

Goodbye Lenin: A Memory Shift in Revolutionary Ukraine

by Serhii Plokhii

Sunday, December 8, 2013 witnessed by far the largest public protest to take place in the city of Kyiv since the Orange Revolution of 2004. About 800,000 people poured into Independence Square (Maidan) and Khreshchatyk Boulevard in the city center to protest actions taken by the government of President Viktor Yanukovich.

The protests had been initiated eighteen days earlier, on the night of November 21, by a few hundred people appalled at the abrupt change in the policy of the Ukrainian government, which, under pressure from Russia, had refused to sign the long-awaited association agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. The EuroMaidan, or the European Maidan protests, as they became known in the media, were started by Kyiv yuppies—a relatively small group of Western-oriented journalists, businessmen, political activists and students—who saw in the association agreement their last hope of reforming Ukrainian politics and society in order to liberate them from the Soviet legacy and the corrupt Russian-backed regime of President Yanukovich.

The EuroMaidan turned into what became known as the Revolution of Dignity on Sunday, December 1, after government riot police brutally dispersed student protesters encamped on the square. Close to 350,000 Kyivans took to the streets of the capital. The orientation toward Europe and signing of the association agreement with the EU remained among their slogans and goals. But the new protest was fueled first and foremost by their refusal to countenance the regime's brutality as a way of solving political problems. The people rejected the increasingly authoritarian government, which they now wanted to bring down.

On the following Sunday, December 8, the number of protesters more than doubled, their ranks increased by sympathizers from other parts of Ukraine, above all from the country's pro-European west. Emboldened, those leading the protests called on their followers to blockade the Presidential Administration. The Revolution of Dignity was about to enter a new stage. The government knew that and was preparing troops to crush the revolt. Violence was in the air.¹

¹ Reuters Timeline: Political crisis in Ukraine and Russia's occupation of Crimea <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-timeline-idUSBREA270PO20140308>>; BBC Ukraine Crisis: Timeline <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>>; Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven and London, 2014), pp. 66–85.



<http://vikna.if.ua/news/category/ua/2013/12/09/15619/view>

Lenin Falls

Sometime after 5:00 p.m. on December 8, 2013, when the main rally was over and winter darkness had fallen on the streets of Kyiv, a column of approximately 200 men, most of them wearing balaclavas, began to proceed from the Kyiv city administration building, the protesters' headquarters on Kreshchatyk, to the intersection of that boulevard with another one named after Ukraine's most famous poet, Taras Shevchenko. The column was headed for the monument at the foot of Shevchenko Boulevard across the street from the Besarabka (Bessarabian Market), the city's main agricultural bazaar. The monument, which honored Vladimir Lenin, had been erected in December 1946, as the Soviet authorities were "cleansing" and reclaiming the symbolic space after the defeat of the Nazis, who had occupied the city from 1941 to 1943.

Ever since Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991, followed by the removal of a much larger statue of Lenin from the city's main square, many in Kyiv had wondered whether the Lenin monument on Shevchenko Boulevard should go as well. Why should there be a monument to the founder of the Russian Communist Party and godfather of the brutal Soviet regime on the boulevard named after Shevchenko, whom many considered the spiritual father of the Ukrainian nation? The statue was also an eyesore to those less concerned with the Ukrainian nation than with belief in the market economy—a belief symbolized by the Bessarabian Market across the street from the monument. It stood as proof that even the Bolsheviks could not fully crush market forces. Among the Kyivans who wanted the monument to stay in place were members of the Communist Party of

Ukraine, who were prepared to defend it with their bodies if need be. The civic authorities decided to play for time, citing the artistic value of the marble statue as an excuse to keep it where it was.²

As monuments to Lenin were removed by city councils in other parts of Ukraine, the Kyiv authorities took a pause on the monument that lasted more than twenty years. That seemed excessive to Ukrainian liberals and intolerable to Ukrainian nationalists. The latter decided to take the initiative into their own hands. The first attempt to demolish the monument was undertaken by members of the Ukrainian nationalist organization Tryzub (Trident) on June 30, 2009, the anniversary of the declaration of Ukrainian independence by nationalists in 1941 and the birthday of one of the icons of the Ukrainian nationalism Roman Shukhevych. The attackers managed to damage the monument before they were arrested and put behind bars. As justification of their action, they cited the decree on the Soviet regime's responsibility for the Holodomor, the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33, signed a few days earlier by President Viktor Yushchenko. When the pro-Western and anticommunist Yushchenko was replaced in early 2011 by the pro-Russian President Yanukovich, who was friendly to the communists, the perpetrators were prosecuted, but their sentences were suspended. . The Lenin monument was restored soon after the attack. The pause taken by the civic authorities continued.³

The start of the EuroMaidan protests in November 2013 presented a new threat to the monument, and the government dispatched a special detachment of riot police to protect it from any eventuality. With a column moving toward the monument on the evening of December 8, the police knew what to expect. They had already fought off an attack on the monument the previous Sunday, December 1, later claiming it had been so violent that eight officers had had to seek medical attention. This time they decided to do nothing. The large column and the mass character of the protest earlier in the day may have been one reason. But it is equally possible that the authorities did not mind the impending demolition and were preparing to use that act of symbolic violence to justify the very real violence they intended to unleash in the coming days. One way or another, the column of men in balaclavas got a free hand to do what they had come to do—demolish the monument to Vladimir Lenin.⁴

² "Istoriia pamiatnyka Leninu v Kyievi," *Ukrains'ka pravda*, December 9, 2013

<<http://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2013/12/9/140323/>>.

³ "Na Lenini lytsia nemaie! Ukraïns'ka presa u seredu," *BBC Ukrainian.COM*, July 1, 2009

<http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/pressreview/story/2009/07/090701_ua_press_1_06.shtml>; "Sud otlozhil na neopredelennoe vremia srok rassmotreniia dela o razrushenii pamiatnika Leninu v Kieve," *Korrespondent*, April 9, 2013.

⁴ "MVS povidomliaie pro 8 hospitalizovanykh militsioneriv pislia sutychky bilia pam'iatnyka Leninu," *Tyzhden.ua* December 1, 2013 <<http://tyzhden.ua/News/95462>>.



<https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-lenin-vandalized-statues-euromaidan/25227472.html>

Demolish they did. While the organizers of the action cheered on the crowd gathered around the monument with nationalist and anticommunist slogans, young men in balaclavas attached a tall ladder to the monument—together with the pedestal, it was more than 10 meters in height—put a loop around the neck of the communist chief and, with considerable effort, pulled the monument off the pedestal. Lenin fell headfirst, crushing a granite plate near the base of the monument. His neck did not survive the impact, and the head broke off, to the further excitement of the crowd. In front of the cameras the attackers, some armed with heavy hammers, descended on the demolished idol, trying to split off pieces of the marble body as revolutionary souvenirs. A representative of the largest Ukrainian nationalist party, Svoboda (Freedom), which claimed responsibility for the action, compared the fall of the monument to that of the Berlin Wall.⁵

Leaders of the mainstream political parties were less enthusiastic. Andrii Shevchenko, a prominent Ukrainian journalist, member of parliament, and future Ukrainian ambassador to Canada, made a statement on behalf of the leadership of the EuroMaidan coordinating committee, claiming that the demolition had not been sanctioned by that body. But Shevchenko also refused to condemn the toppling of the monument, stating that there was no place in downtown Kyiv for a monument to Lenin. A few weeks later Ukraine's most celebrated composer, Valentyn Sylvestrov, expressed the opinion of many when he stated: "They brought down the monument—a dubious achievement of the revolution, but an achievement." Many Kyivans, as well as people in other parts of Ukraine, did not

⁵ Oleksandr Aronets, "Povalennia pam'iatnyka Leninu v Kyievi," *YouTube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVgjjv0WcX8#t=516>>; "Svobodivtsi vzialy na sebe vidpovidalnist' za povalennia Lenina," *IPress*, December 8, 2013 <http://ipress.ua/news/svobodivtsi_vzyaly_na_sebe_vidpovidalnist_za_povalenogo_lenina_35123.html>; "Povalennia pam'iatnyka Leninu v Kyievi," *Wikipedia*.

welcome the manner of the removal or share the nationalist ideology of those who carried it out, but they did not doubt that it was high time for Lenin to go.⁶

The toppling of the Lenin monument in Kyiv on December 8, 2013 is considered the start of what became known as the *Leninopad*, or Leninfall—the mass demolition of Lenin monuments in Ukraine in late 2013 and the first half of 2014. Indeed, television coverage of the demolition of the most recognizable Lenin monument in the country triggered similar attacks in the Ukrainian provinces, but the process was slow to gather speed, and the impact of the Kyiv toppling became clear only in retrospect. Only three monuments were demolished or vandalized elsewhere in Ukraine between December 9 and 30, 2013. Nine more were attacked in January 2014, and an additional five in the first half of February 2014. Given that there were hundreds of monuments to Lenin all over Ukraine, the immediate impact of the fall of Kyiv’s Lenin was modest at best.⁷

But then, all of a sudden, anticommunist hell broke loose. On February 21 alone, more than 40 Lenin monuments and statues were either demolished or attacked by activists in small towns and villages of Ukraine. By the next day, more than a hundred monuments and statues were gone. Altogether the month of February 2014 witnessed the demolition of 320 statues and monuments to Vladimir Lenin. The term “Leninfall” was born. The chronology of the Leninfall, not unlike its beginnings in December 2013, was closely associated with the main stages of the Revolution of Dignity protests. The dramatic spike in attacks on Lenin monuments on February 21 came in the wake of the violent clashes and mass killing of protesters on the Maidan one day earlier. To the crescendo of violence on the Maidan, the pro-Maidan forces in the Ukrainian provinces responded with attacks on the symbols of the erstwhile communist regime, which came to be seen as a proxy for the corrupt administration of President Yanukovich.

