Russian separatist direction which is banned in Ukraine since 2007. The organization during two years from the day of its emergence was operating anti-Ukrainian performances with the Russian flag and called on the creation of sovereign Donetsk federation including seven South-Eastern oblasts of Ukraine (Inform. Donbas, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> “Russian Bloc”, a previously known as “Russian Movement of Ukraine”, a Ukrainian political organization, registered in 2001 is currently under a status of banned in the territory of Ukraine since May 2014. The organization is known for promoting the idea of “One United Rus” or Pan-East-Slavic State (Pravda.ua, 2014).



People’s Militia”, approved the information that he is the owner of advertising company where he has been working for the last eight years, and added that he studied for historian that is why he knew the power of political and social network technologies. From his words, “The People’s Militia” started as a self-organized group in Facebook which was developing rapidly due to the emerged political crisis in Ukraine in 2014, especially in the period after Yanukovitch’s escape to Russia. He was following this group since the start of the Euromaidan and actively writing posts there. Gubarev stated that in Donetsk there were about twenty political organizations but none of them could raise people and make them follow those who were strongly against newly-formed pro-European government. The most active members of the “People’s Militia” organized a council where Gubarev was selected as a governor. Interestingly, that on the interviewer’s question about how/what means Gubarev was about to use to get power in the Donbas region, he answered “*by idea of justice*” (Lenta.ru, 2014b). In his understanding “justice” means the right of Donbas people elect the authorities themselves especially in times of political turbulence. He believes that most of Donbas people support his view (or are solidary with him/*solidarny s nim rus.*) about the Donbas referendum, and its possible joining the Russian Federation. Gubarev claims that people with other views would not cause a problem to him and his followers, because a maximum size of opponents would not exceed one thousand people consisting of mostly students (Lenta.ru, 2014b).

*However, what exactly was going on during the pro-Russian protests, and what the insurgents appealed to the public and Gubarev himself that he managed to get support from the Donbas population?*

Aiming to find answers to this question, we decided to analyse ten protests during March 2014 in both Donetsk and Lugansk through recorded videos in YouTube platform. The observation method of video materials<sup>1</sup> allowed us to collect data for content analysis, highlight specific details which are not possible to see and detect while reading or interpreting secondary data, and what more – it partially brought us closer to events that we could watch

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<sup>1</sup>Video materials used for this analysis were selected on the criteria that a video should have at least 360 pixels of resolution, an adequate quality of sound so that all the words can be detected, and the date of the videos uploading to YouTube should have corresponded to the day when the protest occurred, as the latter condition slightly minimizes the chances for the video being processed with a montage.

them by our own eyes and make personal conclusions. The choice of YouTube is motivated by its current status of the biggest visual social platform in the world. The number (10) of videos divided between two cities (Donetsk and Lugansk) is a minimum median that gives a chance to get an objective picture of the events. The analysis of the video materials was driven by “*Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*” of G. Rose<sup>1</sup> (2004). Following the methodological algorithm proposed by Rose we developed a table (Appendix 1) in which we included indicators such as date, place, gender, person’s identification, peculiar details (paying attention to symbols and emotions/reactions of the actors involved in the protests), and made a transcript of the speeches addressed to the public for a content analysis (see Appendix 2). The transcript of speeches we coded according to seven identifiers<sup>2</sup> which we find relative to the subject of investigation.

Thus, having applied the methods of video observation and a content analysis of speeches noted during the observation, this thesis has found several symbolic elements in the Pavel Gubarev’s speeches as well as in other’s protesters. Firstly, from the video materials, we have observed a range of referential symbols: *flags of Russia, former Soviet Union, and “DNR/LNR”, Chigivara’s portrait, Saint George and Russian ribbons on the people’s jackets, Lenin’s monument, tents with “DNR/LNR’s names”* and lots of posters with short pro-Russian slogans such as “Donbas – Russia”, or “Yes to Russian language” etc. All these symbols cause certain associations among the public, which are well-known and quite popular among the Donbas population. We already know from the previous chapter, that exactly this region has showed tendencies for “nostalgia” about the Soviet times, so that, the “Russian Spring”

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<sup>1</sup> Rose (2004) accounts the place of video production and a modality of the image/video in the process of the visual materials interpretation. Rose sees image modality as technological, compositional and social. Each type of modality has its specific questions that guide the researcher while processing the data: e.g. a social modality raises questions such as: what is a visual context of the image/video? What is the connection between the images/videos and other social connotations entailing categories such as class, gender, race, bondedness etc.

