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Sep 23 · 81 tweets · [neil\\_abrams/status/1573307576959512576](https://twitter.com/neil_abrams/status/1573307576959512576)

According to tankies, the 2014 Euromaidan revolution, in which Ukrainians rose up and ousted kleptocratic dictator Viktor Yanukovich, was a “coup” by the U.S. acting in cahoots with Ukrainian Nazis. Was it?

Short answer: No

Long answer: Also, no.

Let’s dig in.

This thread, on the Euromaidan, is the first of three debunking tankie claims about Ukraine. The next two, respectively, will address the Donbas “rebellion” of 2014-21, which was actually a covert Russian invasion, and the far-right’s influence in post-Maidan Ukraine.

The tankie narrative about the Euromaidan actually consists of three separate assertions: (1) that it was a “coup, (2) that it was engineered by the U.S., and (3) that it was carried out by the Ukrainian far-right. We will consider each in due course.

The Euromaidan revolution lasted from November 21st, 2013 to February 21st, 2014. It is the critical starting point for understanding how we got to where we are today, for a number of reasons:

Not only did the Euromaidan usher in Ukraine’s most recent experiment with democracy; it also served as a sort of second founding for an independent, post-communist Ukraine (the first having occurred in 1991 with the declaration of independence from the USSR)

The Euromaidan marked the maturation of Ukrainian civil society. It also gave rise to a new national ethos of a nation that came together to cast off a predatory dictator propped up by the Kremlin.

That nation, moreover, came to be seen by Ukrainians as defined not by ethnicity or language but by common membership in a democratic state. It might not have been entirely true at the time but it has since become increasingly so, especially after the Russian invasion of 2022.

Finally, the Euromaidan precipitated Russia's war against Ukraine—the first war, that is, which saw Putin's forces occupy the Crimean peninsula and soon after launch a stealth invasion of the eastern Donbas region.

By the way, don't even think about replying to this thread with some bullshit about Oliver Stone's ridiculous documentary about the Euromaidan.

Stone's film resembles an extended Twitter thread by the New York Times Pitchbot: "We wanted to understand what really happened during the Euromaidan so we sat down with Vladimir Putin and Viktor Yanukovich at a Fuddruckers in Tampa." I'm not shitting you; that's what it is.

"In this Donetsk pub, it was a tradition: Team up with a bunch of mafia oligarchs, win power, install yourself as dictator, and loot the country. But now the woke mob has taken it all away."

—Oliver Stone, probably. (Sorry, I'll stop.)

Anyway, let's begin with the easy part: Debunking the tankie refrain that the Euromaidan was a "coup." When you think of a "coup," you probably imagine the military or some other state faction unlawfully ousting the government, right?

If so, that's good, because it's exactly how political scientists conceive of it as well: As one prominent definition holds, coups refer to "illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive."

Based on the triple criteria of target, perpetrator, and tactics, Powell and Thyne summarized the literature and arrived at the following precise definition: "[a coup attempt includes] illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive" (Powell and Thyne, 2011: 252). Neglected in classic definitions, but emphasized by Powell and Thyne and McGowan (2003), is that the tactics used must be illegal. Powell and Thyne (2011: 251) write, "this is important because [it] distinguishes coups from political pressure, which is common whenever people have freedom to organize." This illegal act also normally involves a suspension of the constitutional order, whether democratic or autocratic, thus connecting this criterion to the original root of the concept in the seventeenth century. The earlier omission of illegality

Here's the link to that article:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0032321719888857>

So, going by both the popular conception as well as the way experts define it, a coup, by definition, is carried out by \*state actors\*.

#### **Coup d'état —Constitutive Elements**

Looking further at the constitutive elements—the defining criteria—of the concept, we proceed with Powell and Thyne's (2011) definition because it summarizes well what a coup is.

**Actor/Perpetrator.** A coup is performed by actors within or belonging to the state. Although the military is often the focus, and a major historical concern in Latin America, it is not the only actor that can perpetrate a coup. Coup-makers may also include the judiciary, congress, and the civil bureaucracy. This criterion excludes external agents as principal coup-makers, thus distinguishing a coup from an invasion or a revolution (David, 1987: 8), but it does not mean that external actors cannot influence coup-makers, as has been the experience with the United States in several cases (see for example, Thyne, 2010).

If, instead, the government is overthrown by thousands of people in the streets or even by some non-state organization such a political party, that's not a coup, and it would be misleading to call it so. A coup is executed by state actors; otherwise it's not a coup. Period.

