# Integration and Disintegration: Europe, Ukraine, and the World

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The revolution in Ukraine and the Russian invasion that followed have transformed the world, bringing the field of Slavic studies to a central position even as its scholars struggle to make sense of events.

It is not so often that a true revolution takes place in Europe, mobilizing more than a million people, provoking counterrevolution and mass killing, and leading to a change of government. Had the free Ukrainian parliamentary and presidential elections of 2014 been the end of the story, today we might be debating whether the revolution was a bourgeois one, aiming for the rule of law, or a movement from the left, directed against an oligarchical regime. We might be considering the connection made by Ukraine's revolutionaries between national sovereignty and European integration, the intuition that one depends on the other. Rather than dismissing the logic of dying for Europe, we might have considered the reasons why Ukrainians who risked their lives associated individual freedom with the rule of law and international norms.[1]

The Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea and then the support of armed separatism in Donets′k and Luhans′k oblasts ended a long moment in European and Atlantic history in which a certain order was thought to be durable and sovereignty taken for granted. By simultaneously violating the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, Moscow's actions have raised the stakes of analysis. The subject was no longer a revolution within one country but the nature of the international order. Because Russian aggression was accompanied by a boundlessly postmodern campaign of public relations, historical concepts such as fascism, antifascism, the Holocaust, the Christian conversion of the Slavs, and the Russian empire have all been lifted from their normal settings and applied absurdly but effectively to this or that event of the day.

Every such challenge to scholarship is also an opportunity. Propaganda might even, in an indirect way, suggest the contours of a historical change. The attempts of Russian propagandists to present the war in Ukraine as a global conflict hint at an important starting point: that the revolution and war in Ukraine only make sense when the country's history is placed within a

1. On the actual course of events I wrote about forty articles and gave about twenty lectures, in Ukraine and abroad, some of which can be found at timothysnyder.org/ukraine/ (last accessed July 28, 2015).

global framework and the choices of Ukraine's revolutionaries understood as a response to a historical predicament. Indeed, the Ukrainian revolution and the Russian counterrevolution are opposing responses to the same historical situation. It is precisely what Ukrainian revolutionaries and Russian counter-revolutionaries understand about global history that is so interesting.[2]

Modern European history cannot be convincingly presented as a collection of national histories, since nation-states in Europe have always been fragile and temporary as such, nor as a synthesis of west and east European histories, since the distinction is a shallow and artificial one that only makes sense in reference to the twentieth century. A more fruitful approach, suggested by the present war, might be to seek series of contests and choices between projects of integration and disintegration.[3]

Such a conception overcomes one traditional difference between European and global history. The word that separates the two is *colonial*, which places Europeans (and sometimes Americans and occasionally the Japanese) on one side of a divide and the rest of the world and its inhabitants on the other. Yet empire and resistance do not separate Europe from the rest of the world, since that dialectic began within Europe itself. Colonization began to yield to decolonization in the twentieth century in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but in the nineteenth century in Europe. Balkan revolutions against Ottoman rule, usually categorized as national, were the beginning of the decolonial moment. The version of nationalism they offered was, on a global scale, more significant than the more celebrated French model, because in the two centuries to follow, nationalism would generally be anti-imperial rather than antiroyal.[4]

World War I was a direct consequence of the Balkan model of integration, the creation of nation-states from empires. During its course, all of the

2. An excellent first-person discussion of the prehistory of the war propaganda is Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York, 2014), which introduces well his report with Michael Weiss, "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money," *Interpreter*, with the Institute of Modern Russia, November 22, 2014, at www.interpretermag.com/the-menace-of-unreality-how-the-kremlin-weaponizes-information-culture-and-money/ (last accessed June 1, 2015). A valuable Russian perspective on American syndromes of interpretation is Nikolay Koposov, "Back to Yalta? Stephen Cohen and the Ukrainian Crisis," *Eurozine*, September 5, 2014, at www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-09-05-koposov-en.html (last accessed June 1, 2015); in Russian as Nikolai Koposov, "Назад к Ялтинской системе? Стивен Коэн и украинский кризис," *Гефтер*, October 3, 2014, at gefter.ru/archive/13198 (last accessed June 1, 2015).

3. On attempts to integrate global and European history by rethinking colonization, see Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London, 2008); Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, Eng., 2010); and Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization* (Cambridge, Eng., 2011).