<sup>2</sup> Seven identifiers, we name the categories of the codes which specify and group the content analysis. For instance, 1) *hate language*, points out a sharply negative attitude of “opponents-protesters” through the expression of language means; 2) *economy*, a general designation of economic/financial rhetoric; 3) *history and religion*, detects any references towards historical and religious connotations especially with the history of the Donbas region, WW2, and the Russian Orthodox Church. 4) *Russian language and Russian Affiliation*, focuses on direct mentioning of Russian language and its connection with the Russian heritage; 5) *Emotions*, here we observe any kind of emotional expression (delight, aggression, fear etc.) seen in the public; 6) *Culture*, aims to reflect common beliefs, values, etc. which refer to the Donbas people; 7) *Calls to mobilize*, detect direct statements addressed to join the insurgent’s actions.

activists surrounded themselves with symbols-referents in order to strengthen the effect of a feeling “as if people can return the times they missed so much”. The place the insurgents chose for the protests in both cities (Lugansk and Donetsk) was the Lenin’s Square in four out of ten protests studied by us which demonstrates a direct association with the Sovietness (*sovetskost*). In the background of the speeches’ delivering we could detect a non-visual but a noticeable symbol - a song approximately of 1960s-70s which we assume was a well-known song among those presented in the protests who were around fifty and older. Concerning the public’s average age, people in the masses looked neither young accounting the age up till 35, nor old (over 65). From this point, we can generalize that the public’s age was around 40 and older. Judging the insurgent’s performance in terms of “charisma”, we could measure and apply it only to Pavel Gubarev, who was detected in four out of ten protests, and in four out of five protests located in Donetsk. He did not seem to have any extraordinary features which are often peculiar to a strong charismatic leader. However, in terms of the “symbolic political act” Gubarev tried to make from his performance a symbolic act, when in Donetsk on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, he stressed the people’s attention on his hand being wrapped in bandage because it was broken the day before by a pro-Ukrainian man.

Also, we have detected a range of condensation symbols (symbols that are embedded into the symbolic act that raise emotions) during the process of a content analysis. Firstly, we have found that symbols belonging to such as: hate language, history and religion, emotions and Russian language prevail over other coding identifiers for example economy, culture and direct calls to mobilize. Secondly, we noticed that some phrases taken from the speeches may belong to several groups, so that, it means they overlap with each other. The case with overlapping refers to the categories of “Russian language and Russian Affiliation” and “Culture”, as by culture we supposed to detect the elements belonging to Ukrainian culture not Russian. With an attempt to present our findings clearer, we developed a table below (see also Appendix 2) which exemplifies which particular symbols we found during the content analysis of linguistic utterances.

Coding identifier	Symbols/Myths/Emotions highlighted though the analysed speeches of protesters	Interpretation of detected symbolic elements