According to our best estimates, a full 20% of the population, or over 8 million people, took part in the Euromaidan. That, dear reader, is not a coup. Even if you choose to believe that it was a nefarious scheme by far-right organization Right-Sector, it still wasn't a coup.

*The anniversary of the Maidan is a survey of public opinion in Ukraine*

*The nationwide survey of the public opinion of the population of Ukraine was conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology from October 9 to 18, 2014. The survey was conducted in 110 settlements in all regions of Ukraine, except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. A total of 2,025 respondents were interviewed. The sampling error does not exceed 2.2%. Surveys were conducted within the framework of the Public Sociological Consortium project with the financial support of the MATRA program of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Ukraine and the European Union.*

- In total, 20% of the population participated in the Euromaidan events – protests against the authorities in November 2013–February 2014: 5% participated in protests in Kyiv, 6% in other cities or villages, another 9% helped the protesters (products, things, money).

(Link to that poll; use Google Chrome to translate it)



**Річниця Майдану – опитування громадської та експертної думки**

38% українців вважає, що Євромайдан був «усвідомленою боротьбою громадян, які об'єдналися на захист своїх прав». Ще 17% вважають, що цей протест населення був стихійним. «Державним переворотом» вваж...

<https://dif.org.ua/article/richnitsya-maydanu-opituvannya-gromadskoi-ta-ekspertnoi-dumki>

Now onto the second of the three claims—that the Euromaidan was engineered by the U.S. government. When making this argument, there are a few bits of “evidence” the tankies like pull out of their ass.

First, they'll note how prominent U.S. politicians like John McCain and Victoria Nuland came to Kyiv to express solidarity with the protesters and, in Nuland's case, went so far as to...hand out complementary baked goods.

Short of distributing millions of meth-laced cookies, there's absolutely nothing McCain or Nuland could have done to \*make\* 8.5 million Ukrainians storm the streets and oust a president.

Somewhat less preposterously, the tankies also point to the leaked transcript of a conversation between Nuland, then Assistant U.S. Secretary of State, and Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine.

**Ukraine crisis: Transcript of leaked Nuland-Pyatt call**

A transcript of the alleged conversation between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt discussing the crisis in Ukraine.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26079957>

During the call, which occurred sometime in Jan. or early Feb. 2014, Nuland and Pyatt discuss different candidates who might head a post-Euromaidan government. This, for the tankies, is the smoking-gun which proves the U.S. was responsible for driving Yanukovych from power.

argument going on in that group at this point. But anyway we could land jelly side up on this one if we move fast. So let me work on Klitschko and if you can just keep... we want to try to get somebody with an international personality to come out here and help to midwife this thing. The other issue is some kind of outreach to Yanukovych but we probably regroup on that tomorrow as we see how things start to fall into place.

*Pyatt:* Yeah. I guess... in terms of him not going into the government, just let him stay out and do his political homework and stuff. I'm just thinking in terms of sort of the process moving ahead we want to keep the moderate democrats together. The problem is going to be Tyahnybok [Oleh Tyahnybok, the other opposition leader] and his guys and I'm sure that's part of what [President Viktor] Yanukovych is calculating on all this.

*Nuland:* [Breaks in] I think Yats is the guy who's got the economic experience, the governing experience. He's the... what he needs is Klitsch and Tyahnybok on the outside. He needs to be talking to them four times a week, you know. I just think Klitsch going in... he's going to be at that level working for Yatseniuk, it's just not going to work.

*Pyatt:* Yeah, no, I think that's right. OK. Good. Do you want us to set up a call with him as the next step?

Except there's one tiny problem with the "Victoria-Nuland-as evil-mastermind" claim. Like many countries, Ukraine has both a president and prime minister. Nuland was not talking about replacing Yanukovych as president; she was referring to who would become prime minister.

How do we know this? Well, for one thing, on Feb. 21st, 2014, the U.S. and E.U. managed to broker a deal between Yanukovych and the opposition in which Yanukovych would continue as president until new elections were held in December, a full ten months from that point.

**Kyiv, 21 February 2014**

**Signatories**

Viktor Yanukovych, president of Ukraine

**For the Opposition**

Vitaliy Klichko, UDAR

Oleh Tyahnybok, Svoboda

Arsenij Yatseniuk, Batkivshchyna

**Witnessed by**

**For the EU**

Radoslaw Sikorski, Polish foreign minister

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German foreign minister

Laurent Fabius, French foreign minister

**For the Russian Federation**

Vladimir Lukin, Russian special envoy

2. Constitutional reform, balancing the powers of the President, the government and parliament, will start immediately and be completed in September 2014.