4. The move here is not to apply postcolonial theory to eastern Europe but rather to insert eastern Europe into the history of colonialism, which would then require a rethinking of the postcolonial canon. Donald Bloxham helpfully connects Ottoman and German themes to the history of colonization in *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford, 2009). Holly Case demonstrates how an apparently Balkan muddle of memory can be presented as a highly reflective diplomatic history in *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, 2009).

European land empires were either defeated or succumbed to revolution. This meant the completion of decolonization within Europe as of about 1922. The maritime empires of Great Britain, France, and the United States, victorious in the war, contained their application of the principle of self-determination to central and eastern Europe. What they failed to do was to integrate the new nation-states, their clients, into a durable form of economic or political cooperation. Neither Great Britain nor the United States exhibited much durable interest in the new states. France worked hard at its military alliances in eastern Europe, but these foundered when French investments disappeared during the Great Depression and as other, more proximate powers came to seem stronger than Paris. Nothing the great powers could do could have overcome the basic problem of the lack of territorial continuity between themselves and their clients.[5]

The European nation-state, based on the Balkan model, succeeded as a method of disintegrating land empires but failed as a method of reintegration. As a result, ideas of colonialism found their way back to Europe, not as nostalgia, but as planning. Beginning in about 1930, eastern Europe became the site of attempts at what might be called *recolonization*, the application of colonial knowledge to European neighbors. Both the Nazi and the Soviet projects envisioned that much of Europe might be treated as a colonial possession. Adolf Hitler openly admitted his intellectual debt to Balkan militarism but sought to expand its logic from the ethnic to the racial. Economic success was not to be achieved by consolidating a people but by the conquest of other peoples, conceived as races. Ukrainians, above all, were conceptualized as blacks or as Africans, since their land was seen to be the secret to German self-sufficiency as the keystone to a new German empire.[6]

The Bolshevik revolution was of course anticolonial in ideology and in self-description. Vladimir Lenin defined imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, and the Soviet Union after its creation in 1922 set about exploiting national and class tensions in the outside, "imperialist" world. More quietly, however, the logic of the new regime was also colonial, precisely because its most pressing task was to emulate capitalist development. If imperialism was a stage of capitalism, it could hardly be skipped. Iosif Stalin explained the logic of his first Five-Year Plan as one of internal colonization, in which Soviet power had to treat Soviet territories as the maritime empires treated their distant possessions. In this scheme, Ukraine also played a central role. At the precise moment Hitler was speaking to his followers of Ukraine as a breadbasket for a future German empire, Stalin was overseeing a deliberate famine in

5. An appropriate elaboration of this idea would have to consider Zara Steiner's masterful *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933–1939* (Oxford, 2011). One of the productive features of Thomas W. Simons, Jr.,'s textbook on east European history, *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World* (New York, 1991), is that it begins with the diplomatic dilemmas of the interwar period.

6. The relationship between racism toward Africans and German wartime colonialism was one of the more pregnant themes of Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*. In the past fifteen years, the debate has been carried out on a more empirical basis in Germany. The main American contribution is Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, 2005).

which Ukrainian peasants were punished for their ostensible resistance to his own development plan. Both the Nazi and the Soviet system provided what, in the 1930s, seemed to be a successful rival to the failure of capitalism. Both were contiguous to eastern Europe.[7]

For many observers, the question of the second half of the 1930s, when the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany seemed to be locked in a permanent ideological struggle, was which of their neocolonial models would mount the challenge to the capitalist nation-state in Europe and perhaps around the world. In the years 1938–41, in a kind of intermezzo before this main issue was decided, the postwar order in Europe was dismantled. States that were created after 1918 were destroyed one after the other: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. Even Yugoslavia, the extension of victorious Serbia, was undone. This collapse, a result of both German and Soviet policy and, after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, joint German-Soviet policy, represented the failure of one project of integration. In June 1941, when Nazi Germany betrayed its Soviet ally and undertook Operation Barbarossa, the contest for the definition of the new order began.[8]

