



A Tale of Two Ukraines: A Postfunctional Analysis of Discourses of Integration in the Buildup to Euromaidan

Hamilton Price Phillips¹

¹American University, hp5376a@student.american.edu

Abstract

The Integrational crises do not necessarily arise from fissures resulting from policy failures, but often reveal previously unseen schisms. In the buildup to the Euromaidan crisis, historical left and right political splits in Ukraine were undercut by an entirely different, yet salient, concern: integration with Europe. In analyzing this reconstructive process of politicization, I draw from Hooghe and Marks' postfunctionalist theory of integration (2009: 3).¹ I conceptually distance myself from the two, however, by providing a discursive analysis of the process by which pro-European movements arose in similar circumstances to the authors' outlined conditions for politicization, yet resulted in an opposing outcome to their notably pessimistic outlook towards integration. Through this lens I attempt to understand the context of politicization in the Ukrainian integration crisis. In examining both European and Russian discourses within Ukraine, I uncover the role that systems of exported intellectual power served to both create and reimagine what Ukrainian integration could (or could not) look like. In doing so, I introduce a new direction that postfunctionalist discourse on European integration can take, removing the chains of essentialist disintegration to help guide further research on supranational integration.

Keywords: International Studies; Integration; Politicization; Postfunctionalism; Ukraine; European Union; Supranationalism

Postfunctionalism

In order to understand European integration, it is imperative to understand the political processes of constructing the European identity. Often, as Hooghe and Marks summarize, the constitutive 'production of Europe' takes place dialectically opposed to a constructed Other (2009: 2). Additional approaches to integration also meet this criterion. Functionalism, the *modus operandi* for scholars of European integration throughout the 20th century was, as the authors argue, first established with an eye toward the long-standing relationship between the European bureaucracy and economic elites, thereby creating the markings of a top-down identity (3). In effect, the introduction of a postfunctionalist lens to European integration

scholarship served to return political literature to the long-standing tradition of identity playing a foundational role in the political process, rooted in Plato's Republic (Gerson 2004: 305).

Even the outcomes of neofunctionalist projects, such as Schimmelfennig's and Sedelmeir's (2020) rational bargaining 'External Incentives Model,' understand their predication upon the whims of domestic politics and therefore the principles of politicization (817). It is important to note that using a postfunctionalist gaze to uncover the so-called 'politicization of Europe' does not necessarily lead to disintegration, though it can - and has (Schmitter 2009: 215). Even some functionalist scholars predicted the ascendance of politicization as a key paradigmatic mechanism to integration yet failed to predict how politicization could lead to disintegration (211). This oversight has led to a drastic reimagining of the functionalist community. Phillippe Schmitter, himself a 'card carrying neofunctionalist,' now acknowledges that docketed negotiated policy outcomes towards integration may not be even recognized by domestic politics (214). I use what Hooghe and Marks describe as 'refraction,' or the way that distinct historical trajectories reinscribe institutions and discourse surrounding integration, to understand the context of politicization that took place in Ukraine prior to Euromaidan.

In their historical examination of the discipline, Hooghe and Marks elicit three assumptions of functionalist scholars of European integration:

"First, the public's attitudes towards European integration are superficial, and therefore incapable of providing a stable structure of electoral incentives for party positioning. Secondly, European integration is a low salience issue for the general public (in contrast to its high salience for business groups), and therefore has little influence on party competition. And, thirdly, the issues raised by European integration are sui generis, and therefore unrelated to the basic conflicts that structure political competition."

By using these three assumptions as quasi-positivist 'tests,' I can determine whether a postfunctionalist approach is appropriate when inspecting Ukraine. These tests are in the Ukrainian Politicization of European Ascendance section.

Ukraine and Euromaidan

Since 1991, Ukrainians have held pessimistic outlooks about their economic future, unchanging during varying levels of Russian or European involvement in the economy. During this time, Ukrainian discourse on European integration primarily surrounded identity, namely the concept of 'European Unity,' rather than the economic benefits of integration (European Commission 1996). Given the socio- and geopolitical developmental statuses of Ukraine in the 1990s in comparison to Western Europe, this discourse would reject the predictions of all various branches of functionalism. That's not to say, however, that functionalist predictions fail to explain any integrational phenomena; Hungary and Poland shared similar discontents with their future economic outlook yet emphasized economic benefits of European ascendance and ultimately joined the European Union in 2004 (1996). Moreover, it has been argued that historical Ukrainian national identity directly relates to their integration with Russia and Europe, drawing from their peripheral position in the world system (Larrabee 2003: 89). Following this narrative, Himka (2006) constructed typologies of Ukrainian identity from historical context surrounding the numerous foreign rulers of Ukraine in the past 300 years, possibly mapping out more effective greater explanatory devices than what an economic incentives model would show. (484).