While no other month matched February 2014 in number of demolished or vandalized monuments to Lenin and other prominent figures of the communist regime, the Leninfall continued for the rest of the year, further fueled by the Russian annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 and the beginning of open warfare in the Donbas in April and May 2014. Altogether in 2013–14 more than 550 monuments to Lenin were removed in Ukraine by local activists and by decisions of local councils.⁸

The Leninfall of 2013–14 had a less dramatic but in many ways even more consequential continuation in the following year. In April 2015 the Ukrainian parliament passed a set of four “Decommunization Laws.” In the following month, President Petro Poroshenko, elected to office in the middle of the Crimean and Donbas crises in May 2014, signed the legislation into law. One of the laws established a six-month deadline for the removal of all monuments to Lenin and leaders of the communist regime. It decreed the renaming of thousands of Ukrainian cities, towns, villages, and streets in order to remove all communist-related names. By early 2017, close to 1,300 additional Lenin monuments and statues were gone. The Leninfall had attained its ultimate objective. Out of

⁶ “V Kieve vozveli barrikady i snesli pamiatnik Leninu,” BBC Russia Service, December 9, 2013 <http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2013/12/131208_ukraine_kiev_lenin>; Mariia Semenchenko, “Valentyn Syl’vestrov: chytaite Shevchenka poky ne pizno,” *Den’*, December 29, 2013.

⁷ “Khronologia Leninopadu (2013–2014),” [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_\(2013—2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_(2013—2014)); Oleksandra Haidai, *Kam’iany hist’: Lenin u tseentral’ni Ukraini* (Kyiv, 2016), pp. 172–189.

⁸ “Khronologia Leninopadu (2013–2014),” <[https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_\(2013—2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_(2013—2014))>.

approximately 5,500 Lenin monuments and statues in Ukraine in 1991, all but a few were gone by October 2017, the month marking the centenary of Lenin's October Revolution of 1917. In Ukraine, the century of V. I. Lenin was over.⁹



https://gazeta.ua/articles/history/_znesennya-pamyatnika-leninu-v-kiyevi-ce-ochischennya-mista-vid-togo-scho-jogogabילו-istorik-dmitro-malakov/530817

⁹ Vitalii Chervonenko, "Rada ukhvalyla 'dekomunizatsiyni paket,'" *BBC*, April 9, 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2015/04/150409_communizm_upa_vc>; "Poroshenko signs laws on denouncing Communist, Nazi regimes," *Interfax-Ukraine*, May 16, 2015 <<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/265988.html>>; "Khronologia Leninopadu (2013–2014)," <[https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_\(2013—2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_(2013—2014))>; "Khronologia Leninopadu (2015)," <[https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_\(2015\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_(2015))>; "Khronologia Leninopadu (2016)," <[https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_\(2016\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_(2016))>; "Khronologia Leninopadu (2017)," <[https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_\(2017\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Хронологія_Ленінопаду_(2017))>.

Interactive Mapping: Turning on Location

What should one make of the Leninfall story? Was the demolition of the Lenin monuments just an unfortunate episode, a passing spasm of symbolic violence fueled by social upheaval and resulting in the loss of part of the country's cultural heritage (some of the monuments, such as the one removed in Kyiv, had unquestionable artistic value)? Or did it reflect a broader change in society and its perception of itself and its past? And if the latter is more true than the former, then what does that memory shift tell us about the direction taken by Ukrainian politics and society since the time of the EuroMaidan and the Revolution of Dignity?

None of these questions can be adequately addressed without taking into account the spatial dimension of the Leninfall. Taking place in the midst of Ukraine's most profound political crisis since the demise of the Soviet Union, the Leninfall was as much the outcome of political strife as were the wars of historical memory. Politics and memory had been closely interlinked in Ukraine at least since the Orange Revolution of 2004, and both have had very strong regional components. Regionalism in Ukrainian politics and memory had been strengthened by the Revolution of Dignity and the loss of the Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine to Russia-led separatist projects, which also mixed politics and memory, as evidenced by the "Novorossia" project, rooted in the imperial past, and the creation of the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, inspired by the Soviet experience and endowed with the Soviet legacy.

The exploration of the regional dimensions of Ukrainian historical identity and the politics of memory based on that regionalism is the main objective of the "History and Identity" module of the MAPA: Digital Atlas of Ukraine Project developed by the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University. This module is the result of collaboration with two main partners: the project titled "Region, Nation, and Beyond: An Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Reconsideration of Ukraine" under the leadership of Professor Ulrich Schmidt at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, and a project undertaken by the Razumkov Center in Kyiv under the title "The Formation of the Common Identity of Ukrainian Citizens in New Circumstances: Peculiarities, Prospects and Challenges." Some information for the module was provided by the Institute of National Memory of Ukraine.¹⁰

The maps developed by MAPA Project Manager Kostyantyn Bondarenko and MAPA Research Fellow Viktoriya Sereda are based on a spatial analysis of the data produced by two surveys conducted in Ukraine in March 2013 and March 2015 by the University of St. Gallen Project with the support of the Swiss National Foundation and the Wolodymyr George Danyliw Foundation, as well as a December 2015 survey conducted by the Razumkov Center and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands under the auspices of the "Social Transformation in Ukraine and Moldova" project. The first two surveys included 6,000 respondents aged 18 and above, while the third covered more than 10,000 respondents of the same age category.

The discussion that follows is based on the data and maps produced on the basis of the above-mentioned surveys. Both the maps and the databases, including the formulation of survey questions

¹⁰ "History and Identity," MAPA: Digital Atlas of Ukraine <<http://harvard-cga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5c2c743e132f4b048293d3e3adc075fc>>.

and responses to them, expressed as percentages of all responses, may be consulted on the module page of the MAPA website. The MAPA maps reproduced below represent one or more layers of the spatial information available on the website. Although the MAPA-produced maps and layers of information provide the basis for this discussion, it also draws on maps and data produced by other mapmakers and projects acknowledged in the footnotes.

While this paper focuses mainly on the Leninfall and seeks primarily to offer preliminary answers to the questions formulated at the start of this section, it is also designed as a demonstration of the possibilities inherent in GIS-based mapping and spatial analysis based on it and is presented as an invitation to further research into the spatial dimensions of Ukrainian memory politics and Ukrainian society at large.

The Geopolitics of Memory

Ever since the Orange Revolution of 2004, memory wars have shaken Ukraine almost without interruption. The battle has been fought by proponents of two historical narratives—one post-Soviet, strongly influenced by the Soviet-era Russocentric and procommunist interpretation of the past, the other ethnonational, with strong anticommunist and often anti-Russian overtones rooted in the nationalist resistance to Soviet rule during and after World War II. The Ukrainian liberal camp, represented by a significant group of Ukraine’s leading historians and backed by pragmatic elements in the Ukrainian government and political elite, found itself embroiled in this struggle between two radically different visions of the Ukrainian past. The liberal narrative of Ukrainian history, with its inclusive attitude toward citizens who were not ethnic Ukrainians, helped lead the country toward independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s but was unable to regain ground lost after the polarization of Ukrainian politics, including the politics of memory, in the course of the Orange Revolution.¹¹

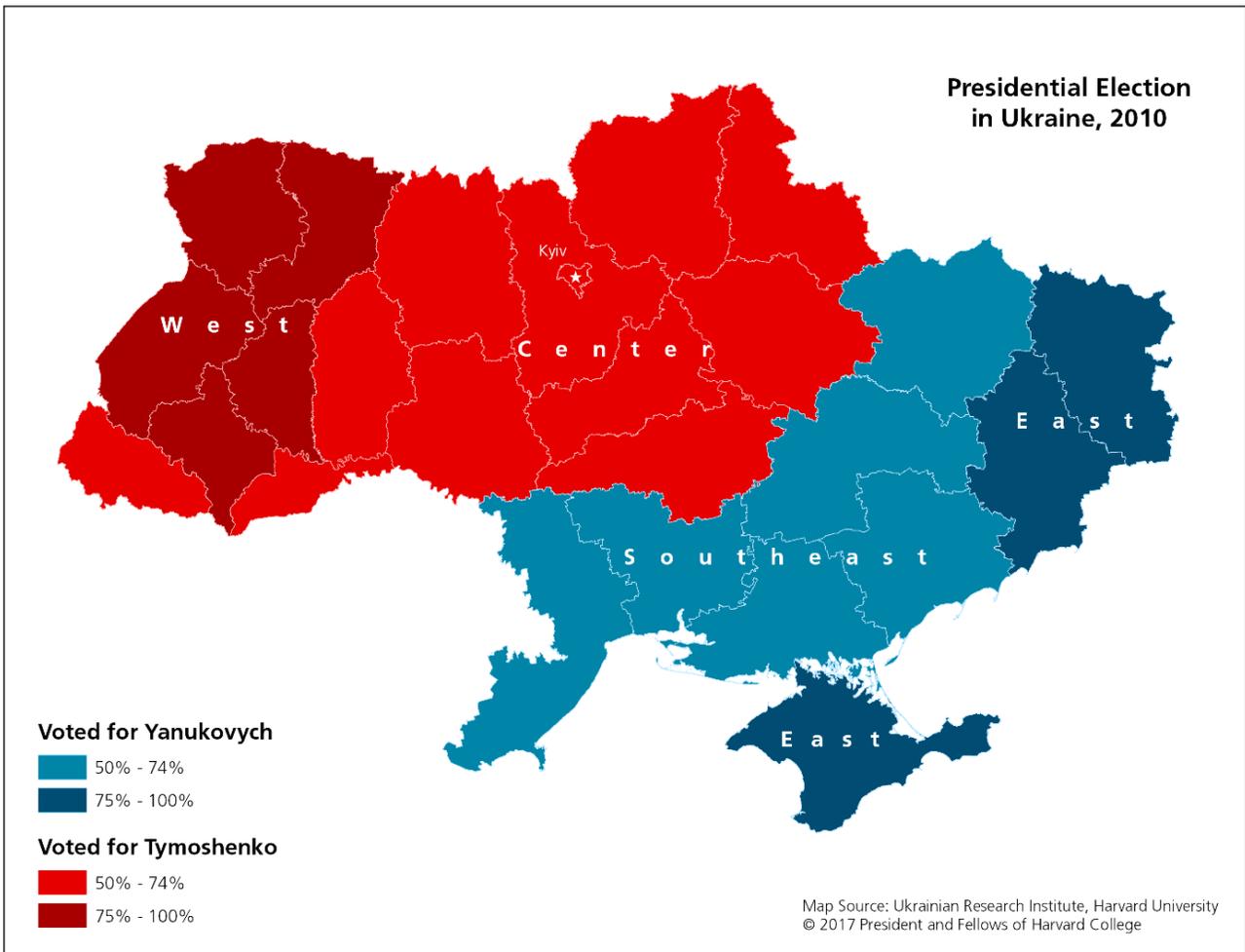
The polarization of Ukrainian politics after 2004 had a clear regional dimension, pitting the east of the country, nostalgic for the Soviet period, against the west, which was anticommunist and oriented toward Europe. Under the circumstances, the politics of memory became an important instrument for political parties trying to mobilize their regional electorates. But “lived memory,” rooted in the actual history of a given region, began to be modified by current politics in this period. The city of Kyiv, for example, which had never been part of any other country than the Russian Empire or the USSR since the mid-seventeenth century, accepted many elements not only of liberal national but also nationalist narratives of Ukrainian history, as did the population of other urban centers in predominantly rural central Ukraine. In regions east of the Dnieper, elements of national and nationalist narratives made inroads not only in rural regions such as Poltava but also in industrial centers like Dnipro (formerly Dnipropetrovsk).