<p>Hate language</p>	<p>“Kiev junta”, “South-East is against Banderites” “<i>the Nazi, fascism is so close to us</i>” “Banderite group and employees of Anglo-Saxons that are the parasites of the whole world”.</p> <p>“<i>Terror coming from Kiev junta. We are against of imposters and terrorists</i>”.</p> <p>We are not “bydlo”</p>	<p>“Kiev junta” is a well broadcasted word combination masterly used by Russian media as an element of propaganda to delegitimize a newly-formed Ukrainian government in end of February 2014. A reference of the “parasites” to “Anglo-Saxons” is a linguistic offence existing inside the myth of USA-Russia confrontation since the Cold war in which the USA aims to destroy the Great Slavic World. The words “imposters and terrorists” are addressed again to a new Ukr. government the image of which is the creation of evil as well as Banderite. The word “bydlo” – a direct translation “cattle” is a very rude utterance used by the protester stating that people should stop behaving like slaves obeying their masters, thus it provokes people to separate and join the insurgent’s movement</p>
<p>History and Religion</p>	<p>“What kind of monuments should stand here. We do not want our monuments and parishes to be destroyed”.</p> <p>Ashamed in front of the grandfathers who came across the whole WW2”. “We will not let anyone to trample down our land for which our grandfathers fought”.</p> <p>“We are all the patriots of Lugansk.</p> <p>Let the God help us, brothers! God is with us! <i>Motherland is calling! We will reach a victory that will come on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May!</i>”</p>	<p>The issue of monuments especially of Lenin is a very sensitive topic in this region, as many people treat as an artefact of history which reflects local historical narratives.</p> <p>Everything concerning parents, grandfathers is almost a taboo about which it is not accepted among the Ukrainian society to talk badly, thus a hypothesis that what was defended by grandfathers could be destroyed causes highly negative associations which may lead to emotions of fear and hatred.</p> <p>A repeated reference to God and a fear that parishes would disappear creates a myth-making emphasising the role of the Russian Orthodox Church as a civilizational principle that makes the Donbas region a distinct land with strong religious values symbolising innocent and sacred world.</p>
<p>Emotions</p>	<p>“Any drop of your blood should not be spilt because of this new government”.</p> <p>“This is our big victory”</p> <p>“Can Kiev junta put Donbas down on the knees?”</p> <p><i>Or we will die by obeying to fascists and Banderites or we will survive due to the help from Russia’s President</i></p>	<p>The Head of the Donbas Insurgency mentions his broken arm and ribbon to provoke sympathy and braveness, and simultaneously to demonstrate what kind of action the opponents to him did.</p> <p>In this context, <i>victory</i> serves as a symbol of glory and patriotic pride which also closely connected with WW2 This question causes controversial aggressive emotions because, certainly any nation does not want it to be abused.</p> <p>Here, again a case of overlapping because this phrase can be placed in the category of “Hate language” but these words are presented there already. At the same time, this phrase has an emotional hidden context which demonstrates a fear to group extinction and an one-side alternative because, the first half of the phrase excludes any choice for people by using offensive words and statement meaning same as “slavery”.</p>
<p>Russian Language and Russian Affiliation</p>	<p>“YES to Russian language” We are told what language we should use!</p>	<p>Russian language is a classical polarised topic in Ukrainian society and Russia’s leverage in Ukr. domestic politics. Indeed, a continuous process of Ukrainization since Yuschenko’s Presidency increased. But a big role a “Svoboda” party played, by demanding to make Ukrainian an only language of education in Ukraine. It means to exclude also the rights for national minorities to have education in their native language. By all means, this utterance causes one of the biggest resentment and dislike for the Donbas people as more than half of the population speak Russian and find this language as their</p>

	<p>“We have Russian soul, I am Russian and you are Russian. The Russian land will not die “We are with Russia” Russia won’t leave us alone. We have to ask Russia’s people to help us”.</p>	<p>mother tongue. By this passage, the protesters try to create a myth that people from Donbas are not Ukrainians. The repeatedness of the word “Russian” connotes with several meanings for these people: with Russian language, Russia, culture, and mentality. In such a fashion, the protesters try to mix up all the possible connotations together and create one which persuades Donbas people that they are a part of foreign state, that is Russia.</p>
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Based on the video observation and a content analysis above of the protests in Donetsk and Lugansk during a pre-insurgency stage, we may conclude that the insurgents skilfully surrounded themselves with short referential and condensation symbols that helped them to provoke sentimental associations. These associations were mostly linked with historical narratives about the Soviet Union which no longer exists, WW2 and glories of past times that *as if* they could be revived, and raised the degree of separatism by demonstrating the Russian flags and appealing utterances to various degree about the Donbas people’s connectedness with Russia mentally, culturally and religiously. The protester’s usage of “hate language” during their utterances strengthened a symbolic effect of their performance and added emotions of fear and resentment, partially hatred towards a new-elected Kiev government.

#### 4.3 Russian Propaganda Influence in the Donbass Insurgency

In this paragraph, we will discuss if there were any Russian propaganda relating to the Donbas insurgency, and if so, if it had any influence on the Donbass insurgency.

##### *Russian propaganda in the 1990s and early 2010s*

After the collapse of the USSR, the KGB (its successor FSB) and GRU changed and adapted their vectoring of disinformation and political propaganda according to the new circumstances and geopolitical picture. With the coming of internet and the birth of social media they also got new and important channels to spread their messages, be it purely political or disinformation, and could target their intended audiences in a much more precise way. In short, they got new and powerful tools in their toolbox, making it easier to reach “...fundamental goals of managing the collective attitudes of a populous by the manipulation of significant symbols” (Fitzgerald and Brantly, 2017). This allows them to manipulate information in such a way that it is not difficult to take facts and make them a fiction, or to alter the fundamentals of decision making and bias the recipients to their ends.