3. Presidential elections will be held as soon as the new Constitution is adopted but no later than December 2014. New electoral laws will be passed and a new Central Election Commission will be formed on the basis of proportionality and in accordance with the OSCE & Venice commission rules.

The full text of the agreement can be found here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agreement\\_on\\_settlement\\_of\\_political\\_crisis\\_in\\_Ukraine#Viktor\\_Yanukovych](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agreement_on_settlement_of_political_crisis_in_Ukraine#Viktor_Yanukovych).

The deal never came into effect. Why? Because immediately after signing, Yanukovych hightailed out of Kyiv. Within days, he'd be in Russia. Lest it needs stating, you cannot carry out your duties as Ukrainian president from the reassuring safety of Vladimir Putin's bosom.

In sum, the Euromaidan wasn't a coup. Nor was it the product of some malicious scheme by Victoria Nuland to replace Yanukovych.

One country, above all, did try to shape the Euromaidan's outcome. That country was Russia. In fact, Putin's extraordinary efforts to keep Yanukovych in power merely marked the latest chapter in the sordid history of Kremlin interference in Ukraine's post-Soviet affairs.

Documents recovered from Yanukovych's estate revealed dozens of phone calls at key moments between him and Putin as well as the two countries' interior ministers. Putin et al. probably weren't advising their Ukrainian allies to go easy on the protesters.



#### Yanukovych phoned Russian President Putin 12 times during the mas...

Ukrainian prosecutors have completed their investigation into planned charges against ex-President Yanukovych and 9 high-ranking officials for organizing the gunning down of unarmed protesters during...

<https://khp.org/en/1608809760>

MP Hennadiy Moskal, referring to secret documents received from his own sources, stated that prior to the start of the dispersal an encrypted telegram marked "secret" was sent to all oblasts other than Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk, ordering them to transfer their Berkut units to the disposition of the Interior Ministry, not the National Security and Defence Council or the Kyiv police. At the same time, opposition members leaked reports on interrogations of Popov, Sivkovych and Koriak, conducted on December 13. According to the reports, the three gave evidence that on the eve of the tragic events on the Maidan, Vitaliy Zakharchenko, the Minister of Internal Affairs, personally phoned him and ordered him to execute all the commands of Volodymyr Sivkovych. Oleksandr Popov stated that Andriy Kliuyev, National Defence and Security Council Secretary, had personally phoned him twice on November 29, to give him a similar order. The interrogation report for Popov suggests that it was Sivkovych who was coordinating the brutal battle. Interrogation reports for Sivkovych contain information that on the eve of the EuroMaidan operation he met with Andriy Derkach, who is known for lobbying Russian interests in Ukraine and has close ties with Viktor Medvedchuk. Vladimir Putin is the godfather for Medvedchuk's daughter. Medvedchuk is considered to play a leading role in the implementation of Russian scenarios through Ukrainian top officials.

This hints at a clear Russian trail. Kliuyev, and his Deputies Sivkovych and Derkach, not to mention Medvedchuk, have long lobbied the Kremlin's interests in Ukraine, related in one way or another to Soviet and later Russian special services. This trail had been visible before, first in the

One important detail from the briefing was the fact that there were 12 phone conversations between Yanukovych and Putin during those bloody three days, as well as 11 phone calls between Interior Minister Zakharchenko and his Russian counterpart. Although the content of these calls is unknown, the mere fact that there were so many is already highly telling. Other such details were not revealed at the briefing in order not to hinder the case, however information will become available during the trial, Ivanov explained. It is clear that there were constant consultations at very high level between the Yanukovych regime and Moscow.

Worth noting that a Ukrainian delegation to the Council of Europe in late January 2014 spoke with high-ranking European officials of fears that Putin was waiting until the end of the Sochi Winter Olympics, and that it suited him for Yanukovych to have bloodstained hands since this would ensure that the EU did not sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. The fears, unfortunately, proved warranted.



Also, a recovered diary belonging to Yanukovich's security chief documents a secret Jan. 8th meeting between Yanukovich and Putin at which they allegedly decided on a policy of unrestrained repression along with new laws to authorize said repression.

<https://euromaidanpress.com/2014/03/12/yanukovichs-secret-diaries/>

In addition, some very well-known and prominent clients of Putin, notorious for advancing the Kremlin's interests in Ukraine, were deeply involved in orchestrating the violent crackdown of 11/30/13, which was perhaps the pivotal moment of the whole saga.