Given the close connection between memory and politics in Ukraine, it is only natural to start our discussion of the present-day geography of memory by considering the country’s regional political

¹¹ On Ukraine’s memory wars, see Oxana Shevel, “Memory of the Past and Visions of the Future: Remembering the Soviet Era and its End in Ukraine,” in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (Oxford, 2014), pp. 146–69; idem, “The politics of memory in a divided society: a comparison of post-Franco Spain and post-Soviet Ukraine,” *Slavic Review* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 137–64.

preferences, as shown on Map 1. Political scientists and sociologists who study Ukraine have come up with various divisions of Ukrainian political space into macro-regions, usually based on voter behavior but also including historical and cultural components, especially linguistic preferences. The number of macro-regions typically varies from two to five. This discussion identifies four macro-regions, but the regional map that we have chosen differs somewhat from generally accepted political-science models.¹²

MAP 1



For the purposes of our analysis, we found most useful the regional division of Ukraine based on a map of the 2010 presidential elections. The map reproduced above divides Ukraine into two parts and then splits those zones into two additional segments, yielding a division of the country into four macro-regions. The basis for this division is the number of votes cast for the two major contenders in the 2010 presidential elections, Viktor Yanukovich and Yulia Tymoshenko. The areas where more than 75 percent voted for Tymoshenko constitute one macro-region, and those where she received

¹² Dominique Arel, "Language and the Politics of Ethnicity: The Case of Ukraine," University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1993 < <http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/23297>>; Lowell W. Barrington and Erik S. Herron, "One Ukraine or Many? Regionalism in Ukraine and Its Political Consequences," *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 1 (2004): 53–86; Mykola Riabchuk, "Ukraine: One State, Two Countries," *Transit Online* 23 (2002) < <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2002-09-16-riabchuk-en.pdf>>; Gwendolyn Sasse, "The 'New' Ukraine: A State of Regions," *Regional & Federal Studies* 11, no. 3 (2010): 69–100.

between 50 and 74 percent of the vote are another. Two more macro-regions consist of those areas where more than 75 percent voted for Yanukovich and those where he gained 50 to 74 percent of the vote. The two regions in which Yanukovich and Tymoshenko achieved majorities constitute super-regions dividing Ukraine into eastern and western halves. To a large degree, the divisions indicated on the map came into existence in the 2004 presidential elections that produced the Orange Revolution.

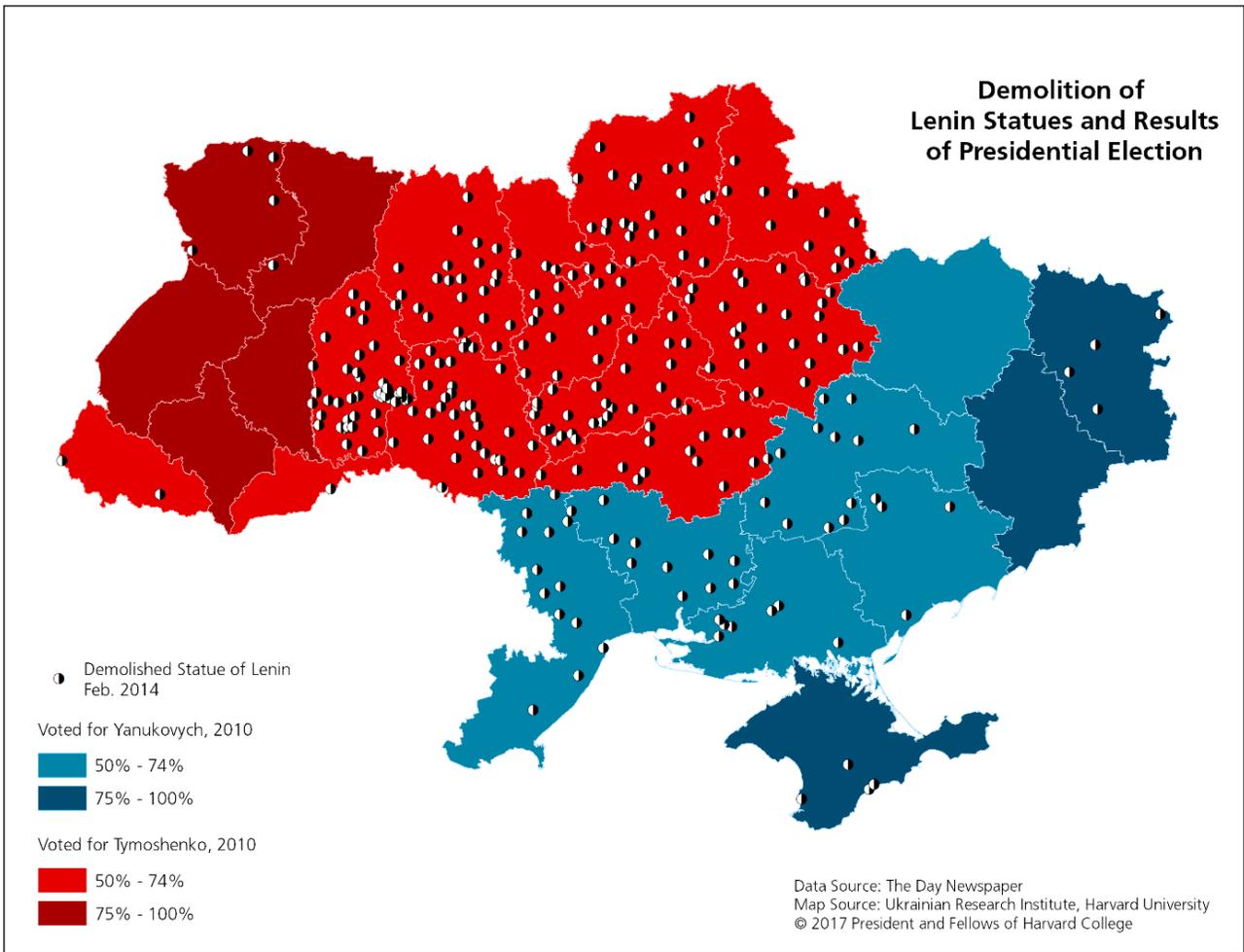
For the purposes of this discussion the regions marked on the map can be labeled West, Center, Southeast, and East, the latter being a composite region that includes the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of eastern Ukraine and the Crimean peninsula. Since we find this map and its regional divisions by far the most useful geographic tool for analyzing the data produced by the surveys, we shall use the four regional names just mentioned in our further discussion.

The Revolt of the Center

Let us now discuss the geographical dimensions of the Leninfall as it occurred between December 2013 and the summer of 2014, keeping in mind the map of the 2010 presidential elections.

Scholars and political activists in Ukraine have made several attempts to map the Leninfall. By far the best-known map, which takes in the period up to the end of February 2014, was produced by the newspaper *Den'* (The Day). The *Den'* map, reproduced below (Map 2), includes the monuments removed in the East—the Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine. The map leaves little doubt that the original Leninfall—the demolition of Lenin statues within the first few months after the fall of the Lenin monument in Kyiv—had a clear regional dimension.¹³

¹³ “Ikonoorafika. Padinnia vozhdia. Liutyi 2014 <<http://incognita.day.kiev.ua/infohraphics/padinnya-vozhdya.html>>.



The “eye” of the Leninfall “hurricane” is clearly visible in Ukraine’s Center, making significant inroads into parts of the Southeast. The virtual exclusion of the West from that map has a fairly simple explanation: most of the monuments there were demolished either in the months leading up to Ukrainian independence or in the first years of independence. The exclusion of the East—the Crimea and a good part of the Donbas—is a more complex phenomenon associated with the Russian annexation of the peninsula and the start of the hybrid war in eastern Ukraine. The lack of enthusiasm for demolishing Lenin monuments there is reflected in the results of the 2013 survey and, for non-occupied parts of Ukraine, in the surveys of 2015, as will be discussed below.

