

IGA-677 / RusNatSecPol / Lecture 23

Russian-Ukrainian War, 2014-2021

Yuri M. Zhukov
Visiting Associate Professor of Public Policy
Harvard Kennedy School

November 21, 2023

Today's objectives

1. *Trace:* political economy of independent Ukraine
2. *Consider:* why “Russian Spring” didn’t spread beyond Donbas
3. *Discuss:* was Russia’s “hybrid warfare” a failure?

Early Soviet attempts at “Ukrainization”

1. Indigenization (koreninizatsiya) policy
 - a) national minorities were key part of Red coalition in Civil War
 - b) Bolsheviks reverse pre-1917 assimilationist policies
 - c) expand use of titular languages in union & autonomous republics
2. “Ukrainizing” Ukraine (1923-1930)
 - a) government jobs require Ukrainian fluency (or mandatory courses)
 - b) Ukrainian-language education
 - c) Ukrainian-language newspapers
 - d) Ukrainian-language theaters
 - e) Ukrainian-language street signs
3. Policy is a success (\uparrow support for Soviets)
 - a) Ukrainians as % of party (KP(b)U):
 - 22% in 1922
 - 60% in 1933



Figure 1: Nove chtyvo

Return to assimilation

1. Ukrainization policy terminated (1933)
 - a) crop failures blamed on Ukrainian nationalists
 - b) Stalin orders reversal of Ukrainization policy
 - c) Ukrainian Communist party purge
 - d) leading Ukrainian cultural figures arrested, killed
 - e) 1938: mandatory Russian instruction in schools
 - f) 1939: replace Ukrainian schools with Russian schools in W Ukraine
2. “Language of friendship of nations”
 - a) post-WWII: Russian promoted as *lingua franca*
 - b) Ukrainian not officially banned
 - c) but assimilation key to professional advancement, social mobility



Figure 2: Friendly people



Figure 3: Racing together

Ukraine on eve of independence

1. Census statistics (1989)

a) nationality (self-reported):

- 73% Ukrainian, 22% Russian
- compare to 1926:
80% Ukrainian, 9% Russian

b) native language (self-reported):

- 65% Ukrainian, 33% Russian

c) Russian *lingua franca* in Ukraine:

- Russian: native language for 88% of minority population (Jews, Belorussians, etc.)
- Ukrainian: native language for 3% of minority population

2. Political, economic dominance of east

a) 14 of 20 largest cities on left bank

(other 6 are Kyiv, Lviv, Kherson, Mykolayiv, Vinnytsya, Cherkasy)

b) Donbas is most populous region, center of industry



Figure 4: End of history

Independent Ukraine

Overview

Ukraine after independence

1. Second-largest country in Europe
 - a) 50M population, 600,000km²
(now ~40M population)
 - b) resource-rich, industrialized
 - c) nuclear-armed (until 1995)
 - d) diverse, well-educated population
2. Tethered by Russian/Soviet legacy
 - a) Donbas strikes, regional autonomy movement (1994)
 - b) Crimean secession attempt (1995)
 - c) Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea
 - d) homecoming of Crimean Tatars (1989), tension w/ local Russians
 - e) resistance to Ukrainian language



Figure 5: Donbas miners



Figure 6: Black Sea Fleet

Political (re-)awakening

1. Orange Revolution (2004)
 - a) protests vs. rigged presidential vote
 - b) outcome: new elections, loss of Russia-backed candidate (Viktor Yanukovych)
 - c) pro-Western leaders take helm
 - d) but reforms stalled by infighting, corruption
 - e) 2010: Yanukovych wins presidency
2. Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014)
 - a) protests vs. Yanukovych's rejection of Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with EU
 - b) outcome: Yanukovych flees to Russia, interim govt installed
 - c) Ukrainian state in paralysis



Figure 7: Maidan 1.0



Figure 8: Maidan 2.0

Russian Annexation of Crimea

Window of opportunity

1. Local political response to Euromaidan
 - a) rival “anti-Maidan”, “pro-Maidan” (Tatars) protests in Simferopol
 - b) local wariness of new Kyiv govt
 - c) but no large-scale agitation
2. Russia's concept of operations
 - a) Spetsnaz, VDV covert actions
 - b) Russian reinforcements arrive, under cover of exercises
 - c) Spetsnaz teams seize administrative buildings
 - d) Naval Infantry, VDV surround Ukrainian bases, sever lines of communication to mainland
 - e) BSF blockades Ukraine navy ships
 - f) Ukraine military offered choice: defect or leave
 - g) hold referendum on joining Russia



Figure 9: Tough crowd



Figure 10: Little green men

Discussion: What explains Russia's successful seizure of Crimea?