The German-Soviet war that was at the center of World War II was about control of Ukraine. German planning included the Hunger Plan, in which foodstuffs would be diverted from Ukraine to Germany and Europe, starving the Ukrainian cities as well as other Soviet lands they meant to occupy. The estimate was that thirty million Soviet citizens would starve in the winter of 1941. *Generalplan Ost* envisioned a remaking of Soviet cities, such that most of the native population would be killed, deported, or enslaved.[9]

A special feature of Nazi ideology, however, was the mixing of the program for a racial colony in eastern Europe with the idea of a global campaign against Jews. In Hitler's presentation, the USSR was a Jewish state, which should therefore collapse when exposed to a German military campaign. When this did not take place, and the grand plans for colonization proved impossible, Hitler could and did blame Jews around the world and behind the German lines. Nazi ideology, in other words, combined in its own way the logics of both colonialism and anticolonialism: the war was at once a colonial

7. See, for example, Lynne Viola, "Selbstkolonisierung der Sowjetunion und der Gulag der 1930er Jahre," *Transit*, no. 38 (2009): 34–56; and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, 2001). I incorporate some of the more recent evidence in "The Soviet Famines," chap. 1 in *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, 2010).

8. This period of state destruction is the backdrop for Carl Schmitt's most famous writings on international law: "The *Großraum* Order of International Law with a Ban on Intervention for Spatially Foreign Powers: A Contribution to the Concept of *Reich* in International Law (1939–1941)," in Carl Schmitt, *Writings on War*, ed. and trans. Timothy Nunan (Cambridge, Eng., 2011), 75–124. An interesting response by a Polish international lawyer is Alfons Klafkowski, *Okupacja niemiecka w Polsce w świetle prawa narodów* (Poznań, 1946).

9. See Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); and Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht: Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944* (Munich, 2009). A good deal of the relevant literature is cited in Snyder, "The Economics of Apocalypse," chap. 5 in *Bloodlands*.

one for racial control over territory and a decolonial one to liberate the planet from what the Nazis presented as global Jewish power.[10]

The two neocolonial systems' encounter, in anticipation as allies and then as enemies, was extraordinarily lethal. Some fourteen million civilians were killed as a result of policy in the lands between Berlin and Moscow in the years when both Hitler and Stalin were in power. The largest group of victims was the Jews killed in the Holocaust, most of them inhabitants of these lands. More than three million inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine were starved by Soviet policy; more than three million Soviet prisoners of war by German policy. Policies of mass terror by shooting took hundreds of thousands of lives, disproportionately in this zone of contact. During the years 1933–45, Ukraine was the most dangerous place in the world, precisely because it lay at the center of interest of both of the neocolonial projects.[11]

The clash between Germany and the Soviet Union was also a clash between two recolonial ideas, two notions of how to apply colonial knowledge to the center of Europe. Yet the Soviet military victory had to mean an encounter with Nazi practices rather than their abolition. The Soviet system that emerged in eastern Europe had to adapt to the deep social changes that German rule had brought.

The first social revolution in most of eastern Europe in the 1940s was not the arrival of Soviet power, significant though that was, but the Holocaust of the Jews. First ghettoization and then murder opened property as well as certain social and economic prospects to millions of east Europeans who had no interest after the war in explaining whence these new gains came. The murder of the people who had constituted much of the commercial and professional classes opened social niches. Soviet-style revolutions in eastern Europe from 1944 began from the racial revolution that had already taken place, and they did not reverse it. The very people who had taken Jewish property and even killed Jews joined the communist parties in these years. In effect, this transfer of Jews' property, which was generally unquestioned, substituted the transfer of property for the first phase of a Soviet-style revolution. The second stage, the shift of property relations from private to public, was carried out much less completely in eastern Europe than in the Soviet Union itself. Within a generation, the locus for the legitimacy of these regimes was one of consumerism. The seeds of this were present from the beginning.[12]

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10. The best-known argument of this form is Saul Friedländer's notion of redemptive antisemitism in his *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York, 2007). I try to connect the ideology with the course of the actual campaign in the east and, in particular, to the new forms of politics it permitted, in "Double Occupation," chap. 5, and "The Greater Evil," chap. 6 in *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (London, 2015). Foundational works for any such attempt include Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung: Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Munich, 1998); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg, 1999); and, above all, Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 2011).