Initially arising out of postcolonial studies, a fair amount of contemporary discourse on Ukraine surrounds the constructed tautology of 'Two Ukraines,' notably put forward by Mykola Riabchuk. Jaroslav Hrytsak (2015) summarizes Riabchuk's argument by mapping the historical Ukrainian national identity as twofold: a 'first' Ukraine and a 'second Ukraine,' split respectively between a Russian-speaking post-Soviet sphere and a Ukrainian-speaking 'European' sphere (35). When closely examined, however, Riabchuk's analysis has come under question. As Hrytsak explains, there are immediate tangible problems with the 'Two Ukraines' theory- namely surrounding the geopolitical mapping of such a line (39). While Donbas and Galicia, the respective centers of each hemisphere, are clearly oppositional today in their political preferences towards Russia or Europe, Hrytsak argues that both are exceptions rather than generalities due to irreconcilable differences within each sphere (40).

To put in perspective the school of contemporary Western thought wherein the dichotomy of the 'Two Ukraines' first arose, polemicist Samuel Huntington described Ukraine in *Clash of Civilizations* as "a classic case of a state divided by civilizational conflict" (Huntington 2011). In a criticism of Huntington, Hrytsak points out that Huntington and Riabchuk fail to recognize nuances of governance that both Europe and Russia practiced during their ruling periods of Ukraine in producing the hybridity of Northwest and Southeast Ukraine (Goble 2016). For example, during its time in control of Galicia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire left the Galicians so neglected that it was called 'the poorest in Europe' at the time (Davies 2005, 106). While the near 200- year European rule over Galicia has led some historians to connect the two today, Hrytsak (2001) points out that the pain felt at the hand of the Hapsburgs gave the Galicians, the home to Hasidic Jews, a point of distaste towards both Central Europe and Poland who had failed to come to their aid (168).

Ultimately, the inscribed dichotomy is not found in sociopolitical or economic queries but is primarily guided by power balances in the region. In Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, President Putin was said to have understood Ukrainian identity as a clear binary waiting to be exploited, thereby expecting Ukrainian norms and values to neatly follow the two possible political allegiances (Jordan 2017).ⁱⁱ Goble (2016) describes this Russian understanding of Ukrainian identity as the *casus belli* and *lus ad bellum* for the Russian invasion, as well as the ultimate general failure of the Russian Spring; why '...the civilizational line of Huntington passes not along the Zbruch but coincides with the line of the front between Russian forces and Ukrainian ones.' Huntington and Putin both demonstrate the role of actors tied to external and tangible systems of power have played as ultimate arbiters of Ukrainian identity since 1991, continuing to guide political discourse even domestically.

Regardless, the popularized dichotomous perspective of Ukraine has not failed to produce three multidimensional semiotic conflicts across Ukraine beyond the breadth of economic preferences of varying interest groups today. Horizontally, the 'Twenty-Two Ukraines' identified by Hrytsak continue to demonstrate underlying cultural and linguistic schisms that are too often catalogued as between the pro-Russian and Ukrainian groups. There is vertical conflict between varying schemas of identity in Ukraine along lines of international power, displayed by Hrytsak's staunch and unrelenting criticism of Huntington's analysis and understanding of Ukrainian sectarian politics. Finally, the artificial and often violent application of a Northwest/Southeast dichotomy has directly led to materially visible horizontal conflict along the so-called 'Huntington line' since 1995. This research examines the artificial top-down development of identity and how it could have built the politicization of Ukrainian accession into

the European Union, thereby eventually providing the necessary conditions for the Euromaidan protests.

Ukrainian Politization of European Ascendance

As discussed earlier, it is important to test theories of politicization on specific cases to determine the role that domestic, consensus-built politics play on integration. The three tests are introduced in the Postfunctionalism section.

First, as Eijk and Franklin (2004) argue, politicization of the European Union has continuously entrenched itself within European media and politics in regions proximate to Europe in recent years, and Ukraine embodies this trend (32-50). Both the a priori framing of Ukrainian-European integration and a posteriori depiction of the Euromaidan protests were predicated upon a preconceived sociopolitical split in Ukraine. This simultaneously reinscribed the European Union as both a valid international actor and ascendance as an achievable political goal. Because integration into the European Union was widely contrasted to the alternative of closer ties with Russia, of which Ukrainians had experienced recently before, positivist claims to the imaginable and now-plausible potential of European integration were further validated. In fact, van Middelaar (2016) argued that the buildup to the Euromaidan protests (which were driven by politicization in the first place) continued to exponentially politicize Ukrainian integration due to the media-driven crisis narrative alongside the academic construction of Ukraine as socially split between Russia and Europe (496). The European Union itself furthered this dialectic narrative, simultaneously legitimizing themselves and Russia as permissible actors in Ukrainian politics by providing an ultimatum to Ukraine to join either their Association Agreement or Russian Customs Union (Euronews 2013).