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
numbers	doctrine	distance	surprise	weather
replacement of losses	strategy	terrain	intelligence	timing
industry/production	training	climate	analysis	luck
logistics	officer quality	roads	communication	
natural resources	technology	fortifications		



Figure 11: Ostrov Krym

War in Donbas

Overview

Donbas (Donets'k + Luhans'k): Background

1. Politics

- a) supported Yanukovych
- b) attempted 1994 referendum on regional autonomy, language, economic union with Russian Federation

2. Demographics

- a) Ukraine's most populous region (6.5M, 15 pct of total pop)
- b) large, but not overwhelming Russian population (38 pct ethnic Russian)

3. Economics

- a) 2nd largest region by GDP
- b) most heavily-industrialized region of Ukraine, ex-USSR
- c) export-oriented economy
- d) long history of labor activism

Share of Ukraine's GDP (2013)

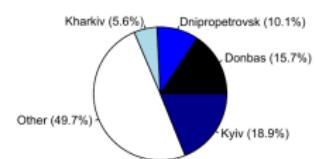


Figure 12: GDP

Industrial production (2013)

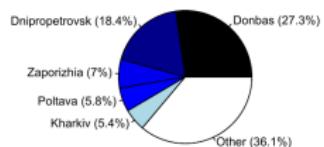


Figure 13: Industry

Share of Ukraine's exports (2013)

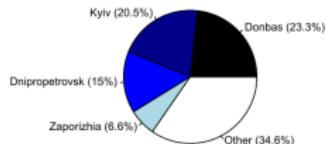


Figure 14: Exports

Donbas War: Phase I

1. Pro-Russia protests (March 2014)
 - a) protestors (mostly unarmed) temporarily seize regional administration buildings
 - b) demands: federalization, Russian as 2nd official language, RF Customs Union
 - c) law enforcement cracks down, arrests protest leaders
2. Pro-Russia insurgency (April 2014)
 - a) armed men (w/ civilian mobs) seize government buildings, proclaim "People's Republics"
 - b) demands: independence, union with Russia
 - c) local police defect or flee

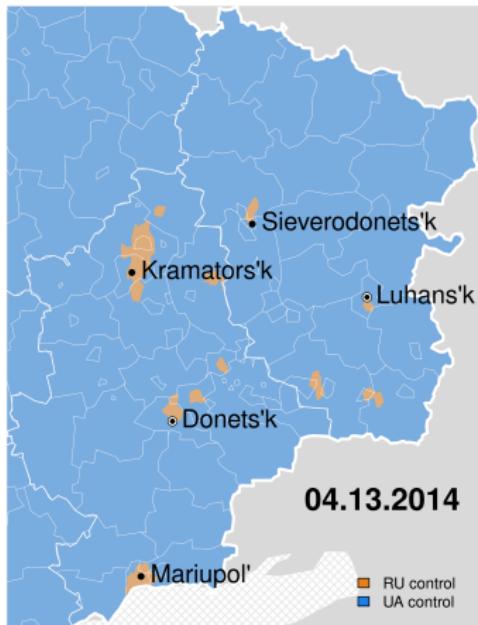


Figure 15: Territorial control

Donbas War: Phase I (cont'd)

3. Anti-Terrorist Operation (April)
 - a) Kyiv launches ATO (JFO)
 - b) but Ukraine army paralyzed, stopped by civilians, abandons vehicles without a fight
 - c) martial law not announced
4. Political consolidation (May 2014)
 - a) separatist "referenda" held in Donets'k, Luhans'k (May 11)
 - b) Ukraine presidential elections (May 25), Poroshenko wins
5. ATO gathers pace (May-June 2014)
 - a) objective: isolate separatists
 - b) army lays siege to Slovyansk'
 - c) Metinvest (Akhmetov) steel worker militia drives separatists out of Mariupol'