11. See Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

12. On double collaboration at the end of the war in Poland, see Alina Skibińska, "Perpetrators' Self-Portrait: The Accused Village Administrators, Commune Heads, Fire

The postwar version of the Soviet project of integration extended almost exactly to the zone of nation-states that had been created by World War I. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, all of the entirely new states created after 1918, became Soviet republics or Soviet satellites. Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, states that had existed before 1918 but which were significantly altered by the peace settlements after World War I, also become Soviet satellites or, in the case of Yugoslavia, a communist order established by an internal revolution. Germany, shrunk by the Treaty of Versailles, was divided after World War II, its northeastern lands becoming a communist state. The one state created by the post-1918 order that did not become communist at all was Austria, whose fate was only settled by the joint occupation in 1955. All of these newly communist territories were subjected to the modernization plan of internal colonization, generally with much less determination than in the Soviet Union. Most of these lands were less agrarian than the USSR had been and so had less to gain from a program of extensive economic development. They were contiguous to one another or to the Soviet Union, but they were also contiguous to another, rival project of integration.

The history of European integration contains within it a new political logic, one only dimly articulated in western Europe but which was clear to both Ukrainian revolutionaries and Russian counterrevolutionaries in 2013 and thereafter. Seeing it requires removing a layer of myth.

The legend of the European Union is that its members learned from World War II. This is not really the case. The essential lessons of the war, whatever they might be, could not really be learned in western Europe since it was only a secondary theater of the conflict. Had experience of the war's horrors translated into a desire for some kind of liberal peace, then it would have been Jews, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Russians, and Poles, the people who suffered most, who would have drawn such conclusions. The politics and myths of war that arose in Israel and Soviet Belarus and Soviet Ukraine and communist Poland were of course very different from those of the EU.

World War I meant the triumph of a European decolonization and the end of the traditional land empires. One person's integration, the integration of nation-states, was another's disintegration, the disintegration of empires. World War II simultaneously thwarted the Nazi recolonial project, altered the Soviet one, and weakened the traditional maritime empires. What the EU actually allowed was a safe landing from colonization, girded by an irenic myth. The most important advocate for European integration at the beginning was the Federal Republic of Germany. West Germany was the most spectacular example in history of a failed colonial project: having attempted to transform half of Europe and change the world order, Germans found themselves defeated, in a divided country, and with a discredited worldview. In this situation, cooperation with France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg could seem in Bonn like an alternative.

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Chiefs, Forest Rangers, and Gamekeepers," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 3 (2011): 459; Jan Grabowski, *Judenjagd: Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw, 2011), 109; and Jan Tomasz Gross, *Sąsiedzi. Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny, 2000), 115.

In the postwar years and decades, the European states that lost their overseas possessions found a substitute zone of trade within Europe itself. France and the Netherlands were followed by Spain, Portugal, and even Great Britain. The transition was not seamless but it followed a powerful economic logic. The notion that a European nation-state could make it alone without some larger trade partner was very rarely entertained. Even the longtime neutrals such as Austria and Sweden traded with the EU and eventually joined it. It was in the late 1980s, as the Soviet empire was faltering, that European integration took shape as a political as well as an economic project. By then, as exhausted Soviet-style systems tried consumerism, this gambit only accentuated the differences between the standards of living in western and eastern Europe. France was less developed than Bohemia in the 1930s but obviously more so by the 1980s. Contiguity between the Soviet empire and the zone of European integration now worked against the Soviet order.

Although the EU worked as a substitute for colonization, it followed different principles. Despite differences in economic and political weight, its members recognized one another as formal equals, with smaller states enjoying exaggerated power within the larger entity. Although the requirements for joining the EU were not formalized until the early 1990s, it was always clear that it was only open to sovereign states that could demonstrate a certain amount of administrative capacity. This was eventually formalized as democracy, liberal economics, and the ability to incorporate the so-called *acquis communautaire*, the body of law and practices of the EU. It was after the revolutionary period of 1989–91 that the EU became a haven not just for the former colonizers but for the formerly colonized.

In the centenary commemorations of the beginning of World War I, one important point was missed: that its peace settlement took a century to formulate. At first glance, the enlargements of the EU in 2004, 2007, and 2013 might appear to be a settlement of World War II, in that the Cold War division between eastern and western Europe was overcome. In fact, a far deeper division was overcome, the one between the onetime maritime powers who were the victors of World War I and the east European nation-states that were created or altered as a result of their victory. The gray zone defined by the external boundaries of the new nation-states of 1918 became, almost exactly, the boundaries of the new external Soviet empire in 1945 and then became, almost exactly, the area into which the EU enlarged in the first years of the twenty-first century.