## *Russia and Ukraine*

The relations between Russia and Ukraine has been challenging since the Ukrainian independence, not just because of the large percentage of Ukrainians of Russian ethnical origin and Russian speaking Ukrainians living mostly in the eastern parts of Ukraine, and particularly in the Crimea and Donbas regions. For the most part the Russian speaking minority has not been inclined to become or be a part of Russia, but rather a more Russian oriented and more independent part of Ukraine. Russia has of course been exploiting this to its ends seeking to manipulate the Russian speaking Ukrainian populous and thus keeping them within the Russian sphere of influence and mindset. Russia's main goals have in general been to keep the eastern regions of Ukraine as buffer zones against western impact and to be able to at least partially influence decisions made in Kiev, notably against Ukraine turning to various degree towards EU and the USA, not to mention NATO and any inclination towards a membership in the alliance is like a "red line" for Russian which should not be crossed (Gerber and Zavisca, 2016).

### *Channels of (dis)information*

Since both Russia and Ukraine have a fairly high penetration of internet accessibility and widespread use of mobile devices (i.e. smartphones, iPads and suchlike), and also more traditional channels like Russian broadcasting (*Russia Today, NTV, Perviy Kanal, Rossiya*) as well as newspapers, the propagandists have a multitude of vectors and channels to reach their targets and groups of audiences. Recent polls have shown that almost half of the population (47%) in Ukraine have turned to internet as their main source of news (Fitzgerald and Brantly, 2017), in such a fashion, the information they get via broadcasts and newspapers are considered to be biased. This reliance on news from the internet also make them susceptible for propaganda, if they are not able to distinguish real from fake news and to weed out what is disinformation. A multitude of Russian allegedly serious and sincere web sites and even supposedly western but Russian influenced think-thanks (for example "*Centre for Research on globalization*" associated with the University of Ottawa, led by prof. Michael Chossudovsky) makes it hard for ordinary people to find the truth, that is why the students of Kiev Mohyla school of Journalism and the professional Digital future of Journalism programme set up the independent Ukrainian website "*stopfake.org*".

### *Prior to the Donbass insurgency*

After the Euromaidan and president Yanukovich's demise and subsequent flight to Russia, the frontiers hardened. Russia has since been pointing out the citizens connected to the Euro-Maidan movement as *fascist*, a powerful (political) symbol in Russian (and Ukrainian) history. Russia was even in the early stages of the buildup to the Euromaidan starting to point its fingers at activists and naming them "*fascists*" and "*neo-Nazis*". Tying the movement to actual right-wing nationalist movements within Ukraine (for example the "*Pravyi Sektor*" or Right Wing group), however insignificant and small these groupings were, made a powerful symbolic image in many persons minds, suggesting a revolutionary movement with ill intentions as the force behind the Euromaidan (Robinson, 2016).

By doing this Russia created a platform and framework to build on further disinformation and propaganda efforts, and to prime and strengthen the cultural connection to Russian values and culture for the followers, and added leverage to the messages from the policymakers in Moscow. As the tensions increased between the two countries after the Euromaidan, Russian TV aired a story about supposedly Ukrainian "*Nazi*" soldiers that tortured and crucified a 3-year old boy in Slovansk in Donetsk. Even if the story was shown to be entirely false and fabricated, and rejected by an international media, nonetheless it cleared the ground for even more falsified propaganda, and stuck in people's minds. It is worth to note that even when shown to be demonstrably fake, the story was never retracted or denied by Russian media.

By using this and similar emotional propaganda stories and hate language based on powerful historical symbols (e.g. fascists, Nazis) linked to the WW2 and in historical context the OUN-UPA insurgents in the western parts of Ukraine that are likened to "*banderites*" (from its leader's name, Stepan Bandera), Russian propagandists are imprinting the minds of Russians in Ukraine that the "Russian way" is the true and correct path, and that the Ukrainian culture is secondary to Russian.

### *The Donbass erupts*

Playing further on the theme, the Russian propagandists exploited the internal regional differences in Ukraine to its full extent, by pointing at the western parts as "Nationalists" who wished for Ukraine proper as a western-oriented state (e.g. OUN-UPA), and the south-eastern parts as "*Novorossia*" (e.g. New Russia) with Russian language and culture at heart and

understanding. The government in Kiev was labeled as a “*fascist junta*” tying them even more to symbols of the WW2 by using depictions as “*karateli*” (e.g. evil enemies) on the leaders and thus creating a myth of the unrest as of evil vs. good, where the good represents the Russians and their partners in “New Russia” versus the fascists and Nazis in the west. When Russian media focused on this, they created a narrative that the rights and lives of the Russian speaking and ethnical Russians were under a threat from the neo-nazis/fascists etc. in Kiev and the west, and thus needed to be protected from these forces of evil. This boosted the loyalty for Russia not only in the “Novorossia” but also prepared the grounds in Russia itself to support the *brothers* and *compatriots* in south-eastern Ukraine. Fomenting unrest and an emotion of fear in the Donbass region spurred a host of pro-Russian separatist movements proclaiming a need for a “return to the motherland” or independence for the south-eastern regions of Ukraine.