[ukrainianweek.com/Politics/97451](http://ukrainianweek.com/Politics/97451)

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So much for the claim that the Euromaidan was a U.S.-backed coup. But what about the role of the far-right? Is it accurate to say that the protests were dominated, driven, or merely instigated by "Nazis?"

Most experts don't think so. But a handful, most notably Volodymyr Ishchenko and Serhiy Kudelia, argue that the far-right's role in the Euromaidan was more significant than is often assumed. We need to take these arguments seriously.

One notion we can dispense with, however, is that the far-right made up a majority of the protesters. No expert believes that. According to Vyacheslav Likhachev, a specialist on the Ukrainian right, such people made up a mere 1% of all protesters.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20140412215227/http://noborders.org.ua/en/fields-of-work/xenophobia/extremism-xenophobia-and-political-strategies-how-its-done/>

Hundreds of thousands of people have appeared in the streets of Ukrainian cities. Hundreds, perhaps even thousands of them, are the radical nationalists, but they do not constitute even 1% of the protesters and not determine the overall profile of the protest movement. The geography of the

What Ishchenko and Kudelia contend is that the far-right's impact was disproportionate to its size and decisive in driving the protests' evolution and outcome.

Ishchenko finds that far-right party Svoboda was the most active participant in the protests, at least according to the frequency of its mentions in press reports.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298422104\\_Far\\_right\\_participation\\_in\\_the\\_Ukrainian\\_Maidan\\_protests\\_an\\_attempt\\_of\\_systematic\\_estimation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298422104_Far_right_participation_in_the_Ukrainian_Maidan_protests_an_attempt_of_systematic_estimation)

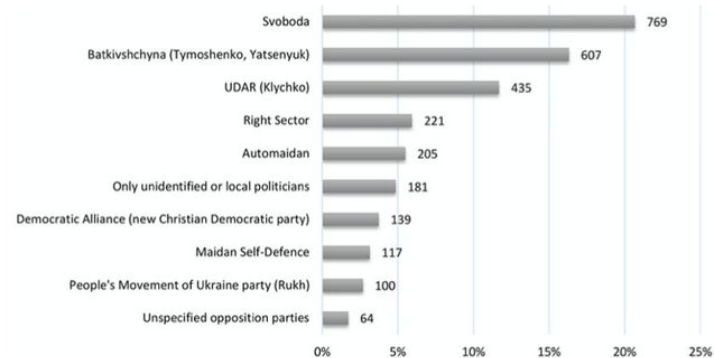
But even going by Ishchenko's figures, the combined participation of Svoboda and Right Sector, the other main far-right actor, still accounted for only 27% of total participation in all demonstrations. Again, the Euromaidan protesters were overwhelmingly moderate in orientation.

### Far right participation in Maidan protests

Figure 3 shows the most frequently mentioned specific organizations or informal initiatives in Maidan protest events. For each event we code every protest participant mentioned in the related media reports. In many cases the participants are named only in a generic way, for example, 'citizens', 'activists', 'protesters', 'students', 'workers', etc. However, in many cases, media mention specific political parties, non-governmental organizations, informal initiatives or their members who organized or participated in the protest.

The *Svoboda* party was the most frequently reported participant of Maidan protests. Its participation was mentioned in no less than 21% of the protest events in support of

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**Figure 3.** Most reported collective agents in the Maidan protests (% from the total number of Maidan protest events). Source: CSLR.

Note: Mentions of affiliated groups, for example, youth organizations of the parties were added to the respective parties figures.

Maidan. Other parties participated in a smaller number of Maidan protests. In 5% of the Maidan protests only unidentified politicians or local officials were reported (though some of these might also be members of the opposition parties, including *Svoboda*). *Svoboda* participation was also very much likely when unspecified 'opposition parties' were reported in 2% of the Maidan protests. In general, the participation of political parties, individual politicians, and local authorities was reported in 38% of all Maidan protest events. Among non-party participants and initiatives, Automaidan (6%), Right Sector (6%) and Maidan Self-Defence (4%) were the most notable. Participation of the entire Ukrainian far right sector including, in addition to *Svoboda* and the Right Sector, minor ultranationalist political parties, organizations and informal initiatives, was mentioned in 27% of all Maidan protests. In 2011–2013 before Maidan started, the percentage of Ukrainian far right participation in the protest events was significantly less, hovering around 19–20% each year.