The EU of the current century has shown that it can be a resting place for both former empires and former subjects of empire. Like the leaders of the maritime powers that lost their empires in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the postcommunist states of the 1990s did not long consider the possibility of remaining fully sovereign nation-states, isolated from the larger project of integration. Most national elites took for granted that "the return to Europe" was the natural end stage of national liberation. Like the Ukrainian revolutionaries of 2013, their intuition about the historical relationship between sovereignty and integration arrived more quickly than journalistic and scholarly understanding of it. The conclusion was reasonable, in that the EU does resolve the fundamental weaknesses of nation-statehood, as revealed by the

experiences of the 1920s and 1930s. It provides contiguity with friendly powers, a method of asserting equality with them, and a zone of free trade and the free movement of peoples.

Unlike previous projects of integration, such as nation-states, land empires, maritime empires, and the neocolonial Nazi and Soviet projects, the EU has little ideology or self-definition, and it has no armed forces of its own. Its expansion had nothing to do with militarism and everything to do with its inherent attractions. Because it is seen as a zone of predictability and prosperity, it tends to mobilize civil societies in favor of the reform of states so that they might be capable of joining. EU members' military budgets are low, since the presence of the United States has historically served as a security umbrella. With the steady withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe since 1989 and the demotion of Europe as a U.S. foreign-policy priority under the Obama administration, leaders of EU member states have found themselves facing a double challenge of self-definition: the popularity of the EU in Ukraine, and a new foreign policy in Russia.

The aspirations of Ukrainians in 2013 and 2014, and in particular the desire for an association agreement with the EU, now come into clearer focus. The Yanukovych regime had the support of much of the population when its policy was to sign the association agreement and lost it when it yielded to Russian pressure not to sign. Citizens of Ukraine, perhaps more than anyone else, were in a position to appreciate the logic of European integration in its latest form. Ukraine has been near the center of several of the major integrative and disintegrative projects of the European twentieth century. It did not become a nation-state, despite a serious military effort, after World War I; instead, most of the lands of today's Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union. It was the major German European colony of World War I and was meant to be the major German colony in World War II. No country was shaped more by the accumulating effect of the Nazi and Soviet projects of transformation.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, Ukraine exemplifies the one historical boundary that the EU has not crossed. The EU can be seen as overcoming the dividing line of 1945 and the dividing line of 1918. What it has not done is overcome the dividing line of 1917. Postwar Soviet satellites belong to the EU; the Baltic states, incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940 and again in 1945, belong. But no country that includes any territory that belonged to the prewar Soviet Union now lies within the EU. In this sense, the Stalinist version of internal colonization has proven durable.[13]

Since the European Union enlargements of the twenty-first century, Ukraine has become contiguous with four members of the EU. Like the communist satellite states of the 1970s and 1980s, Ukraine is a consumer society whose citizens have regular contact with far more prosperous ones to

13. For critical reconceptualizations, see Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford, 2007); Andreas Kappeler, *Kleine Geschichte der Ukraine* (Munich, 1994). I suggest some of these themes in *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke* (New York, 2008); *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven, 2007); and *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, 2003).

the west. Its major problem is not of course communism but the extreme concentration of wealth popularly known as oligarchy and the associated corruption. In 2013, the prospect of an association agreement with the EU was popular in Ukraine because it was seen as a step forward toward the rule of law. The political theory that governed the actions on the Maidan was a simple one, but it was often overlooked. It had to do with a positive logic of integration. Civil society, the state, and Europe were all dependent on one another. The state needed civil society to push it toward Europe and it needed Europe to push it away from corruption. Integration would reinforce sovereignty and sovereignty would reinforce integration but not automatically—not without a large number of Ukrainian citizens being willing to take risks.