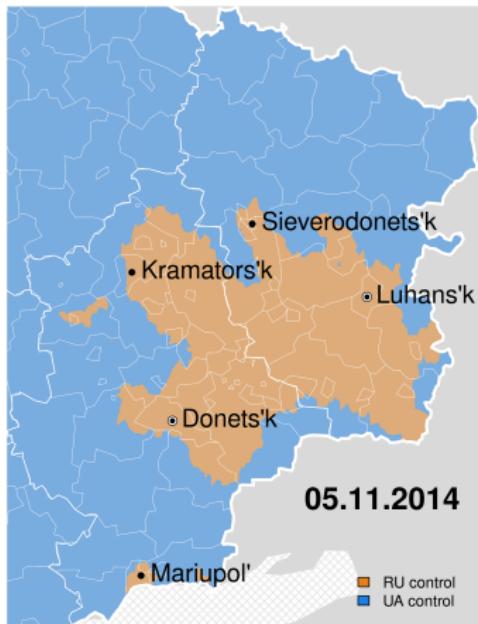


Figure 16: Territorial control

Donbas War: Phase II

1. Ukraine on offensive (June-Aug)
 - a) siege warfare working
 - b) Kyiv regains control of border
 - c) takes Slovyans'k, Kramators'k
 - d) battle for Donets'k airport
2. Russia avoids direct action
 - a) 40,000 troops on border, as conventional deterrent
 - b) sends air defense systems, volunteer fighters
 - c) FSB, GRU teams on ground
 - d) but no direct, large-scale military support
3. Decisive moment (August 2014)
 - a) Ukraine encircles separatists
 - b) cuts territory in two
 - c) separatists on cusp of defeat

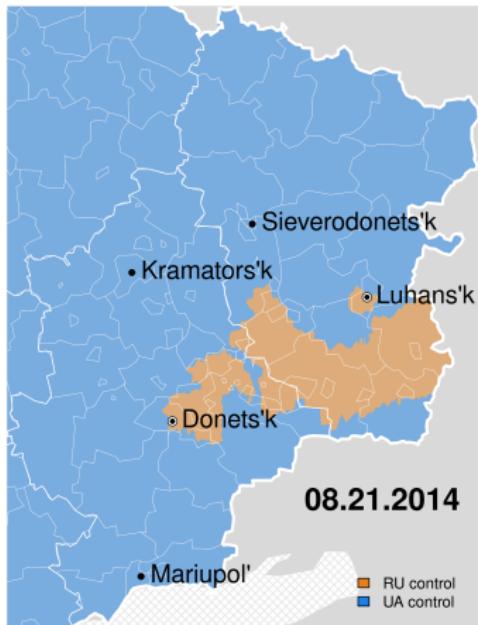


Figure 17: Territorial control

Donbas War: Phase III

1. Russia intervenes (August 24)
 - a) brigade-size task force of Russian VDV, mechanized forces streams across border
 - b) "humanitarian convoy" cover
 - c) Ukraine army defeated at Battle of Ilovaisk
 - d) Russians reach Mariupol'
 - e) Ukraine: 60% equipment lost
2. Minsk I ceasefire (September 5)
 - a) pull back heavy weapons
 - b) OSCE monitoring mission
 - c) Ukraine agrees to "decentralize" power
 - d) Russia agrees local elections, withdrawal of armed groups
 - e) front stabilizes

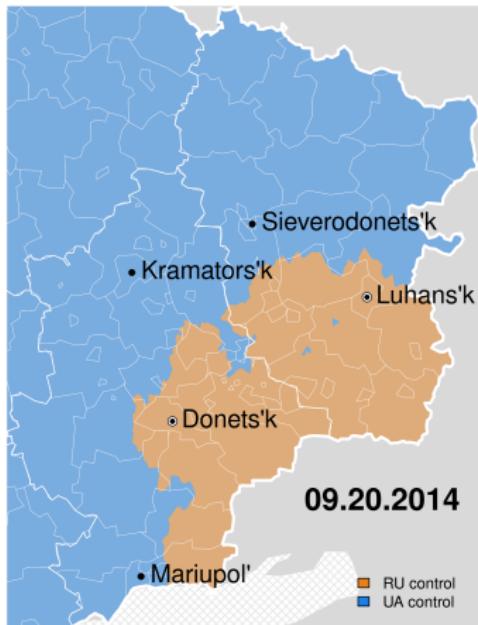


Figure 18: Territorial control

Donbas War: Phase III (cont'd)

3. 2nd Russian offensive (January)
 - a) fighting escalates separatists capture Donets'k airport
 - b) separatists, Russian troops capture Debaltseve pocket
 - c) shelling of Mariupol', Kramators'k
4. Minsk II agreement (February)
 - a) Ukraine agrees to amend constitution, grant special status, amnesty for separatists
 - b) Russia agrees to restore Ukraine border control
 - c) front stabilizes (despite periodic flareups)
 - d) but political progress stalled
 - e) status quo until 2022