Ishchenko finds the far-right comprised 20% of events marked by violence and/or confrontations with police and 29% of specifically violent events. As the arithmetically-inclined will note, this means the far-right \*didn't\* account for 80% and 71% of protests in each category.

All told, Ukrainian far right parties and groups were mentioned in 20% of confrontational and violent Maidan protest events, and in 29% of specifically violent events. The scale of far right confrontations and violence increased both in terms of their intensity (absolute number of events) and in terms of their size. Far right radical actions were not small isolated events but a part of the overall radicalization of Maidan. Confrontations and violence where far right participation was mentioned were typically even larger than events where far right participation was not mentioned (Table 2).

Not only was the far-right a minority participant in confrontational and violent protests, but such protest events themselves constituted a small fraction of all protest events (20% for confrontational events, 9% for violent events).

Overall, the absolute number of confrontational and violent protests increased drastically over the course of the Maidan (Figure 1). Still, the relative share of violent events compared to the total number of Maidan protests was not high. Only 9% of all Maidan protests were violent, 20% were confrontational and 71% of Maidan protests used conventional tactics.

Kudelia likewise finds the far-right played a disproportionate role in the violence. He also concludes that, even though violence was present in only a small portion of protest events, it proved decisive in compelling Yanukovych and his allies to give up power.

Here's the link to Kudelia's article:



**When Numbers Are Not Enough: The Strategic Use of Violence in Ukra...**

Recent studies show that protest campaigns have a greater chance of success if they adopt nonviolent tactics, while the use of violence is often self-defeating. This article argues that violence may ...

[https://www.academia.edu/36926443/When\\_Numbers\\_Are\\_Not\\_Enough\\_The\\_Strateg...](https://www.academia.edu/36926443/When_Numbers_Are_Not_Enough_The_Strateg...)

The combination of a small, violent, far-right vanguard and a larger population of nonviolent protesters, Kudelia argues, freed the latter to maintain high levels of mobilization and boosted its leverage over the regime, ultimately convincing Yanukovych and his allies to flee.

in Ukraine, which toppled the regime of Viktor Yanukovych.<sup>4</sup> While the total share of violent protests across Ukraine for the duration of the movement was just 12 percent, the total substantially increased in the final month (January 19-February 21, 2014), with most of violence concentrated in Kyiv.<sup>5</sup> The choice of violent tactics by protesters during Euromaidan signaled a major departure from the previous patterns of peaceful contentious politics in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> Yet, only after the start of violent clashes with the police in mid-January did the authorities offer tangible concessions and ultimately yield power.



But even Kudelia lays ultimate blame on the regime. It was the regime's recalcitrance, combined with its brutal response to peaceful protests, that instigated the turn to violence and legitimized it in the eyes of the much larger contingent of moderate, peaceful protesters.

The failure to achieve any tangible concessions from the regime almost two months after the launch of Euromaidan protests generated a crisis of confidence in party leaders. As one activist remembers, after the parliament's vote to criminalize all unsanctioned mass rallies, "the intensity of rejection of opposition politicians by Maidan reached its maximum." He recalls that during the rally on January 19, "I stood next to the guys from the Right Sector and heard how they disapproved of what was said from the stage and heckled at opposition leaders."<sup>66</sup> This attitude was shared by other protesters since, according to another activist, "It became clear to the people that the politicians already capitulated, so it was up to the people to decide what to do next."<sup>67</sup>

The disruptive effect of non-violent actions was also quickly diminishing. As one protester observed, "people were already standing for two months and realized that they

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could stand like that all their lives and nothing would change since the authorities just ignored them."<sup>68</sup> Still, politicians dismissed the possibility of adopting violent tactics.

To see why the regime was primarily responsible both for elevating the far-right's role in the protests as well as causing the violence, we need to examine how the Euromaidan evolved from its beginnings on 11/21/13 to its culmination on 2/21/14.

The impetus for the initial protests was Yanukovych's decision to abandon negotiations on a trade deal with the E.U. in favor of a deal with Russia. When the news broke, about 1500 people showed up to protest on Kyiv's Maidan square. These demonstrations were peaceful.

At one point over the next few days the protests would balloon to about 100,000 people. But by the end of November they had died down to a few thousand stalwarts remaining on the square. Had Yanukovych simply done nothing from that point, he likely could have retained power.

But, thug that he is, Yanukovych couldn't bring himself to leave things alone. So on the night of 11/30/13, his Berkut riot police stormed the square and savagely beat the protesters.