Meanwhile, in the summer and autumn of 2013, Russian foreign policy shifted, taking the disintegration of the European project as an explicit goal. There is no overall Russian strategy in the traditional sense of a positive objective; what is exhibited instead is a strategic relativism, designed to undo the connections that have made the defined adversary seem strong. For the first time, the Kremlin defined the EU as an opponent. In doing so, Russian leaders were following the same historical logic as Ukrainian citizens: they were recognizing the positive feedback between civil society, the rule of law, and Europe. But unlike Ukrainian citizens, Russian leaders wished to break these connections rather than affirm them. This, too, was a choice; Russian policy could (and almost certainly should) have taken a different course. The Ukrainian policy of signing an association agreement with the EU, a goal that had been clear for more than a year, was quickly identified as a blow to Russian interests. President Vladimir Putin dissuaded then president Viktor Yanukovych from signing the deal with the EU in November 2013. Russian foreign policy thus led to the protests that began the revolution.

The Kremlin's proposal at the time was that Ukraine could be won for Russia's rival project, the Eurasian Union. In form, this was to be a customs union of Russia and some of its neighbors; in ideology, it was presented by Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, as a comprehensive alternative, "a common economic and humanitarian space stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean" that would supplant the decadent EU.[14] Its architect, Sergei Glaz'ev, explained that it would keep Poland from "tak[ing] Ukrainian territories back under its jurisdiction."[15] When Ukrainians protested the failure of their president to sign the association agreement with the EU, Russian propaganda emphasized the EU's supposed moral failures. By early 2014, Russian propaganda would fix on the cynically effective tactics of defining its enemies as fascists and its war of aggression as geopolitics, but in the first weeks of authentic surprise at Ukrainian preferences, the impulse was to call Europeans

14. "Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the 50th Munich Security Conference, Munich, 1 February 2014," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, February 2, 2014, at www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/90C4D89F4BF2B54344257C760 02ACE67 (last accessed June 30, 2015).

15. Sergey Glazyev, "Who Stands to Win? Political and Economic Factors in Regional Integration," *Global Affairs*, December 27, 2013, at eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Who-Stands-to-Win-16288 (last accessed June 30, 2015).

and Ukrainians homosexuals. The origin of the anti-Maidan policy was the anti-EU policy, of which it was a constituent part.[16]

When I predicted in early February 2014 that Russia would invade Ukraine, what I had in mind was a Russian underestimation of both Ukrainian civil society and the Ukrainian state.[17] The initial Russian policy of slandering protesters and promising money to the Ukrainian government to repress them seemed likely to backfire, and it did. The Yanukovych regime's dictatorship laws of January 2014 and the sniper shootings of February 2014 transformed the protests into a revolution. The Russian response—the invasion and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula—was likely meant to topple the Ukrainian state. When nothing of the kind happened, Russia backed separatists in Luhans′k and Donets′k oblasts. Finding limited social support and few committed allies beyond criminals and local right-wingers and Nazis, Russia was forced to use its own troops. Ukrainians have died in the thousands in these two oblasts and more than a million Ukrainian citizens have been displaced. Considerable numbers of Russian soldiers have also been killed in action in Ukraine.

Although much evidence will no doubt emerge in the coming months and years, and the war will no doubt be a subject of historical debate for decades to come, it seems reasonable to see it as unfolding from a larger campaign of disintegration. Despite lofty talk of Russian speakers' rights and the like, Moscow has evinced little interest in the actual fates of those Russian speakers whose homeland has been wrecked by the Russian intervention. Russia shows no inclination to annex Luhans′k or Donets′k oblasts, preferring instead to leave them in a permanent state of disaster that challenges both Ukraine and the EU. The challenge to the Ukrainian state posed by unpredictable war and unending crisis seems to be the point. The Russian invasion itself has moved Ukrainian public opinion even further toward the idea of European integration, but membership in the EU requires a sovereign and functional state.

The axial difference between the current project of European integration and one of disintegration is the political and rhetorical treatment of weak states. The EU's proposal has been to passively encourage reform with the prospect of future membership. Russia's proposal seems to be to subjugate to destroy, accompanied by various forms of the language of inequality: the claim from Putin that Russia and Ukraine are "one people," his arguments for the reality of "New Russia" or a "Russian world," and his assertions that Ukraine is a "composite state" and that "Russian history" began a thousand years ago on

16. Oleg Riabov and Tatiana Riabova, "The Decline of Gayropa? How Russia Intends to Save the World," *Eurozine*, February 5, 2014, at www.eurozine.com/articles/2014–02-05-riabova-en.html (last accessed June 30, 2015).