Since the political parties in the south-eastern regions (effective only the “Party of the regions”) failed to put up any functional leadership, the people turned to self-proclaimed “people’s governors”, “people’s mayors” or “field commanders” for leadership in this alleged crisis time. Self-proclaimed leaders sought to use strong political and historical symbols as aforementioned in their rhetoric and narratives to strengthen their cause and grasp on power as it was shown in previous paragraph. Thus, the conflict sharpened ever more, and the insurgency’s second stage started (which is called an incipient conflict according to the Guide to the Insurgency Analysis, CIA, 2012) when, the counterinsurgency from the Ukrainian side emerged and the weaponry was detected.

*Has Russian propaganda influenced the pre-insurgency stage in the Donbass?* This thesis claims that it has. By examining the above, taken from the three papers referenced as sources, we can clearly see that by the use of heavy historical symbols connected to especially the WW2, the Russian propagandists have created a myth of “us and them” depicting the pro-western regime as “evil” against Mother Russia. By doing this, the Russian propaganda has managed to tie the Donbass particularly close to Russia among other south-eastern regions of Ukraine, enabling Moscow to yield power over the region and in effect creating a buffer zone against western influence, diminishing or even excluding a degree of influence from Kiev, and thereby reaching its long-term goals by now.



## CHAPTER 5. Conclusion

### *Summary*

We set out on this Master thesis with a goal to study and understand the emergence for the Donbass insurgency, and in particular how the use of political symbols has shaped the insurgency and its development. To be able to do this, we have in chapter 2 went through, firstly, the theories of what an insurgency is, how it develops, and how it plays out. Secondly, we have looked into the symbolic politics theory, and finally, we have established a methodology for studying this phenomenon. In chapter 3 we have studied the prerequisites for the Donbass insurgency, namely the Ukraine's identity and with the focus on Donbas in its geographical, historical, ethnical, religious and not least political compositions and variations. Then, in chapter 4 we did our case study on the Donbass insurgency itself, firstly by doing a chronological run-through, then an analysis on the use of symbolism by the Donbas insurgents, and finally an analysis of how the Russian propaganda has influenced the development of the pre-insurgency stage.

### *Conclusion:*

Our findings showed that the use of political symbols, and especially those connected with the World War II has made a significant impact on how the pre-insurgency stage in terms of its organizational needs (establishing leadership, recruiting members and gaining support from the masses). The political speculators have played with these symbols mainly to widen the already existing gap between the ethnical Russians and pro-Russian Ukrainians living in south-eastern regions of Ukraine, and in particular in the Donbas region.

By expanding the gap "us-and-them" in the Ukrainian society, the insurgents have managed to tie themselves and the population in the region closer to all things affiliated with Russia and the Russian mothership, legitimizing (in their eyes) the need for closer bonds with Russia and an autonomous and independent Donbas. In the process of doing this, the protesters performed emotionally by appealing to various degree speeches consisting of key messages full of "hate language" and separatist context. Among emotions, fear and hatred prevailed in the protesters speeches, that means their goal was to foster separation from Ukraine through manipulative techniques as according to the symbolic politics hatred justifies hostility. The myth which explains that Ukraine did not exist at all or as if it is an "accidental

state” which was created due to the efforts of the Soviet rule is one of the used example of the rebels to delude people’s minds via propaganda “fake” stories and made them believe that they belong to a great “Russian World”. We already know from paragraph 3.2 that a historical memory is an important consolidating factor in Ukrainian society, and it is not accidentally that precisely in the regions where citizens, many of whom are carriers of “Soviet values” a war splashed.

In such a fashion, the explicit use of historical symbols belonging mostly to WW2 and former Soviet Union as shown in our analysis in chapter 4.2 and the propaganda channels in chapter 4.3 have proved to be powerful tools in the hands of insurgents. When it comes to inspiring and convincing people of the “truth” in their rhetoric and narratives these symbolic methods proved to be effective in the pre-insurgency stage before it flew into a full armed war.