[https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/articles/2013/12/8/7005339/view\\_print/](https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/articles/2013/12/8/7005339/view_print/)

Popular revulsion at the regime's violence on 11/30 would prove to be a critical turning point. Before 11/30, the protesters' demands were mostly limited to signing the E.U. trade agreement. After 11/30, they'd escalate to include Yanukovych's removal from office.

Not only that, but the protests became much, much bigger and expanded across the entire country. The next day, on 12/1, a half-million protesters showed up in central Kyiv. But even these demonstrations were mostly peaceful.

A 12/7 poll revealed the protests' moderate character—only 14-15% supported seizing buildings or creating armed groups. The same poll showed anger over the 11/30 crackdown to be the biggest reason for taking part, with 70% saying so.



#### Майдан-2013: хто стоїть, чому і за що?

Опитування учасників Майдану було проведено 7(субота) і 8 (неділя) грудня 2013 року

<https://dif.org.ua/article/maydan-2013-khto-stoit-chomu-i-za-shcho>

• It is natural that the participants of the Maidan are much more likely than the general population to participate in various forms of protest, the most - in authorized meetings and demonstrations (71%), 43% - in strikes, 37% - in collecting signatures under collective appeals, 36% - in boycotting the decisions of the authorities, 35% - in picketing state institutions, 15% - in creating armed formations independent of the government structures, 14% - in seizing buildings, 11% - in protest hunger strikes.

• Among the motives that prompted people to go to the Maidan, the three most common were: the brutal beating of demonstrators on the Maidan on the night of November 30, repression (70%), Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union (53.5%), and the desire to change life in Ukraine (50%). The desire to change the government in Ukraine was also sufficiently expressed (39%). The calls of the opposition were an incentive for 5% of the participants, and the same number went to the Maidan, seeking to take revenge on the government for everything it does.

• Among the main demands put forward on the Maidan, the greatest support (more than half) among the interviewed participants of the Maidan received: the release of the arrested participants of the Maidan, the end of repression (82%), the resignation of the government (80%), the resignation of Viktor Yanukovich and the holding of early presidential elections (75 %), the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union (71%), the initiation of criminal cases against those responsible for the beating of demonstrators on the Maidan (58%), the dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada and the appointment of early parliamentary elections (56%). In addition, a large part of the participants of the Maidan spoke in favor of opening criminal cases against everyone who was involved in corruption (50%), a general increase in people's living standards (47%), the release of Yulia Tymoshenko (38%) and a change in the Constitution, a return to constitutional reform 2004, which limited the power of the president (38%).

So the impetus for the Euromaidan's expansion as well as its radicalization came not from the demonstrators themselves and certainly not from "Nazis." Instead, the blame rests squarely on Yanukovich's shoulders.

But even the protests sparked by the 11/30 crackdown had died down by early January. Aside from one event on Jan. 12th numbering 10-50,000 people, the Maidan was a fairly tame affair at this point. But Yanukovich, being Yanukovich, just had to make things worse for himself.

You see, aside from being a thug, Yanukovich isn't particularly smart. This is a guy known for boasting to foreign leaders about all the money he'd stolen—because, like, Angela Merkel totally gets it, right?

Had Yanukovich simply NOT DONE ANYTHING, the protests probably would have fizzled out. It was winter in Ukraine, and winter in Ukraine is cold. But Yanukovich is not that kind of guy. So, in mid-January he decided, for no particular reason, to up the ante once again.

On Jan. 16th, Yanukovich personally appeared in parliament to berate and threaten deputies to pass the so-called "dictatorship laws," which essentially legalized the intensified repression his regime was about to unleash.

In merely one of many examples that make a mockery of tankie handwringing over the legality of Yanukovich's eventual ouster, the dictatorship laws passed in a farcical session which featured a "hand-count" lasting all of five seconds.



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/zOcUQedsfCE>

The dictatorship laws not only revived the protest movement but radicalized it further, ushering in its most violent phase. On 1/19, 200,000 protesters flooded central Kyiv, many throwing Molotov cocktails and, after police killed two protesters, seizing government buildings.

It was this last stage of the Euromaidan that would witness the preponderance of the violence, with the far-right Right Sector assuming a prominent role. But, again, even Kudelia acknowledges that it was the regime's recalcitrance and repression that initiated this dynamic.