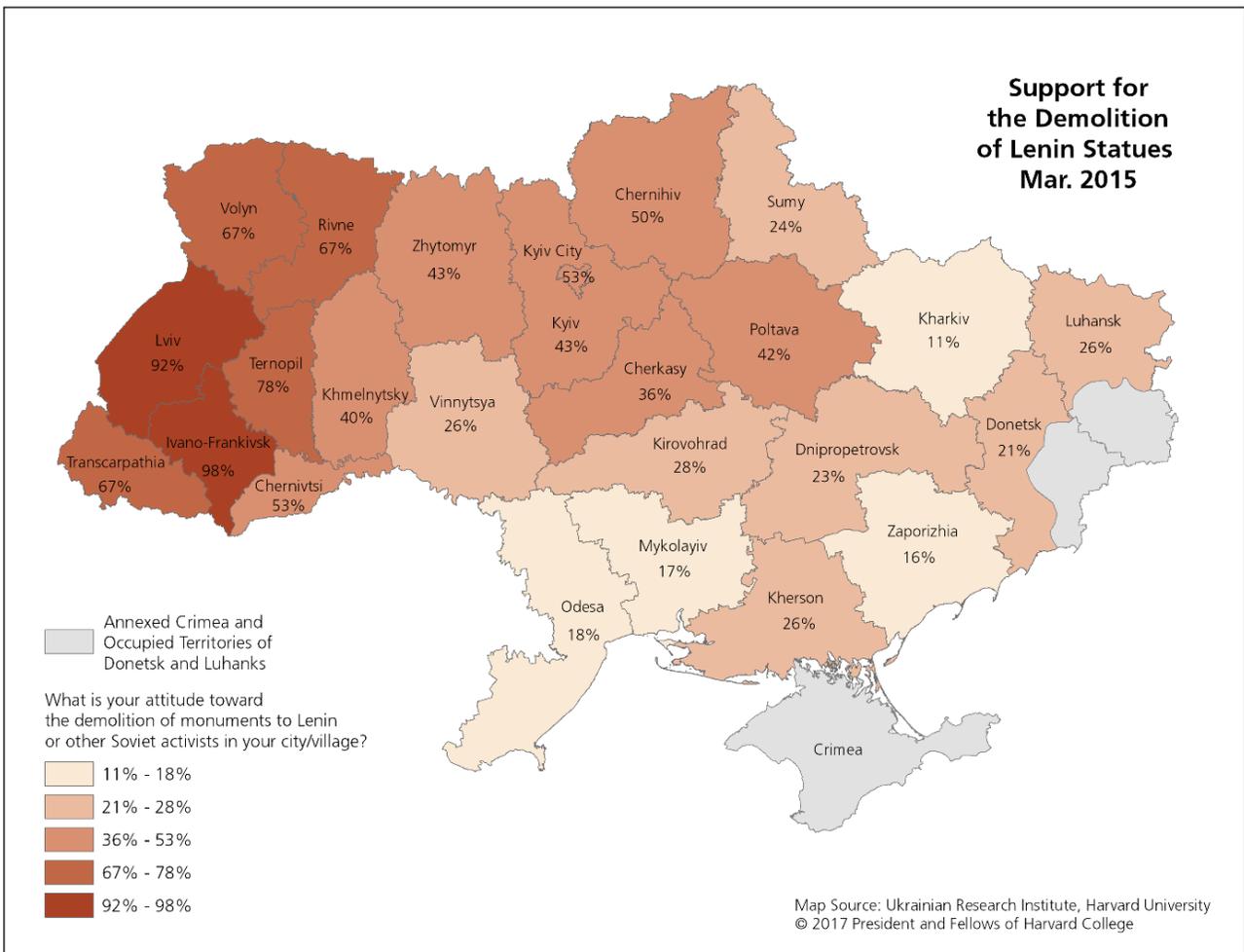
What happened in the Center in late 2013 and early 2014, and why did that macro-region emerge as the driving force of the Leninfall? Was a shift in the attitudes of the local population responsible for that change?

Our data from the March 2013 survey along with the research done by scholars in Ukraine suggest that even before the start of the EuroMaidan, support for retaining Lenin monuments in the Center was lukewarm at best. Kyiv oblast, where attitudes more or less reflected those of the Center in general, had 23 percent of respondents wishing to keep such monuments in their towns and villages. The strongest support for the status quo was registered in Poltava oblast, where 34 percent of respondents favored monuments to Lenin in their settlements. These figures set the Center apart from

both the West and the Southeast, its immediate regional neighbors. Ternopil oblast in the West had the lowest level of support in the entire country—no respondents at all—in favor of Lenin monuments. Odesa oblast in the Southeast had the country’s highest level of support, with 51 percent of respondents favoring Lenin statues.¹⁴

That was before the start of the Leninfall. The EuroMaidan, the Revolution of Dignity, and the outbreak of warfare in the East produced a major shift in the historical attitudes of the Center, sharply reducing enthusiasm for Lenin. In Kyiv oblast, support for Lenin monuments fell from 23 percent to 16 percent, while in Poltava it dropped from 34 percent to 10 percent, turning one of the most pro-Lenin regions in the Center into one of its most anti-Leninist.

MAP 3



Map 3 uses shades of color to show the level of support for the demolition of Lenin monuments in March 2015 (the more intense the color, the stronger the desire to get rid of Lenin) In the city of Kyiv there was a majority (53 percent) in favor of demolition, while Kyiv oblast was on par with Poltava oblast: in both cases, 42-43 percent of respondents favored demolition. Once again, the Center stood apart from the Southeast, where support for demolition did not exceed 28 percent of those

¹⁴ Haidai, *Kam'iany hist'*, pp. 102-132.

surveyed, with the lowest level of support (11 percent) registered in Kharkiv oblast. An important aspect of the Leninfall story that emerges clearly from Map 3 is that by March 2015, in terms of desire to rid itself of Lenin monuments, the Center had effectively joined the West to create a joint “Lenin-free” space in Ukraine.

For all its drama, the iconoclastic demolition captured by television cameras in Kyiv and elsewhere was not a sudden rupture in the Center’s narrative of memory but the culmination of a process that had begun earlier. In the course of the 1990s, close to 2,000 Lenin monuments had been demolished in the Western regions of Galicia and Volhynia. The process continued into the next decade, spilling over into the Center. In those two macro-regions more than 1,200 statues were removed in the 2000s. Compared to those figures, the Leninfall, which accounted for about 550 statues, was a rather modest development.¹⁵

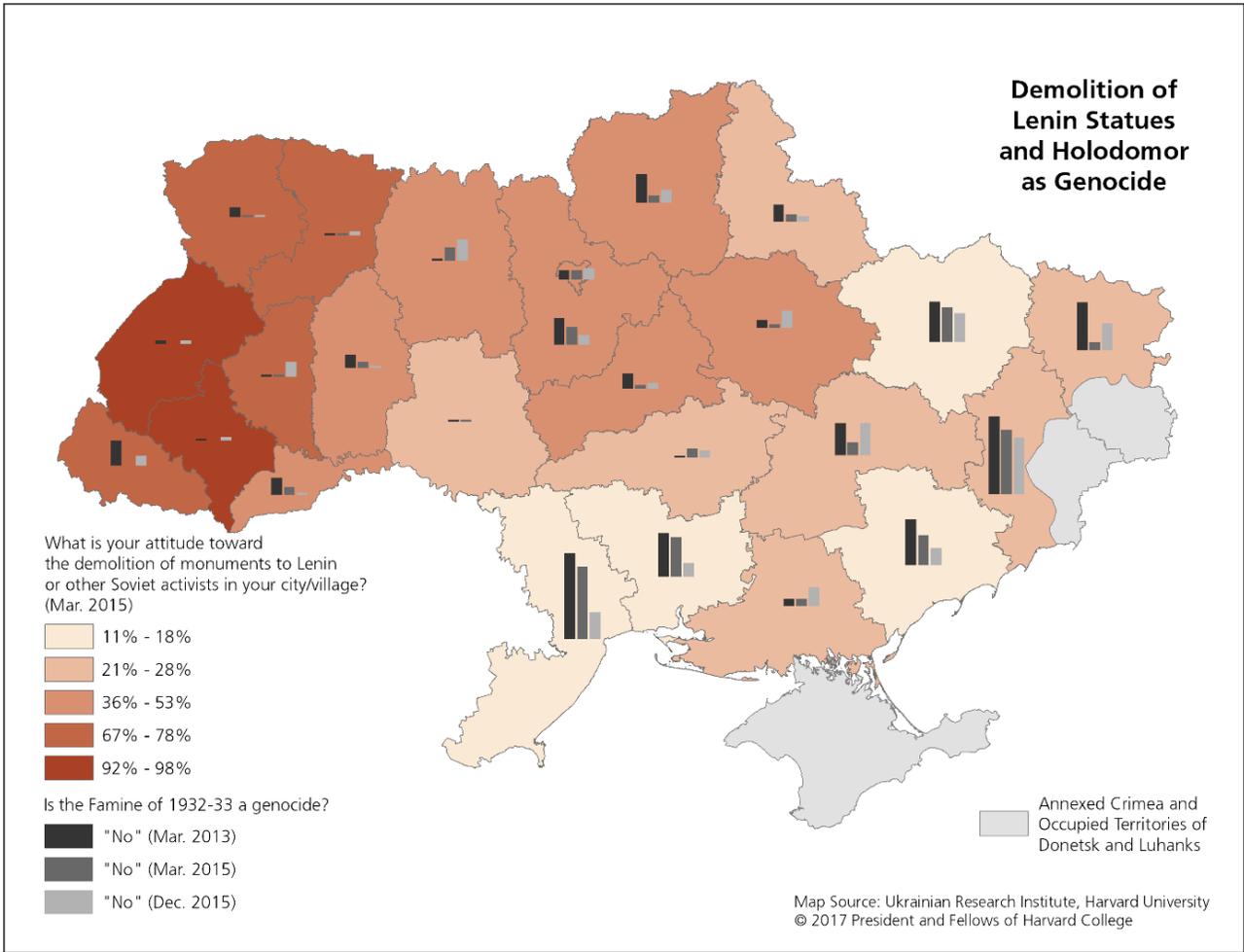
The 2013 and 2015 surveys, the first taken before the EuroMaidan, the second afterwards, allow one to suggest that the Center has joined the West in more than the rejection of Lenin and communism. Obscured by the drama of the demolition was the culmination of a process whereby, in the minds of the population at large, Soviet-era mythology was replaced with elements of the Ukrainian national narrative, which represented Ukraine as a major, if not the principal, victim of the Soviet regime. Since the Orange Revolution of 2004, that narrative has come to include the interpretation of the Holodomor, or the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33, as an act of genocide perpetrated by the communist regime in Moscow against the Ukrainian people. Although the Ukrainian parliament voted in 2006 to recognize the Holodomor as an act of genocide, the issue soon became contested, as Russia mounted an international campaign against the genocide interpretation of the Famine, while President Yanukovich, elected in 2010, dropped the reference to genocide from his official pronouncements.¹⁶

President Yanukovich’s change of rhetoric does not appear to have had much impact on attitudes toward the Holodomor in the Center, where, as shown on Map 4 below, the majority continued to regard it as an act of genocide. That map shows the percentage of respondents who rejected the interpretation of the Holodomor as genocide in March 2013, March 2015 and December 2015. The level of denial is shown by columns, while the color map in the background indicates levels of support for the demolition of Lenin monuments in March 2015.

¹⁵ Pavlo Podobied, “Vid Leninizmu do Leninopadu,” *Radio Svoboda*, December 30, 2014
<<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26770232.html>>.

¹⁶ “Yanukovich: Famine of 1930s was not genocide against Ukrainians,” *Kyiv Post*, April 27, 2014
<<https://web.archive.org/web/20140724173055/http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/yanukovich-famine-of-1930s-was-not-genocide-again.html>>.