Our conclusion must therefore be that the use of symbols as a political technology have been an important part of the Donbas insurgency in the beginning of Spring 2014.

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**Appendix 1. Notes from a video observation of protests in Donetsk and Lugansk in  
Mach 2014**

**Notes of a video observation of protests in Donetsk 2014**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Person's Identific.</b>	<b>Speech in English from Russian (original)</b>	<b>Peculiar Details</b>
1 March 2014	Donetsk Central Square	Female  Male	Pensioner  Not detected  Pavel Gubarev Presented himself	<p><u>Time from the video 0.20-5.29</u></p> <p>“We lived out the Nazi, fascism, one war, Why do you it do for us?”</p> <p>“Berkut go ahead Russia, Russia, we will stand for our land. What is Special Security Offices doing? For 8 years they have been developing Nationalistic Organizations, our guys died, the governmental upheaval happened, what did they do?”</p> <p>“Silence please, I am Pavel Gubarev the Head of the Donetsk People’s Insurgency, I placed an ultimatum for Donetsk Oblast Council, my theses are simple: firstly, de-facto the state has faced an illegal military upheaval, secondly, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is not a legal authority, thirdly, the laws adopted from 22<sup>nd</sup> February are no longer legal. We don’t have pretensions to our police, as we consider the “Berkut” our heroes. I proclaim about the referendum which will determine the fate of our future, of our land, Donbas!”</p> <p>YouTube (2014a)</p>	<p>She has Russian ribbon on her chest</p> <p>Russian song playing of Soviet times app 70s</p> <p>Lots of Russian flags, “DNR” and Soviet Union and Chigivara</p> <p>People supporting and responding to the utterances with engagement</p> <p>Poster “Donbas – Russia” “Donbas without Nazi”</p> <p>“YES to Russian language”</p> <p>“South-East is against Banderites”</p>
2 March	Donetsk Protest behind Donetsk Oblast Council	Male	Pavel Gubarev	<p><u>Time from the video 0.30-5.30</u></p> <p>“I am still eager to go with you to the end. Yesterday people who did not want to listen to us break me an arm and one ribbon in the back, but we won, we were heard and our opinions would be considered. When the fate of our region is decided for the nearest decades without us, please join me and stay with me till</p>	<p>Russian, Saint George, Soviet, Flags</p> <p>Gubarev showed a hand wrapped in bandage</p>



				<p>the end. I will not betray You, and I want to ask You, my brothers, not to betray me I have a plan of giving power of the Donbas to the public [people are applauding]. We need to meet here at 12 o'clock tomorrow, we need to mobilize in the best possible way. I believe that any drop of your blood should not be spilt because of this new government..."</p> <p>YouTube (2014b)</p>	<p>people are chanting Gubarev! Gubarev! delightfully].</p>
3 March	<p>Donetsk</p> <p>Protest behind Donetsk Oblast Council</p>	Male	<p>Pavel Gubarev</p>	<p><u>Time from the video 0.20-5.20</u></p> <p>"Listen to me! We got the power! And I have a plan, I even have been working on it the last two days (people laughing). Today, the list with adequate people who will get the seats will be formed, and later I will inform you. You (public) all are my deputies and you will vote for these seats, your mandate is your raised hand, I will introduce every person to you, and he will tell you about himself. Any person from the Party of Regions who were only "bla bla bla" I will not let in any of them. We made a great thing, we took the power from oligarchs. And, this is our big victory!</p> <p>YouTube (2014c)</p>	<p>Russian, Saint George, Soviet, Flags</p>
5 March	<p>Donetsk</p> <p>Protest behind Donetsk Oblast Council</p>	Male	<p>Pavel Gubarev</p>	<p><u>Time from the video 0.20-5.20</u></p> <p>Today, I said to the Donetsk Oblast Council or you let us occupy the whole building not just two first floors, or we will capture the whole building ourselves peacefully and quietly. Today the country is on the stage of economic collapse, and we are not guilty for it, people who are in Kiev provoked this situation, the state budget did not receive 80% of its incomings. No money, we won't receive any loans until we have such an unstable political situation. I am the Head of the Donbas People's Insurgency, who on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March was performing for you, I was beaten the same day. I am going to call Aksyonov, the Governor of Crimea and ask him for a help: judicial and</p>	<p>People are applauding</p> <p>People look supportive and reactive actively</p> <p>People are chanting YES</p>