The failure to achieve any tangible concessions from the regime almost two months after the launch of Euromaidan protests generated a crisis of confidence in party leaders. As one activist remembers, after the parliament's vote to criminalize all unsanctioned mass rallies, "the intensity of rejection of opposition politicians by Maidan reached its maximum." He recalls that during the rally on January 19, "I stood next to the guys from the Right Sector and heard how they disapproved of what was said from the stage and heckled at opposition leaders."<sup>66</sup> This attitude was shared by other protesters since, according to another activist, "It became clear to the people that the politicians already capitulated, so it was up to the people to decide what to do next."<sup>67</sup>

The disruptive effect of non-violent actions was also quickly diminishing. As one protester observed, "people were already standing for two months and realized that they

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could stand like that all their lives and nothing would change since the authorities just ignored them."<sup>68</sup> Still, politicians dismissed the possibility of adopting violent tactics.

During these final weeks of the Euromaidan, Yanukovich unleashed the “titushki,” or street thugs financed with his looted money and coordinated by his interior minister.



**Titushki - the Ukrainian president's hired strongmen | DW | 19.02.2014**

The word “titushki” is not listed in a dictionary - but that’s what people all over Ukraine call the sturdy young men in tracksuits who join forces with the police to fight anti-government protesters...

<https://www.dw.com/en/titushki-the-ukrainian-presidents-hired-strongmen/a-17443078>

The European Court of Human Rights found that the titushki, together with Berkut forces, engaged in the kidnapping, torture, and murder of Euromaidan protesters. This violence by the regime was planned, not provoked.



**ECHR finds Ukraine breached the right to life over Maidan killing and ...**

Almost exactly seven years after the first deaths of Euromaidan activists, including the abduction and savage killing of Yury Verbytsky, the European Court of Human Rights has issued damning judgements...

<https://khp.org/en/1608808762>

In the video below, you can see titushki collecting blunt-force weapons along with shields from inside an administration building in Dnipropetrovsk



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/HRtBJNYwUlw>

In addition, eyewitness accounts from the final, climactic days of violence (18-20 February 2014) offer evidence of the titushki shooting protesters with live ammunition.



**In Kiev, 'titushki' thugs shoot live bullets at protesters**

As fighting raged between Ukrainian security forces and protesters Tuesday night, "titushkis", who are thugs for hire, were spotted causing trouble in Kiev. Two of our Observers saw them shooting li...

<https://observers.france24.com/en/20140219-kiev-ukraine-titushki-video-bullets>

The post-1/19 phase of the Euromaidan was marked by a vicious cycle of regime repression triggering protester violence and vice versa, ending in the so-called sniper's massacre of Feb. 20th, when government forces indiscriminately shot protesters from windows and rooftops.

The sniper's massacre was the culminating event of the Euromaidan, resulting in dozens of deaths. The next day, on 2/21, Yanukovich would flee the capital.

Still, you can't have an atrocity by pro-Russian forces without a corresponding false-flag theory absolving those same forces of guilt, and the snipers massacre is no exception.



There are two sources the tankies invoke to make this false-flag claim. The first is the leaked transcript of a call between E.U. foreign affairs minister Catherine Ashton and Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet.

In it, Paet reports overhearing an emergency physician who had tended to injured protesters claiming the snipers were member of the opposition, not the regime. But the doctor denies having said that and can't understand how Paets came away with that view.

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/exclusive-photographs-expose-russian-trained-killers-in-kyiv>

In a weird post-script to the event a few days after the massacre Estonian Foreign Affairs Minister Urmas Paet spoke with E.U. foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton in a phone call tapped and leaked to the public on YouTube, most likely by Russian intelligence operatives or their allies. Paet is heard saying that a doctor in the Maidan during the shootings said she thought the snipers were shooting at both police and the protesters and that the shooters were acting on the orders of the opposition. Bogomolets has been identified as his source, but she says she has no idea how Paet could think that was what she was saying. "Snipers were killing protesters," she says. "Maybe it was a misunderstanding," she adds.

The other source for the theory is Ivan Katchanovski, a political scientist who has controversially argued that the snipers' massacre was a false-flag op by members of Right Sector, who allegedly shot the protesters to pin the blame on Yanukovich.

Katchanovski's thesis requires a thread of its own, which I don't have time for here. Suffice it to say, I don't find it convincing. Along with most everyone else who studies Ukrainian politics, I believe the sniper's massacre was perpetrated by the regime.

In brief, much of Katchanovski's argument assumes that government and anti-government forces separately controlled a number of very, very large buildings and even entire sections of the city on 2/20. This assumption, in my view, is not plausible.