17. The prediction of a Russian invasion, which I believe I was alone in making, and which I wanted to make in sharper terms than the editors would allow, was in "Don't Let Putin Grab Ukraine," *New York Times*, February 3, 2014, at www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/opinion/dont-let-putin-grab-ukraine.html?_r=0 (last accessed June 30, 2015). Generally, people who now claim that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was legitimate have passed through earlier phases of denying that it was possible and then denying that it was happening.

what is today Ukrainian territory;[18] Glaz′ev's claim that Ukraine has ceased to exist or never existed or is only propped up by U.S.-trained Nazis;[19] at the extreme (but a meaningful extreme) is Alexander Dugin's claims that Ukraine is part of "Greater Russia" and that Russians must kill people who claim to be Ukrainians in order to realize Russia's own destiny.[20] The difference in rhetorical style is itself quite significant: whereas in the EU the political etiquette is to exaggerate the equality of member states, Russian officials and propagandists exaggerate the weakness of the Ukrainian state and dismiss Ukrainian national identity and Ukrainian history. The ultimate aims are different: to reinforce the idea of sovereignty and then pool it within a larger entity, or to weaken sovereign states and recreate an imperial hierarchy.

The intellectual difference between the current projects of integration and disintegration is the belief in civil society or in world conspiracy. The belief in the integration of states in the EU tends to accompany the belief that civil society is needed for healthy politics. The revolution on the Maidan was an enactment of civil society, in the sense that it involved people freely associating against an unpredictable (and then a dictatorial, and then a murderous) state in the name of the rule of law in the present and European predictability in the future. The assumption, repeated over and over although not always understood, was that civil society, the Ukrainian state, and European integration had to become a positively, mutually reinforcing triad. This mainstream of political thought on the Maidan connected individual agency, national identity, and political normativity.[21]

The Russian response to the Maidan is grounded in a contrary, and mistaken, assumption: what is called "civil society" is nothing more than another name for hostile global influence. For President Putin, as for other European leaders before him, Ukraine is the country that connects colonization and decolonization, a local project of conquest linked to and justified by resistance to a grand global hegemon. On the one hand, Putin uses traditional colonial rhetoric to justify a traditionally colonial war against Ukraine. On the other, he claims that the war is an expression of resistance to the international American conspiracy. Foreign Minister Lavrov complains that the American

18. "Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai Discussion Club: Transcript of the Final Plenary Session," Valdai Club, October 25, 2014, at valdaiclub.com/valdai_club/73300.html (last accessed June 30, 2015).

19. "An Interview with Sergey Glazyev," *National Interest*, March 24, 2014, at nationalinterest.org/commentary/interview-sergey-glazyev-10106 (last accessed June 30, 2015).

20. Alexander Dugin, "Letter to the American People about Ukraine," *Open Revolt!*, March 8, 2014, at openrevolt.info/2014/03/08/alexander-dugin-letter-to-the-american-people-on-ukraine (last accessed June 30, 2015), which is of interest for other reasons as well; Alexander Dugin, "Towards Laocracy," *Open Revolt!*, July 28, 2014, at openrevolt.info/2014/07/28/alexander-dugin-towards-laocracy/ (last accessed June 30, 2015).

21. Tatiana Zhurzhenko and I translated first-person accounts of the Maidan protest in "Diaries and Memoirs of the Maidan: Ukraine from November 2013 to February 2014," *Eurozine*, June 27, 2014, at www.eurozine.com/articles/2014–06-27-snyder-et-al-en.html (last accessed June 30, 2015). See also Paweł Pieniążek, *Pozdrowienia z Noworosji* (Warsaw, 2015); and Konrad Schuller, *Ukraine: Chronik einer Revolution* (Berlin, 2014).

leadership treats Russians like "subhumans" and complains that Americans' ideas of superiority are "in their blood" or "genetic."[22]