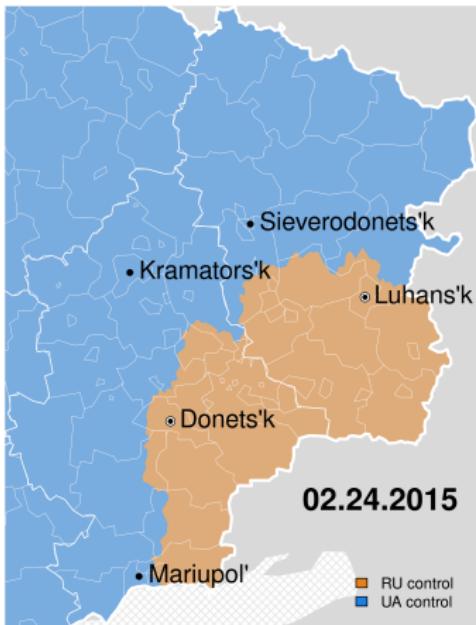


Figure 19: Territorial control

Political Economy of the Donbas War

What explains *local* variation in conflict?

- why did separatists attack some places, but not others?
- why did some towns fall to separatists more quickly than others?

Potential explanations:

1. Russian support for rebels
 - a) necessary, but not sufficient
 - b) cannot explain geography, timing of violence or territorial control
2. Ethnic nationalism
 - a) more Russian language/ethnicity → more support for separatism
3. Economic shocks
 - a) more local economic dependence on Russia → more support for separatism ✓



Figure 20: Economic engine

Ethno-linguistic explanations

1. Primordialist hatreds
 - a) deep cultural cleavages, interethnic mistrust
2. Bargaining failure
 - a) issue indivisibility over language
3. Ethnic exclusion
 - a) grievances over perceived anti-Russian discrimination
4. Collective action
 - a) shared language facilitates organization, enforcement
5. External support
 - a) weapons, aid from co-ethnics in Russian Federation

Hypothesis

- more violence in areas inhabited by Russian speakers / ethnic Russians



Figure 21: Mapa ros. movy

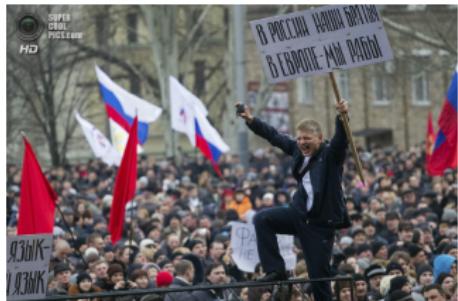


Figure 22: Nosiy movy

Economic explanations

1. Negative shocks
 - a) less growth → unemployment, lower wages
 - b) change in terms of trade → unemployment, lower wages
2. Opportunity costs
 - a) participation in war rises as the opportunity costs of fighting fall
3. Looting / predation
 - a) financial incentives for opportunistic fighters

Hypothesis

- more violence in areas potentially harmed by trade openness with the EU and trade barriers with Russia



Figure 23: Working man



Figure 24: Fighting man

Ukraine's trade with EU vs. Russia

1. Export to Russia (pre-2013)
 - a) heavy machinery ✓
 - b) metals
 - c) agricultural products
2. Import from Russia (pre-2013)
 - a) oil and gas
3. Export to EU (pre-2013)
 - a) metals
 - b) agricultural products
4. Import from EU (pre-2013)
 - a) heavy machinery ✓
 - b) consumer goods



Figure 25: Trade tug-o-war

Donbas' 'Big 3' industries

1. Metals (least threatened by EU deal)
 - a) 50% of industry in Donbas
 - b) exports to 50 countries
 - c) highly profitable, competitive
2. Coal (moderately threatened)
 - a) heavily subsidized, inefficient
 - b) 12% of coal to Russia
 - c) 33% of coal to factories dependent on Russian orders
 - d) IMF loans require end of subsidies, auctions, closures
3. Machine-building (most threatened)
 - a) 46% of industry in Donbas
 - locomotives, mining equipment, steel furnaces, industrial cranes, rolling mills
 - b) 60% of exports to Russia
 - c) no domestic demand
 - d) not competitive in EU, Asia



Figure 26: Steel magnate



Figure 27: Rust belt

Which of these better explains the dynamics of the Donbas War?