An equally large portion of Katchanovski's thesis is based on his own amateur ballistics analyses which, being a political scientist, he's not in any way qualified to perform.

But some of the other evidence he offers is (seemingly) more credible and, as such, requires a more extensive discussion. But it will have to wait for a future thread.

Still, even if Katchanovski is right, it doesn't explain Yanukovich's demise. It would be one thing if the sniper's massacre triggered huge protests that forced him from power. But that didn't happen. No, Yanukovich just up and left.

Again, Yanukovych wasn't actually overthrown. Coward that he is, he fled—despite being holed up at his heavily-fortified estate, built with looted state funds, miles outside of town where he was in no particular danger. Historians Andrew Wilson and David Marples explain:

If these events constituted simply a violent overthrow of a democratically elected regime, other things need explaining too: the subsequent holding of presidential and (forthcoming) parliamentary elections; and the explanation of why [former President Yanukovych had been preparing for several days \(if not weeks\) to leave his residence, as evidenced by the fleets of vehicles moving his goods from Mezhyhirya. It was not a sudden departure forced by the threat of his capture. Central Kyiv after all is 12 miles away](#)

The moderate leader of one of the parliamentary opposition parties Vitaliy Klitschko was booed when he announced the EU-brokered deal.<sup>44</sup> Russians constantly claim that 'no sooner than it had been signed, the deal was rejected by the Maidan',<sup>45</sup> and so there was a coup d'état. But this is false. The deal was being criticised – and for good reason – not rejected. There was no voting process on the public square. The Maidan Public Council reluctantly backed the deal by thirty-four votes to two.<sup>46</sup> If Yanukovych ran away simply because one rabble-rousing speech got a big cheer, then that was his own personal choice.

[Yanukovych actually fled because he had finished packing.](#) Preserving what he could of his wealth seems to have mattered more to him. Ukrainian prosecutors estimated that he took \$32 billion (out of his supposed \$100 billion total graft) to Russia with him, much of it literally crossing the border in trucks.<sup>47</sup> That kind of round-but-precise figure was suspicious. How did they count it? It would amount to several trainloads. But Yanukovych certainly sent a lot of money ahead. He got back to Mezhyhirya quite early, given the circumstances, at 8.55 p.m.; and he left when the packing finished at 4 a.m. He was undoubtedly planning his next move, but does not seem to have issued any significant orders other than to complete the packing. Yanukovych departed with twenty-one bodyguards in two helicopters for the secret government residence Obukhiv, near Kharkiv.<sup>48</sup>

The day after Yanukovych skipped town, parliament voted to remove him. Yes, they cut some corners, with only 73% approving instead of the required 75%. But what were they supposed to do? THE GUY HAD FLED. HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO RUSSIA.

One final note: To discredit the Euromaidan, tankies often call attention to the fact that the protests never quite enjoyed majority popular support. But that misses the point: Thanks to his autocratic conduct, Yanukovych lost his claim to legitimacy. What do I mean by that?

Legitimacy depends not on popularity but adherence to the rules. It's about process, not outcome. Even before the Euromaidan, Yanukovych had broken these rules with abandon. His violent response to the protests merely compounded that loss of legitimacy. Here's Andrew Wilson:

But this was a radicalised citizenry. Three things had changed the mood since late January. One was the 16 January repression laws. The second was the regime's increasingly savage off-screen violence: protestors were snatched from their hospital beds; activists were seized at night, beaten and dumped in local forests. The third was the ineffectiveness of negotiation. Yanukovych was duplicitous, and the parliamentary opposition did not speak for the Maidan. Every time an agreement was signed between the parliamentary parties and the president, the protestors ignored it or put on a show of force to demonstrate that they were not consulted.

So the protestors got more and more militant, and the regime got more and more brutal.

When leaders violate the agreed-upon rules governing access to power, they sacrifice any claim to legitimacy, whether moral or practical. With his unlawful power-grabs, violent repression, and epic corruption, Yanukovych made his own bed. He'd eventually have to lie in it.

So there you have it. Whatever the tankies might want you to believe, the Euromaidan was not a coup. Nor was it engineered by the U.S. Nor was it dominated by the far-right. It was a popular revolution brought about by Yanukovych's self-inflicted loss of legitimacy.

Stay tuned for more threads debunking additional tankie claims, most notably about the 2014-21 Russian invasion masquerading as a rebellion along with the far-right's much-exaggerated influence over post-Maidan Ukraine. /fin

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