In 2014, Russia cultivated client states within the EU (Hungary), sought to win new ones (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia), supported separatism within the EU (the UK Independence Party and Scotland), cultivated national populist and far-right parties that advocate weakening the EU (Front national, Jobbik, and several others), and legitimated fascists and Nazis by inviting them to observe the "referenda" that accompanied the invasions of Crimea and southeastern Ukraine as well as to other Russian-sponsored gatherings.[23] The ethnic justifications of the war against Ukraine were a philosophical challenge to state sovereignty. President Putin's approach to history is apparently to seek models rather than lessons. The years 1938–41, when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union dismantled the prior European system, have received particular attention. The attempt to dismantle Ukraine is strikingly similar to the successful dismantling of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939. In November 2014, while speaking to Russian teachers, President Putin rehabilitated the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that led to the beginning of World War II. In May 2015 at a press conference with German chancellor Angela Merkel, he claimed that the pact was reasonable geopolitics.[24]

The Russian project to destroy Ukraine and the European Union in the name of an alternative global order should not shock or confuse. It is debatable whether disintegration is in the Russian interest, but it is a policy based in a correct historical understanding. If the Maidan was about agency, sovereignty, and Europe, Russia's anti-Maidan is about propaganda, conspiracy, and empire. Russia's political success in marrying colonial and decolonial rhetoric—fighting a war of conquest in Ukraine while claiming to liberate the world from a repressive planetary hegemon—has been achieved before. If Ukraine has been the passage through which European history becomes global for a century, it is not surprising that it would be again today. The real

22. A clear expression of this was Putin's address at Valdai on October 24, 2014.

23. On a gathering of the Russian and European far right in Vienna to combat the supposed world gay conspiracy, see Gerhard Lechner, "Heilige Allianz gegen die 'Schwulenlobby,'" *Wiener Zeitung*, June 3, 2014, at www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/europa/europaeische_union/635065_Heilige-Allianz-gegen-die-Schwulenlobby.html (last accessed June 30, 2015). On the Kremlin's relationships with the European far right, the best source is the stream of posts on Anton Shekhovstev's blog, at anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.com (last accessed June 30, 2015).

24. The Russian historian Andrei Zubov was quick to make the comparison with the *Anschluss*, in "Eto uzhe bylo," *Vedomosti*, March 1, 2014, at www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2014/03/01/andrej-zubov-eto-uzhe-bylo (last accessed June 30, 2015), and paid a price. Kremlin insider Andranik Migranian replied to Zubov by rehabilitating Hitler's foreign policy through 1939: "Nashi Peredonovy," *Izvestiia*, April 3, 2014, at izvestia.ru/news/568603 (last accessed June 30, 2015). From that point, it was not so difficult to predict that Putin would rehabilitate the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, especially given the Kremlin's support of the extreme right. I did so on May 16, 2014, in Kyiv. See Putin's remarks to history teachers, November 5, 2014, at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46951 (last accessed June 30, 2015); and my "Als Stalin Hitlers Verbündeter war," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, December 14, 2014, at www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/die-gegenwart/gastbeitrag-von-timothy-snyder-hitler-stalin-pakt-13320814.html (last accessed June 30, 2015).

question is how: as an extension of a European project based on first reinforcing and then pooling sovereignty, or as an example of a Russian (in the final analysis, Chinese) project of hierarchical sovereignty that, as Carl Schmitt once put it, ends the "the monopolistic position of an empty concept of state territory."[25]

The risks that Ukrainians took on the Maidan and take in resisting the Russian invasion in the east are backed by a political logic, one that the Kremlin also understands and resists. Resisting the positive cycle of civil society-state integration involves providing alternative explanations to visible phenomena which are consistent with and in fact accelerate the goal of disintegration. The Kremlin's antiglobal ideas, especially the ones that involve resisting supposed (American, oligarchic, gay, Jewish) world conspiracies resonate widely during moments of globalization. Pointing to the contradictions within Russian propaganda or between Russian propaganda and Russian actions will not make the challenge disappear. Previous rivals of liberalism might not now seem very attractive, but that did not stop them from working as hammers of disintegration when it mattered.

A historical framework that permits Ukraine to be seen as a subject and an object of projects of integration and disintegration, as a link between European and global history, might help us make sense of present conflicts, and making sense of them just might help bring them closer to an end. At the very least, a scholarly apparatus might help us get some purchase on the phenomena of revolution and war and some distance from the alternative reality of propaganda, whose tropes can otherwise serve as a tempting substitute for thought.

25. Schmitt, "The *Großraum* Order of International Law," 124. China is the only winner of the war in Ukraine, at least thus far.