Second, while there is some truth about general relative discrepancies between the economic 'value' of European integration to the general public versus business groups, Evans and Norris (1999) point out that integration is not universally independent of domestic politics across all of Europe, with Ukraine not as an exception (207). Both authors provide current voting trends across Europe as examples of decisive votes determined on European grounds (220). Following such trends, and as will be seen later, politicians in the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian legislature, increasingly began to frame their foreign policy (particularly on trade) as being clearly either pro-Europe or pro-Russia.

Hix (1999) also shows that it is rarer to find legitimate sui generis European politics than it is to recognize their dimensional recurrence elsewhere (85). This is a metric, however, where Ukraine necessarily takes a normative shift from other European politicization. Politicization of European integration from within the European Union naturally adopts vastly different paradigms and dimensions to those outside of it, as Ukraine does not comfortably fit within the literature on sub-European Union multi-level governance. That is not to say that discourse on Ukrainian integration is sui generis. Prior to and immediately following the Euromaidan movement, Ukrainian discourse on European integration was cast dialectically in respect to Russia- both European and Russian identities in Ukrainian politics depended on the other to exist. Because Russia as a relevant actor had existed in Ukrainian politics, society, and literature for over 1000 years, the existence of the European Union as an oppositional, yet powerful polity was validated through the preconceived heuristics that Ukrainians had developed for Russia years before.

While Ukrainians have been leveling discontents with the material conditions provided by their government since the fall of the Soviet Union, domestic discourse on Ukrainian integration with the European Union has primarily surrounded the idea of a unified European identity rather than economic interests. According to the February 1996 Eurobarometer survey, the first of such to include Ukraine, Ukraine was the '...most pessimistic of all those in the CIS region surveyed: 41% expect a decline in their financial situation in 1996' (European Commission 1996). Nevertheless, this same survey found that Ukrainians were among the

most optimistic of CIS countries surveyed over a future relationship with the European Union, and that Ukrainians preferred integration with the European Union due to its 'European Unity' rather than any specific economic gains.ⁱⁱⁱ A national security-based approach of negotiated coordination, such as that advocated by Keohane (1982) and seen with the 1994 Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) and 2009 Eastern Partnership, fails to explain the lack of en masse popular demands for integration until 2013 (302-55).^{iv}

Neofunctionalist belief in integration through interconnected webs of economic interests, pragmatically represented by numerous EU-Ukraine free trade agreements penned since 1999, also failed to lead Ukraine to further integration with the European Union. Resulting from European policymaker efforts, greater economic ties between the European Union and Ukraine only nominally led to integration movements with the European Union (The Ukrainian Week 2013). It only took the second economic summit, held in Vienna in 1998, for the European Union and Ukraine to agree on a position vis-à-vis future ascendance into the European Union (European Commission 1998). The Vienna summit took place before the trade deals and liberalizing visa policies that have been at the center of political discourse between the two entities, yet the visible ascendance processes stalled prior to 2013. It is worth noting that the reluctant approach of the European Union to build discursive consensus on a 'plural and united Europe' did nothing to prevent politicization of the European identity in Ukraine, only allowing for external actors (here Russian and American political and intellectual elites) to ascend to key roles in the discourse (Sakwa 2015: 564).

Because discourse of Ukrainian integration into Europe stressed the unified European identity rather than economic gains from ascendance, all Ukraine needed for an ultimate decision on ascendance was the domestic politicization of the issue. The process of politicization prior to and during Euromaidan came in three initial steps:

1. Reification of the Northeast/Southwest binary.
2. Popularized comparisons between Ukraine and Polish development framed as result of Polish ascendance to the European Union.
3. Ukrainian political parties building platforms around support or opposition to European integration.

The Constructed Binary

Goble (2016) shows how the discursive dichotomy of Ukraine split between Northwest and Southeast led to such identities becoming materially over-scrutinized. This dynamic is demonstrated by the movement of the 'Huntington Line' along the front lines of the Russian and Ukrainian armies, despite the line being theoretically static. This process was initially slow and dominated by outside actors. However, the last five years have produced several notable Ukrainian politicians and academics that adhere to the strict tautology of the nation as either Russian (thus non-European) or European (thus non-Russian), thereby reinforcing the politicization of integration (Goble 2016).