MAP 4



As may be assumed on the basis of this map, as early as March 2013 the Center was forming a common memory space with the West when it comes to the popular attitude toward the Holodomor and, by extension, toward the overall record of the communist regime. This trend gained new impetus with the EuroMaidan, with a further decline of naysayers in March 2015. The adoption of the decommunization laws in April of that year produced a slight rise in the numbers of naysayers in the Center and even in some parts of the West but did not change the overall picture: the West and Center stood together in recognizing the Holodomor as an act of genocide. The number of skeptics was already low in March 2013. In Chernihiv oblast, for example, they declined from 15 percent in March 2013 to 4 percent in March 2015 and a slight rise of that number to 7 percent in December of that year did not change the overall picture.

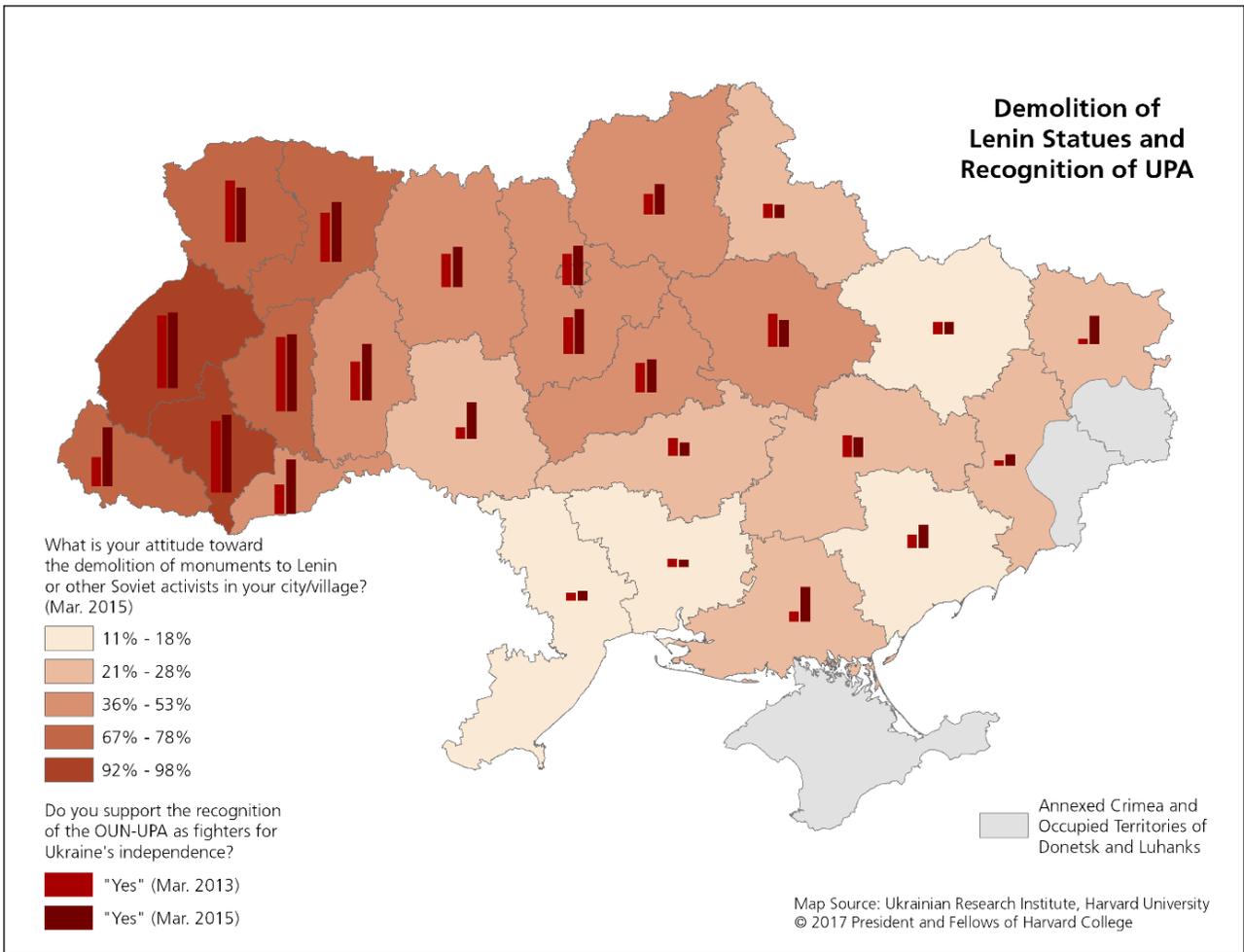
That interpretation of the Holodomor set the West and Center apart from the Southeast, where in December 2015 the naysayers, while not constituting a majority, still showed significant strength. Their percentage was highest in the Ukraine-controlled areas of Donetsk oblast, reaching 30 percent of respondents. The decommunization laws revealed the difference between the attitude toward the Holodomor in the combined Center-West and Southeast, reducing the number of naysayers in the

Southeast and slightly increasing it in the Center and West. The two memory spaces were clearly marching to different drums.

The common memory space of the West and Center was formed not only by the rejection of the communist regime and the condemnation of its crimes but also by the joint adoption of elements of the new nation-based historical discourse. The significant element here is the popular attitude toward the fighters of the UPA—the World War II-era nationalist-led Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which has been a hot-button issue in Ukrainian politics since 2004. The UPA, whose soldiers are as much praised for their resistance to the communist regime as they are criticized or even vilified for participation in the ethnic cleansing of Poles, fought in the western regions of Galicia and Volhynia and has been part of the living memory of the local population. Those living in the West saw the UPA condemned under the Soviet regime and celebrated during the years of independence. The Center, which had no direct exposure to living memory of the UPA, has been slow to accept the relevant historical mythology as part of its own narrative.

This is one of the features of memory politics in Ukraine reflected by Map 5. Its shades of color show levels of support for the demolition of Lenin monuments, while its columns show varying degrees of support for the proposed official recognition of UPA soldiers as fighters for Ukrainian independence. Ternopil oblast, the West's leader in terms of anti-Leninist sentiment, also led in acceptance of the pro-UPA narrative. Support for the recognition of UPA soldiers as fighters for Ukrainian independence increased there from 94 percent in 2013 to an overwhelming 98 percent in 2015.

MAP 5



Map 5 also shows that in enthusiasm for the UPA, the Center has been catching up with the West, and the EuroMaidan produced a boost in that regard. In March 2015 more respondents were in favor of the UPA in the Khmelnytsky region in the Center than in Volyn (Volhynia) oblast in the West: 72 percent vs. 69 percent. Support for UPA recognition increased most dramatically in Transcarpathia, where it grew from 37 percent to 75 percent of respondents. In Kyiv oblast the rise in support was less dramatic but increased from 47 percent to a majority of 57 percent. While support for the UPA had been negligible in the Southeast before the EuroMaidan, it grew in that region as well, especially in oblasts affected by the Russo-Ukrainian war: in Luhansk from 7 percent to 35 percent and in Kherson from 13 percent to 44 percent of respondents—still quite low in comparison to the Center.

Thus the Leninfall is best understood as the culmination of a relatively long process fueled by two parallel developments—the condemnation of communist crimes and the acceptance of a nationalist alternative to the communist historical narrative. Both developments began in the West in the 1990s and made inroads into the Center in the 2000s. The creation of a common West-Central memory space was sealed in symbolic terms by the public toppling of the Lenin statues, but it had begun to develop in the decades following Ukrainian independence and the Orange Revolution of 2004.

The maps reproduced above indicate that the memory shift that brought the West and Center together also highlighted differences in historical attitudes between the Center and the Southeast. Under the influence of the EuroMaidan and, especially, the Russo-Ukrainian war, the Southeast began to move closer to the Center in condemning the crimes of the communist regime but in many ways remained outside the new common West-Central memory space. Few things better demonstrated the memory gap between the West and Center on the one hand and the Southeast on the other than the hundreds of Lenin monuments still standing in prominent public spaces in the Southeast after the triumph of the Leninfall in the Center in 2013–14. But there the change was coming as well.

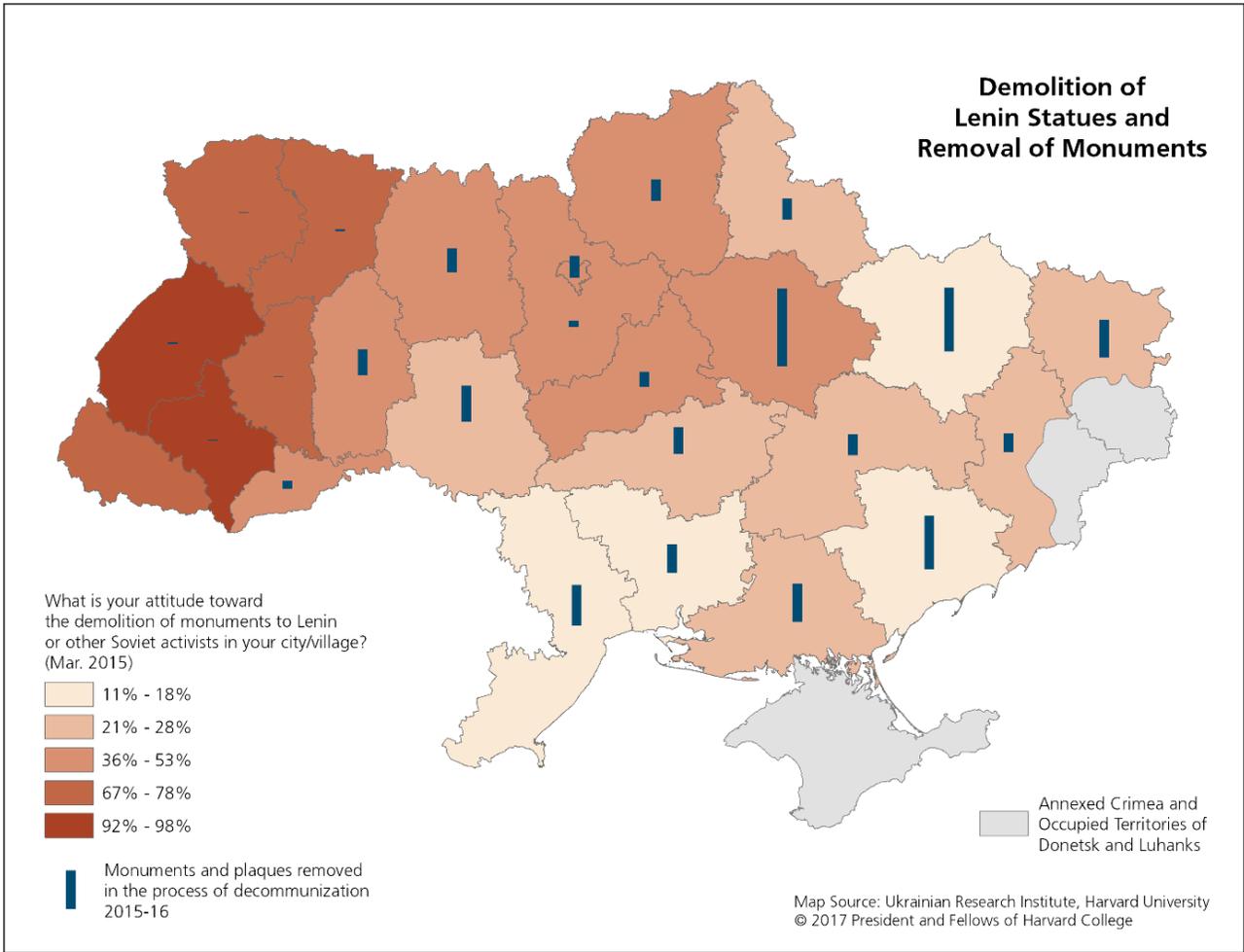
The Center Rules: The Decommunization Laws