				consultations about how to make a referendum about the status of Donetsk Oblast. We will go to the end!  YouTube (2014d)	
16 March	Donetsk  Lenin's square	Male	Denis Pushylin	<u>Time from the video 1.25-6.26</u>  “Donbas, Comrades, many of us thought that the radicals are far away, and this will not approach our life, also fascism is somewhere, but we did not expect it to come to us so close. Look in the sky (Russian flag is flying), Ukraine before “Maidan” unfortunately no more exists. Lots of mottos were spreading through Maidan, however, oligarchs still maintain there, what did we get? We are told what language we should use, what kind of monuments should stand here, and what is the most fearful and for what I feel ashamed in front of our grandfathers who came across the whole WW2, they try substitute the notions of a fascist by a hero. It is shame! Shame! Can Kiev junta put Donbas down on the knees? Yanukovitch made a lot of bad actions, but he remains the only legitimate President.  YouTube (2014e)	Lenin's Monument  Russian, “DNR” Flags  People are chanting “Shame”

\*Speeches from Russian into English were translated by Olena Telenyk

### Notes of a video observation of protests in Lugansk 2014

Date	Place	Gender	Person's Identific.	Speeches* in English from Russian	Peculiar Details
1 March	Lugansk  Lenin's Square	Male	Priest Uniform	<u>Time from the video 4.05-9.05</u>  “We are Slavic people who want to live in peace, we do not want our monuments and parishes to be destroyed, we will not let anyone to trample down our land for which our fathers fought. We united here for the sake of our Slavic brotherhood and let the God help us in our affairs...” we are brothers Slavs, we want to live in	The crowd of people is listening very attentively

				<p>peace and wealth. We are all the patriots of Lugansk, and we are united by the same values: peace, wealth and order. Let the God help us, brothers!</p> <p>YouTube (2014f)</p>	
2 March	Lugansk	Male	<p>Some man</p> <p>Another man</p> <p>Zakharov Segrei Presented himself</p>	<p><u>Time from the video 1.15-6.15</u></p> <p>The decision that was decided today belongs to today's affairs, the decision that will be taken tomorrow will be tomorrow! (People are angrily chanting Today! Shame!)</p> <p>Please listen to me, the deputies of our Council adopted our decision, the rest no, because they also do not recognize a new government in Kiev</p> <p>Good day my compatriots, I am Zakharov Sergei, I am the Head of the Russian Heritage Federation for 9 years. We have to give to our native language Russian a status of national language.</p> <p>YouTube (2014g)</p>	<p>Poster "Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are Saint Rus"</p> <p>People are aggressively chanting "Kiev is illegal"</p>
5 <sup>th</sup> March	Lugansk	Male	<p>Not detected</p> <p>Another man</p>	<p><u>Time from video 3.00. – 8.00</u></p> <p>Our task is to stop a devil, we have Russian soul, I am Russian and you are Russian. Let's say not to ourselves but also to those bad people that Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are Sant Rus! God is with us! We will live and the Russian land will not die. Thank you!</p> <p>Hello dear Lugansk people (Luganchane), it is nice to see so many people at this weekday. Firstly, I would like to give you greetings from the veterans of VDV who are now close to Moscow, who were in Chechnya, they said that they would not leave us alone. They will be here, they want to talk to Yarosh and Muzychko. As for the Banderite group, they are just employees of Anglo-Saxons. They (Anglo-Saxons) are the parasites of the whole world, they wiped off the Indians, they need only oil and they don't care about other things. They won't destroy</p>	<p>Tents with "Lugansk Self Defence" Flags</p> <p>People are chanting "Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are Saint Rus"</p> <p>People are applauding</p> <p>People reacting emotionally active and supportive</p> <p>Poster "We are with Russia"</p> <p>People are chanting "Russia,</p>