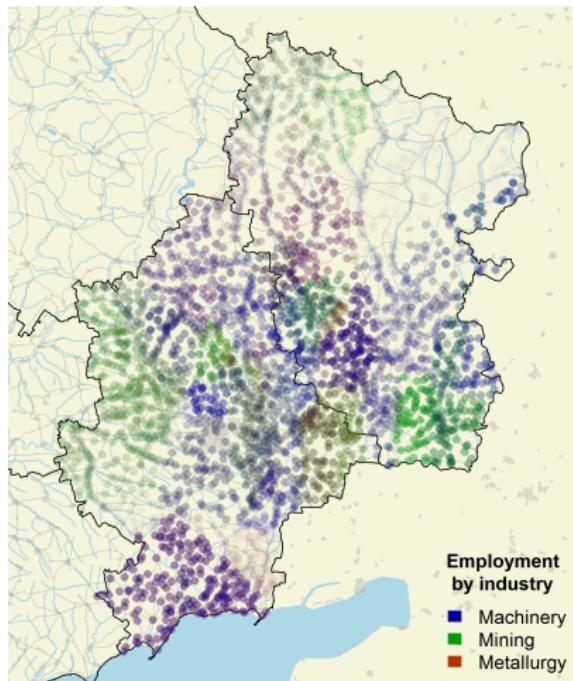


Figure 28: Economics

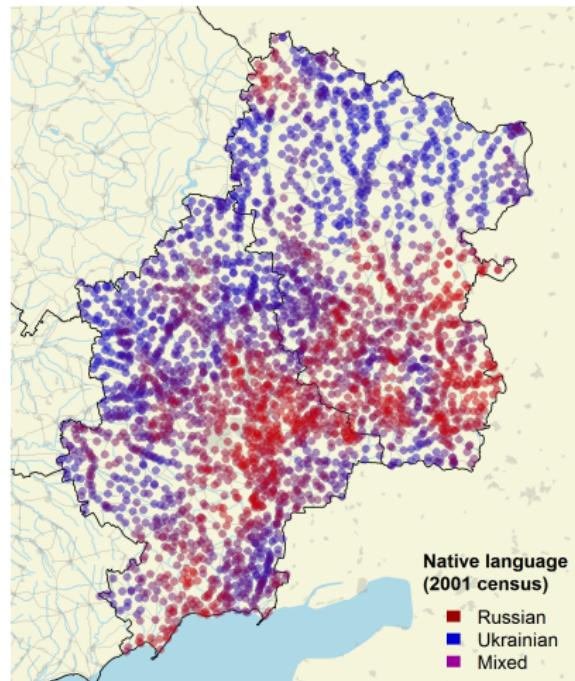


Figure 29: Language

What do the data say?

1. Places that were more dependent on trade with Russia pre-2013...
 - a) saw more pro-Russian violence
 - b) fell to rebels earlier in war
2. Places with more Russian speakers...
 - a) also saw more pro-Russian violence
 - b) but this effect is more uncertain

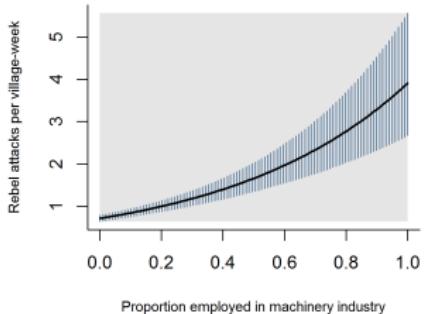


Figure 30: Economics

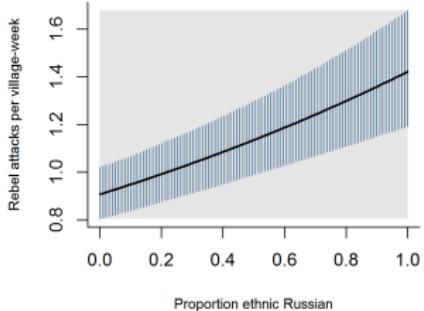


Figure 31: Language

Discussion

Language vs. economics

1. Which cause of conflict is more “preventable”/amenable to policy?
2. Should Ukraine have followed the Baltic model?
(language as requirement for citizenship)
3. Are there national security advantages to being a bilingual nation?

NEXT MEETING

Russian-Ukrainian War: 2022- (Tu, Nov. 28)

- what are the causes and consequences of military stalemate?
- what are Ukraine's lessons for the future of warfare?