The “Southeastern” chapter in the history of the Leninfall began in earnest in May 2015, when President Poroshenko signed the decommunization laws. Adopted by parliament in the previous month, those laws decreed the removal not only of Lenin monuments but also of all forms of commemoration of historical figures and events associated with the communist regime. One of the laws bestowed on UPA soldiers the symbolic status of fighters for Ukrainian independence.¹⁷

As the local authorities began to implement the new laws, they put to shame the activists of the original Leninfall, removing 1,320 monuments and statues by January 2017, more than double the number of those eliminated in 2013–14. With the Center already cleansed of most of its Lenin monuments and statues, the brunt of the new policies was borne largely by the Southeast, where support for such demolition was significantly lower than in the Center. The data from the March 2015 survey, taken only a month before parliament’s adoption of the laws, highlights the differences between the two macro-regions. If in Kyiv and Poltava oblasts of the Center support for demolition was about 42 percent, in Kharkiv oblast of the Southeast it stood at only 11 percent, not significantly lower than in Odesa, where 18 percent of respondents supported demolition. Even in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, the center of Ukrainian mobilization at the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014, support for the removal of Lenin monuments did not exceed 23 percent.

Map 6 combines data on attitudes toward the demolition of Lenin monuments (shown, as on previous maps, in shades) with data on the number of monuments and plaques to communist leaders removed as a result of the decommunization laws (represented by blue columns). The map leaves little doubt that with the curious exception of Poltava oblast, most of the remaining monuments and plaques were demolished or removed in 2015 and 2016 in the Southeast of the country, where support for demolition had been lowest before the adoption of the laws.

¹⁷ The decommunization laws provoked debate among Ukraine-watchers and produced a significant literature, including the following: Volodymyr Viatrovykh, “Dekomunizatsiia i akademichna dyskusiiia,” *Krytyka*, May 2015 <<https://m.krytyka.com/ua/solutions/opinions/dekomunizatsiya-i-akademichna-dyskusiya>>; David Marples, “Decommunisation in Ukraine: Implementation, Pros and Cons,” *New Eastern Europe*, September 16, 2016 <<http://neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/2126-decommunisation-in-ukraine>>; Oxana Shevel, “Decommunization in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: Law and Practice,” PONARS Eurasia, January 2016 <<http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/decommunization-post-euromaidan-ukraine-law-and-practice>>.



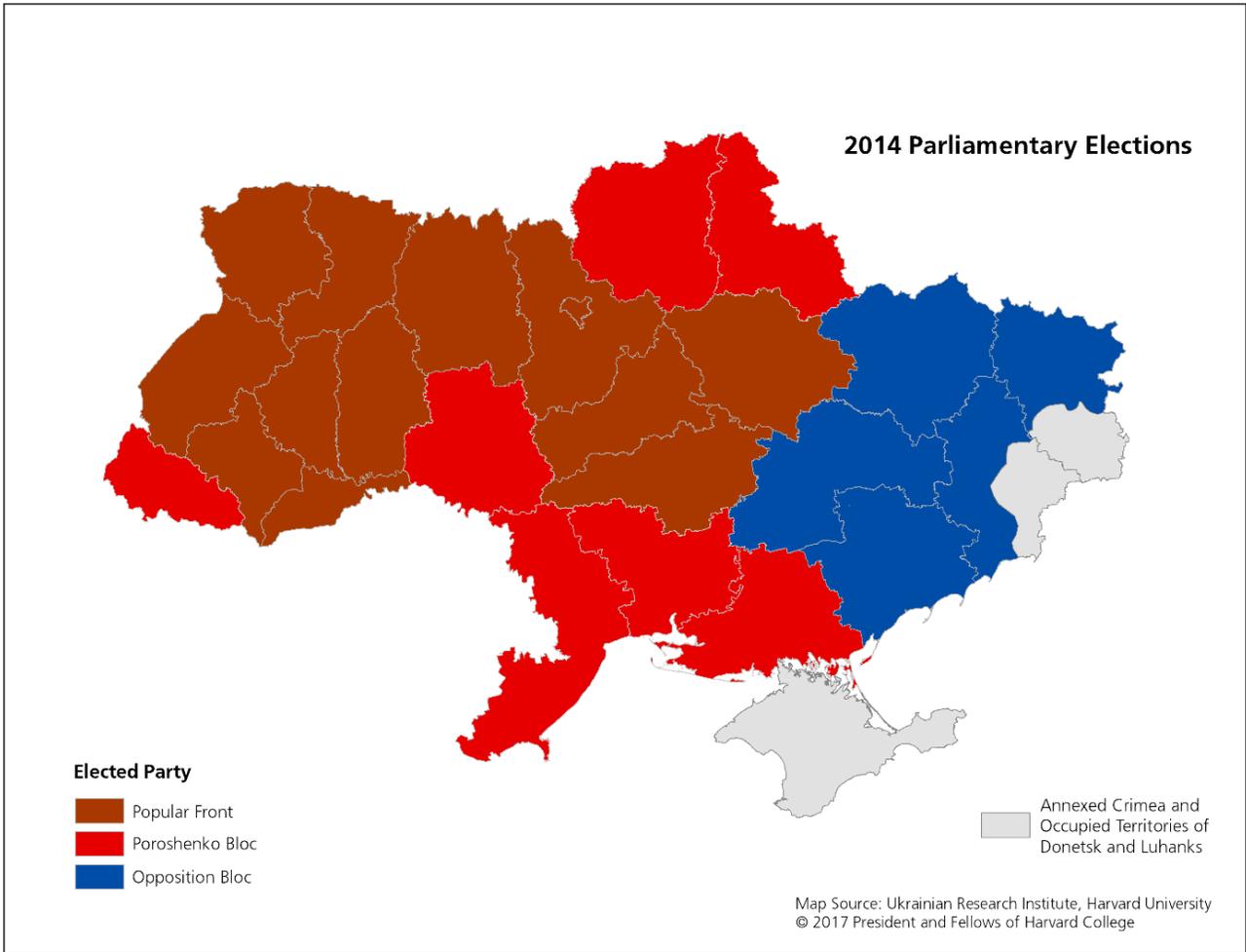
Why did the parliament pass and the authorities in the Southeast accept and duly implement laws not favored by the majority of the local electorate? The main explanation lies not in the EuroMaidan, which triggered the original Leninfall, but in the outcome of Russia’s aggression, which dramatically changed the political map of Ukraine. Here it is useful to return to the map of the 2010 presidential elections. According to it, the Ukrainian electorate was split down the middle, with the blue areas electing Viktor Yanukovich with approximately 49 percent of the overall vote, while the orange areas supplied the lion’s share of the 46 percent of the overall vote received by Tymoshenko. Thus the voting power of the two halves of Ukraine, West and Center against Southeast and East, was approximately equal. But the annexation of the Crimea and the hybrid war in the Donbas removed the East—the Crimea and the most populous parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts—from Ukrainian political space, dramatically reducing the voting power of the “blue” areas of the country.

Electoral politics were soon translated into the politics of memory. In the October 2014 parliamentary elections, parties based mainly in the West and Center received 68 percent of the national vote, reducing the Opposition Bloc, based exclusively in the Southeast, to a mere 10 percent of the vote. Map 7, which shows the results of those elections, reflects the new political reality. It represents the oblasts that elected candidates of the pro-presidential bloc (dominated by local administrators, business elites, and center-right pragmatists) in red; Prime Minister Arsenii

Yatseniuk's Popular Front (dominated by national liberals) in dark red; and the Opposition Bloc, led by former members of President Yanukovich's administration, in blue.¹⁸

¹⁸ For lists of deputies who voted for and against the Law of Ukraine on the Condemnation of the Communist and Nazi Regimes, see the records of the Ukrainian parliament at http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/radan_gs09/ns_golos?g_id=1427.

MAP 7



In the crucial vote on the decommunization laws in April 2014, the Opposition Bloc deputies refused to support the legislation. But their support was not needed, and their opposition could be ignored, as 69 of the 82 Popular Front deputies voted in favor, as did 106 of the 146 members of Petro Poroshenko’s bloc. The greater number of defections in the president’s camp than in the prime minister’s might be explained by the fact that, unlike in the Popular Front, many of the president’s allies came from the Southeast, including the Odesa region, where support for demolition did not exceed 18 percent of those polled in March 2015. If the Leninfall in the Center was prompted from below, in the Southeast it proceeded from above.

While the population of the Southeast was not eager to get rid of Lenin, it also had no desire to fight in order to preserve him. One possible reason is that the demolition was carried out by the local authorities in a lawful and orderly manner. Another reason was that, as indicated by Map 4, which shows the change of attitudes toward the Holodomor, the Euromaidan helped move the Southeast closer to the historical narrative accepted in the Center, a tendency reinforced and solidified by the decommunization laws. The most striking decline of skepticism toward the interpretation of the Holodomor as an act of genocide was registered in Odesa oblast, where the number of naysayers fell from 45.0 percent in March 2013 to 38.0 percent in March 2015 and then to 14.0 percent in December 2015.