				Russia! And Russia won't leave us alone. But, of course we have to ask Russia's people to help us.  YouTube (2014h)	Russia"
9 March	Lugansk  Lugansk Oblast Council	Female	Not detected  Time 0.00-2.47	"Dear Presidents Victor Yanukovitch and Vladimir Putin, we are the Ukrainian citizens of Lugansk oblast, call on to take measures in terms of our protection from the terror coming from the Kiev junta, we are against of imposters and terrorists who took the power in Kiev by force and try to suppress our meetings. We don't have variants: or we will die by obeying to the fascist and Banderites or will survive due to the help of the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia. We are unarmed but they try to destroy us on physical level. Help us same as in Crimea.  YouTube (2014i)	Russian, Saint George, Soviet flags.
30 March	Lugansk  Lenin's Square	Female	Not detected  Time 1.25-6.25	We won't allow to shut up the people's mouth. You should understand, we are not "bydlo"* cattle, we are bored of keeping silence, we don't have possible to talk, we are called as separatists, we have relatives in Russia, we are brothers. We cannot say "Yes" to a country which was harassing us. Only the unity of Slavic people is able to resist to universal mess. Ladies, push your husbands from homes, swimmers, sportsmen, fighters to join the Lugansk Insurgency. Join! Motherland is calling! Let's meet here more often and we will reach a victory that will come on the 9 <sup>th</sup> of May! Thank you!  YouTube (2014g)	People are chanting "Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are Saint Rus"  People are applauding

\*«Bydlo», about people who are considered same as slaves, fulfilling the will of a master.

\*Speeches from Russian into English were translated by Olena Telenyk

## Appendix 2. Content Analysis of the Speeches taken from the Observation Notes.

Theme	Subtheme	Place of Protest	Gender	Code	Meaning unit
Symbolic Politics in the Donbas Insurgency	Detecting Symbols/ Myths/Emotions in the Protester's Speeches during March 2014 in Donetsk and Lugansk	Protest in Donetsk 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Male <i>Female</i>	1. Hate language	"South-East is against Banderites" Kiev junta radicals and fascism is so close to us
		Protest in Donetsk 2 <sup>nd</sup> March		2. Economy	The country is on the stage of economic collapse, 80% of lost incomings, no loans due to unstable political situation
		Protest in Donetsk 3 <sup>rd</sup> March		3. History and Religion	Referring the Nazi, fascism, one war in comparing a new-formed government in Ukraine" "Donbas without Nazi" What kind of monuments should stand here Ashamed in front of the grandfathers who came across the whole WW2
		Protest in Donetsk 5 <sup>th</sup> March		4. Russian language and Russian Affiliation	"YES to Russian language" We are told what language we should use!
		Protest in Donetsk 16 <sup>th</sup> March		5. Emotions	The Head of the Donbas Insurgency mentions his broken arm and ribbon to provoke sympathy and braveness. Any drop of your blood should not be spilt because of this new government "This is our big victory" refers to a seizure of oblast council building. Blaming Kiev authorities for provoking economic problems Can Kiev junta put Donbas down on the knees? Most fearful and ashamed for substitution of notions: fascist and hero.
				6. Culture	Russian song playing of Soviet times app 70s Pavel Gubarev uses utterance "My brothers"
				7. Direct calls to mobilize	We need to mobilize in the best possible way We will go to the end!

		Protest in Lugansk 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Male Female	1. Hate language	Our task is to stop a devil! Banderite group and employees of Anglo-Saxons that are the parasites of the whole world. Terror coming from Kiev junta. We are against of imposters and terrorists.
		Protest in Lugansk 2 <sup>nd</sup> March		2. Economy	Not detected
		Protest in Lugansk 5 <sup>th</sup> March		3. History and Religion	We do not want our monuments and parishes to be destroyed. We will not let anyone to trample down our land for which our fathers fought. We are all the patriots of Lugansk. Let the God help us, brothers! God is with us! Greetings from the veterans of VDV who won't leave us! Motherland is calling! We will reach a victory that will come on the 9 <sup>th</sup> of May!
		Protest in Lugansk 9 <sup>th</sup> March		4. Russian language and Russian Affiliation	I am the Head of Russian Heritage Federation. We have to give to our native language Russian a status of national language. We have Russian soul, I am Russian and you are Russian. The Russian land will not die "We are with Russia" Russia won't leave us alone. We have to ask Russia's people to help us. Asking Vladimir Putin to protect. We have relatives in Russia, we are brothers.
		Protest in Lugansk 30 <sup>th</sup> March		5. Emotions	Or we will die by obeying to fascists and Banderites or we will survive due to help from Russia's President We are not "bydlo" cattle.
				6. Culture	Slavic brotherhood. We are brothers Slavs. My compatriots Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are Saint Rus. Only the unity of Slavic people is able to resist to universal mess. Motherland is calling!
				7. Direct calls to mobilize	Ladies, push your husbands from homes: swimmers, sportsmen, fighters to join the Lugansk Insurgency. Join! Let's meet here more often.



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