The “Lenin-free space” dramatically expanded by the decommunization laws has been defined in memory terms by a growing rejection of the Soviet-era historical narrative, but there is no consensus on the narrative that should replace it. While the Southeast partakes in the national interpretation of the Holodomor with the Center and the West, it is reluctant to accept the heroization of the UPA fighters emanating from the West, which has made significant inroads in the Center. Between 2013 and 2015 there was growing recognition throughout Ukraine of the UPA soldiers as fighters for Ukrainian independence, but the numbers in the Southeast are minuscule as compared with those in the other two other macro-regions (see Map 5). If in Kyiv oblast such recognition increased from 47 percent to 57 percent, in Odesa oblast the increase was more modest, growing from 10 percent to 15 percent of the respondents. In Kharkiv oblast the level of support remained at 15 percent, and in Dnipropetrovsk oblast the number actually decreased from 28 percent to 25 percent of those polled. Decreased support was also registered in Kirovohrad oblast in the Center.

The King is Dead

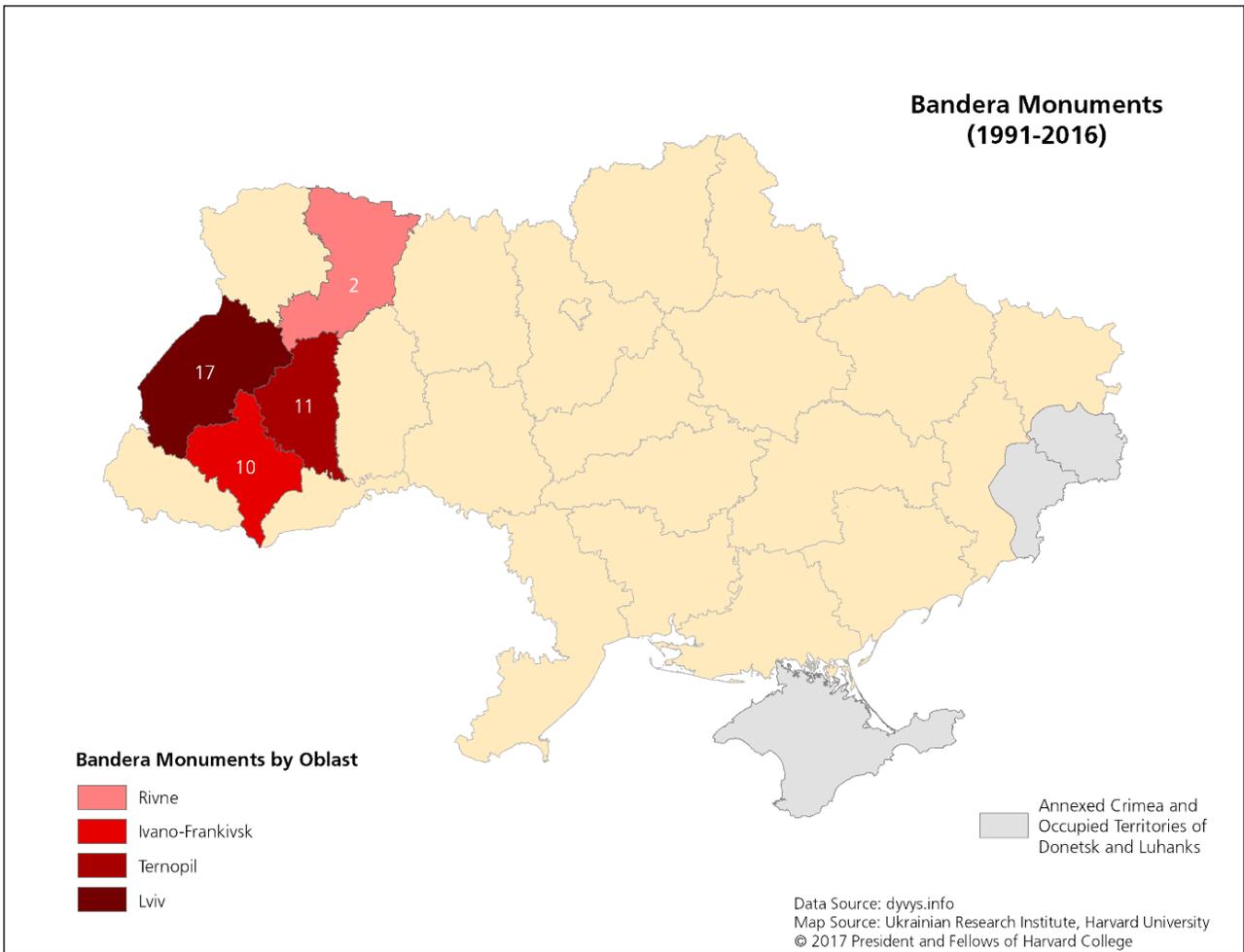
“The king is dead, long live the king!” is a saying that can be applied only partially to the Leninfall both in the Center and in the Southeast of the country. Lenin, the king of the communist narrative, expired symbolically in the two successive waves of the Leninfall, his monuments toppled and his plaques removed, but his vacated central position in Ukrainian public space remains contested. One potential contender for the vacancy is Stepan Bandera, who emerged after independence as one of the country’s most celebrated historical figures. The most idolized figure by far is Taras Shevchenko, with 1,256 monuments and plaques. But Bandera seems to be the most celebrated political leader, with 40 monuments erected in his honor since 1990. As noted in the media, some of them reminded viewers of the Lenin monuments of the past.¹⁹

Is Ukraine indeed, as some argue, undergoing not only the decommunization but also the simultaneous “Banderization” of its historical memory and public spaces? Yes and no—here again, geography is the key. The Bandera cult and its reflection in the building of monuments is limited in geographic scope. As shown on Map 8 below, as of October 2016 all forty Bandera monuments were located in the West, most of them in three Galician oblasts. The Volhynia region, which was also part of the UPA theater of operations, had only two monuments in Rivne oblast, while Volhynia oblast had no monument at all.²⁰

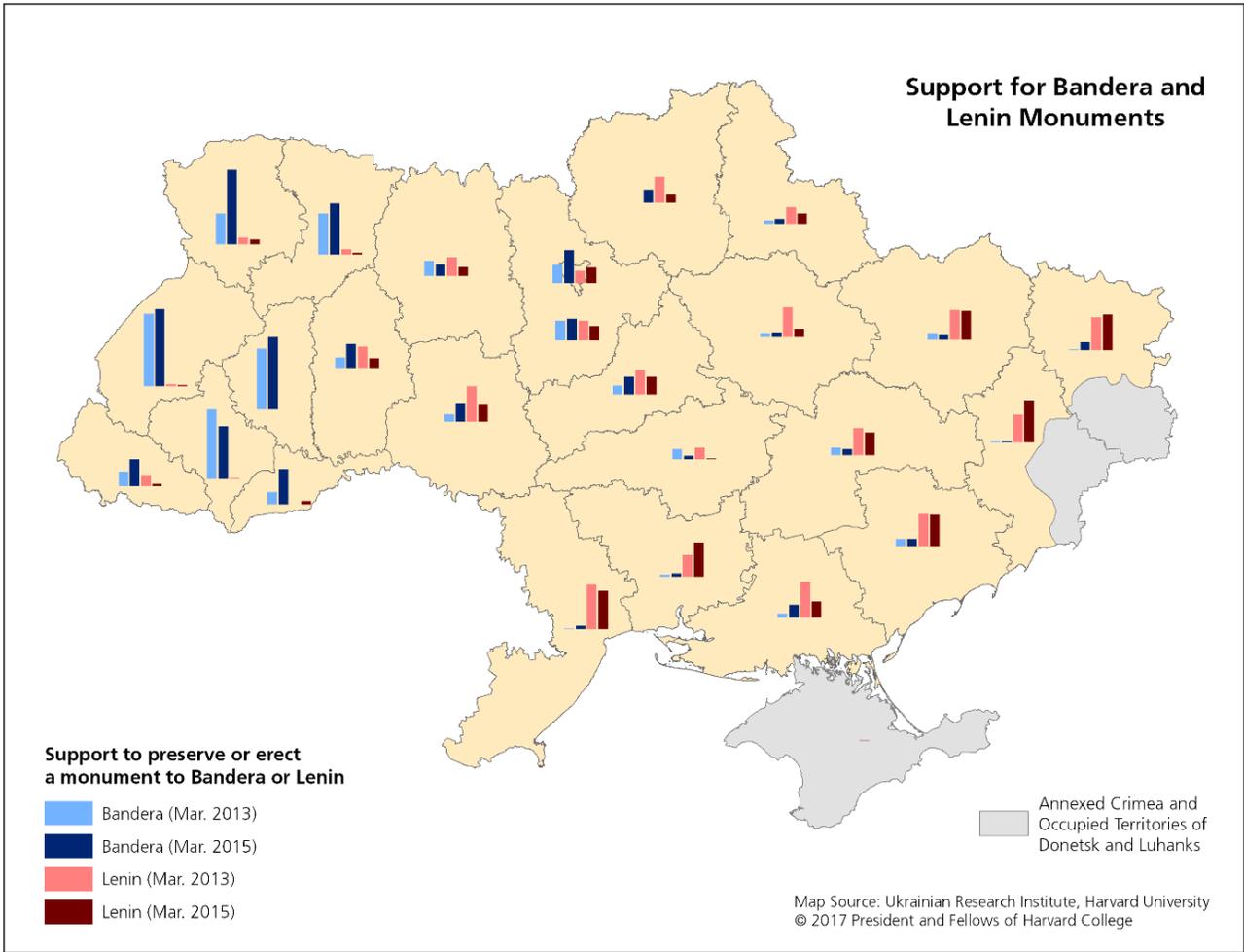
¹⁹ “Prykarpattia uviishlo u knyhu rekordiv Ukraïny za kil'kistiu pam'iatnykiv Shevchenku,” Radio Liberty, December 30, 2014 <<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26769910.html>>; “Pam'iatnyky Stepanovi Banderi,” <https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Пам_percent27ятники_Степанові_Бандері>; “P'iat' pam'iatnykiv Stepanovi Banderi, shcho naibil'she nahaduit' skul'ptury Lenina,” *Gazeta.ua*, December 8, 2009 <https://gazeta.ua/articles/people-and-things-journal/_pyat-pamyatnikiv-stepanovi-banderi-scho-najbilshe-nagaduyut-skulpturi-lenina/318953>.

²⁰ “Stalo izvestno skol'ko pamiatnikov Bandere v Ukraine,” *Apostrof*, October 15, 2016 <<https://apostrophe.ua/news/society/2016-10-15/stalo-izvestno-skolko-pamyatnikov-bandere-v-ukraine-opublikovana-infografika/74209>>.

MAP 8



Map 9 (below), and the data on which it is based, suggest that the situation will not change anytime soon. While there is an appetite for erecting more monuments to Bandera in Volhynia—a spike in that regard has been registered since the EuroMaidan in the “Bandera-free” Volhynia oblast—the drive is still limited to the West, while the Center and Southeast remain largely immune to the Bandera cult. Although support for the erection of monuments to Bandera (indicated by the blue columns on the map) increased throughout Ukraine between March 2013 and March 2015, it remains as low, or even lower, than support among opponents of the Leninfall for maintaining or rebuilding monuments to Lenin—the trend shown by the red columns on the map.



The decline of public support for Lenin monuments and the rise of support for monuments to Bandera is an all-Ukrainian phenomenon, with a few exceptions such as the city of Kyiv in the Center and the Mykolaiv region in the Southeast, where rising support for Bandera monuments occurred simultaneously with rising support for Lenin monuments. While in Kyiv, in March 2015, more people wanted a monument to Bandera than to Lenin (38 percent vs. 18 percent), respondents in the Sumy, Poltava and Kirovohrad regions in the Center still favored monuments to Lenin over those to Bandera. The Southeast produced no oblast preferring Bandera to Lenin, even though support for maintaining Lenin monuments had declined significantly between March 2013 and March 2015. In Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts more respondents wanted a monument to Bandera in 2013 than in 2015, but the numbers were very low to begin with. In the case of Kharkiv, they dropped from 8 percent to 6 percent of respondents, and in Dnipropetrovsk oblast from 9 percent to 7 percent.

When it comes to public support for monuments to Bandera, the Center finds itself in the same memory space as the Southeast, and both differ significantly from the West in that regard. The lack of enthusiasm for Bandera in the East and, partially, in the Center was confirmed by Volodymyr Viatrovysh, the director of the Institute of National Memory and one of the main sponsors, promoters and implementers of the decommunization laws. According to him, out of 51,493 streets renamed in

Ukraine when the laws were implemented, only 34 received the name of Bandera. With the number of demolished Lenin monuments standing at 1,320, only 4 monuments to Bandera were erected before January 2017. While the decision to get rid of communist symbols was made by parliament in Kyiv, the question of what new names to give the now “decommunized” cities, towns, villages and streets rested with the local authorities in the Center and Southeast of Ukraine, and Bandera clearly was not among the favorites there.²¹

Neither the Center nor the Southeast is rushing to replace one toppled political leader with another. That reluctance was already apparent after the demolition of the first Lenin monument in downtown Kyiv in December 2013. Back then, Ukrainian national and nationalist banners, as well as those of the European Union, were placed on the now empty pedestal to fill the void in the symbolically important public space. Kyivans interviewed for the St. Gallen project in early February 2014, a few weeks before the start of the actual Leninfall, were opposed to replacing Lenin with a monument to another political leader.

“In my personal opinion, that space should simply be sanctified for a long time, and a little chapel should be erected there or, I don’t know, a memorial to the victims of the Holodomor or of communist terror,” said one respondent. “I would not place anything there for now.... I think there should be a public discussion about whom to place, some national hero or national genius, or an artist or writer,” commented another Kyivan. Yet another respondent supported the idea of temporary installations in place of a permanent monument: “I liked the idea of one of the artists of establishing it as a kind of permanent monument. Giving an artist a month, say, to put up some kind of installation or sculpture there. It stands for a month and is then replaced by something else.” A floral installation at the base of the old pedestal became a temporary solution to the Kyiv monument problem in May 2017.²²

In September 2017, a petition was circulated about replacing the remnants of the monument with a fountain, while the top of the pedestal was decorated with the emblem of trident—the center piece of Ukraine’s coat of arms, Ukraine’s national blue and yellow and nationalist red-and-black banners. Radical opponents of the new, post-Yanukovich government attached a plaque to the pedestal commemorating two participants of the EuroMaidan who were killed by the secret service and police loyal to the new government after the Revolution of Dignity. One of those commemorated was a radical leader with alleged criminal connections, the other a Buddhist guru from the Donbas. The Soviet-era inscription citing Lenin’s words about a free Ukraine being possible only in union with the Russian proletariat still remained on the pedestal. With the Lenin statue gone, the pedestal had become an ideologically contested space. But the nature of the main debate had changed: it no longer concerned loyalty to Lenin or Russia but the future of Ukrainian nation.²³

²¹ “Banderyzatsii nemaie—Viatrovych krytykam dekomunizatsii,” *Gazeta.ua*, January 25, 2017 <https://gazeta.ua/articles/life/_banderizaciyi-nemaye-vyatrovich-krytykam-dekomunizaciyi/748417 >; “Pro ‘banderyzatsiiu’ til’ky fakty,” Volodymyr Viatrovych, Facebook post, January 16, 2017 <<https://www.facebook.com/volodymyr.viatrovych/posts/10208193515895091>>.

²² Interviews with Kyivans, February 2, 2014, University of St. Gallen University Project “Region, Nation, and Beyond: An Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Reconsideration of Ukraine.”

²³ Author’s observations from his visit to the monument site on September 16, 2017.



The Center and parts of the Southeast found a different solution to the problem posed by the remaining pedestals. In the city of Chernihiv, the surviving pedestal of the Lenin monument was

turned into a Ukrainian national shrine, with a poem by the early twentieth-century poet Lesia Ukrainka inscribed on it, and the trident, the central symbol of the Ukrainian coat of arms, painted in the blue-and-yellow colors of the Ukrainian national flag and augmented with the motto “Ukraine or death.” The pedestal became part of a public space dedicated to the heroes of the Heavenly Hundred—victims of the police shootings on the Kyiv Maidan in February 2014—and Ukrainian soldiers who died in the war in the Donbas, officially called an anti-terrorist operation (ATO). The square where the Lenin monument had stood was renamed the Square of the Heavenly Hundred. In Poltava and in the southern city of Kherson, pedestals of Lenin monuments were also turned into shrines to the Heavenly Hundred and soldiers of the ATO.

Thus, in many cities of the Center and parts of the Southeast, Lenin monuments are being replaced not with monuments to a single historical figure but with memorials to heroes of another rising cult—defenders of democracy in the Revolution of Dignity and defenders of Ukrainian independence and territorial integrity in the war with Russia. In urban centers of the East—parts of the Donbas recaptured by the Ukrainian army, where Lenin monuments were removed mainly by Ukrainian volunteer battalions fighting in the war—attempts to turn the remaining pedestals into shrines to the heroes of the Heavenly Hundred did not take root, and supporters of the pro-Russian rebels have taken the opportunity to cover the pedestals with anti-Ukrainian slogans and graffiti. In the West, where Lenin monuments were removed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the public spaces were reappropriated long ago, leaving little space in symbolically important city centers for memorials to the Heavenly Hundred.²⁴

Conclusions: The Catch-Up Game

The nationalist activists of the Revolution of Dignity, who began the Leninfall in November 2013 with the removal of the Lenin monument in Kyiv, achieved their immediate goal of cleansing Ukraine of monuments that embodied the Russocentric Soviet interpretation of Ukrainian history but failed to replace them with a hero or historical narrative of their own. While the public either supported or raised no objection to the toppling of the Lenin monuments, it refused to replace him with a new demigod, indicating a level of maturity in a society that is still emerging from Soviet-era authoritarianism. But that refusal also indicates another feature of the Ukrainian situation—the lack of a historical narrative and historical figures equally acceptable to all parts of the country. This is a task that Ukraine has yet to address in a variety of ways, including the process of reimagining and rededicating its public spaces.

Our spatial analysis of recent shifts in the historical attitudes of Ukrainian society indicates that region, in particular macro-region, remains a key component in the formation of the country’s new political and historical identity. The Leninfall of 2013–14 had a clear regional footprint marking the shift of historical memory in central Ukraine. The toppling of Lenin monuments in the Center was the culmination of a relatively long process of rethinking the recent and distant past, resulting in a new readiness to condemn the communist regime for its crimes, the rejection of Soviet and neo-Soviet historical narratives, and the ascription of greater value to past struggles for independence—a

²⁴ Data on the use of pedestals was collected by Viktoriya Sereda.

phenomenon reflected in the growing perception of UPA soldiers as fighters for Ukrainian sovereignty.

The toppling of Lenin monuments in the Center helped create a common memory space shared by the Center and West, where the monuments had been removed a decade or two earlier and the communist narrative replaced with a national or even a nationalist one around the same time. The creation of the common memory space was a catch-up process in which the shift of public memory matched the political shift that had occurred a decade earlier. The map of Ukrainian historical memory created by the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 finally became congruent with the political map of 2010, which reflected the political frontline that first emerged during the Orange Revolution of 2004. This interpretation of the origins of Ukraine's memory shift suggests the primacy of electoral politics over the politics of memory.

The revolt of the Center during the Revolution of Dignity not only altered the memory landscape of the region but also produced a major change in the politics of memory throughout the country. The combined political power of the Center and West enabled the two regions to impose their new consensus with regard to the rejection of communism on the Southeast, which was not only disoriented by the Revolution of Dignity and the ongoing hybrid war with Russia but also outnumbered in parliament because of the loss of the Crimea and the most populous parts of the Donbas. The Center thus became the lawgiver in the realm of historical memory politics. It also served as a moderator and creator of a new national narrative in which the pro-independence struggle represented by the UPA fighters was promoted, while nationalism as an ideology embodied by Stepan Bandera was rejected.

The story of the Leninfall provides new insights not only into the changing memory landscape of contemporary Ukraine but also into the country's profound political shift. The political consensus achieved in parliament on the issue of decommunization by deputies representing the West and Center, as well as the political decline of the Southeast, which lost its traditional allies from the Russian-occupied eastern parts of Ukraine, herald the end of the division of Ukraine into two virtually equal parts along the line established during the Yushchenko-Yanukovich elections of 2004 and replicated in the Yanukovich-Tymoshenko presidential contest of 2010. A new majority supported by the Yushchenko and Tymoshenko electorate—a conglomerate of nationalists and liberals united by the idea of a pro-Western political course—has emerged in Ukraine and shown its ability to define the country's domestic and foreign policy. As in memory politics, so in electoral politics the role of the Center has increased both as moderator between the West and Southeast and as generator of policies capable of uniting all parts of Ukraine.