Ukraine and Polish Comparisons

While recent Polish politics have been a headache for the European Union, Poland was often hailed as the success story of Eastern Europe from the early 2000s through the 2008 financial crisis (Schussel 2015).^v Academics and journalists praised Poland for its rapid post-Soviet economic and social reforms, as well as its commitment to European integration (though it has been argued, especially since the ascension of the Law and Justice Party, that the latter may have determined scholars' opinion on the former) (Johnson 2005: 63-84; Szeptycki 2016: 75-76). 'Ratings' published by international NGOs —namely the Polity Index and Freedom

House — matched this discourse (Katchanovski 2017: 28-30). These comparisons did not go unheard within Ukraine, as activists there have compared their contrasting economic and social standing to Poland as early as the Orange Revolution in 2004, despite both countries displaying similar desires for democratization (Szeptycki 2016: 63).

Politicization of Europe within Verkhovna Rada

Whether the origin story of the politicization process of Ukrainian ascendance arose from bottom-up politics or from politicians rhetorizing technocratic trade deals to the third estate, it is certain that the question of integration had become politicized within Ukraine in the five years leading up to the Euromaidan protests. Prior to 2008, all three significant political parties in Ukraine publicly stated their support for European integration (Caramani 2012). Even parties representing the Russian minority in Ukraine at the time, such as The Party of Regions, appeared ambivalent about European integration and buried opposition to ascendance deep into their party platform (Party of Regions Press Service 2013). This paradigm demonstrated a lack of politicization towards the question of European integration at that time.

By 2010, however, the transformation of European integration into a significant political question had become concrete. Repositioning their platform to a Eurosceptic position in 2010 following pressure from the right-wing Svoboda Party, The Party of Regions won elections for both the President (Yanukovich) and Prime Minister (Azarov) (UNIAN 2010). To form his government, Azarov built a new coalition across traditional ideological lines on the specific platform of a preference towards Russian integration over European. (BBC 2010; Whitmore 2007). Opposing coalitions were formed to match The Party of Regions' veracity in positioning over the question of European integration, thereby fully politicizing the issue.

Post-Politicization

Because I retroactively examine the now-concluded Euromaidan movement, it is possible for me to give a postfunctionalist analysis of how exactly politicization laid the foundation for the pro-integration protests. In the ten-year buildup to Euromaidan, the politicization of European integration visibly reached an inflection point. Although, as established before, politicization does not necessarily lead to integration, the process of implanting artificial Russian/European identities onto Ukrainian politics led to the certainty that some decision would be made over the then-pending Association Agreement. Now it is possible to examine two factors leading to the pro-European protests within the context of Ukrainian politicization of Europe. First, then-President Yanukovich's domestic reputation, already in question following his resignation as Prime Minister during the 2004 Orange Revolution, was further put into doubt due to his equivocations about European integration (Kintstler 2015; Reuters 2014). Although Yanukovich showed signs of willingness to comply with the demands of the EU and IMF early in the Association Agreement process, he and Azarov's eventual renege on the deal led to public demands for greater transparency.

Second, rhetoric used by the European media and outspoken members of the European Union raised the stakes even further outside of domestic Ukrainian politicization. For example, in 2013, then-President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso informed Ukraine that entering the Russian trade agreement would permanently void the docketed European Union Association Agreement. Zero-sum rhetoric such as Barroso's dramatically raised the stakes for Yanukovich and the pro-Russian faction in Ukraine, especially in the eyes of politicians and activists who had been campaigning actively for EU integration for nearly 20 years (Euronews 2013).

Conclusion

Attempting to explain causal factors behind the Euromaidan protests without first discussing the role of identity that laid the framework for such a visible schism in Ukraine risks leaving out key subtleties to the question. Just as there would be no European Union without a collective and semiotic idea of Europe, there would be no Euromaidan protest without collective ideas of what it means for a Ukrainian to recognize themselves as European (or Russian). In the scope of this research, I concede that I was unable to include coverage of the Eurosceptic, Russophobic, and far-right Ukrainian nationalist parties, such as Svoboda. This exclusion was based on my attempt to uncover the environment created by the reification of the 'Two Ukraines' model, wherein such a party (however significant) would sit outside of that paradigm. If anything, the existence and success of such a unique party in contemporary Ukraine can be understood as an additional critique of the 'Two Ukraines' model.

It is also important to consider the etymological importance of ascendance into the European Union. The meaning of ascendance and further European integration is not wholly predicated upon improvement of material conditions, though visible disparities between Ukraine and Poland certainly played a role in the early protests. European integration is a semiotic ideal, demonstrated by initial Ukrainian preferences of pan-European unity instead of resolving valid economic grievances. It is also worth noting that many such grievances have been addressed: since Euromaidan, the European Union and Ukraine have entered into numerous trade and security agreements, most notably the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. In addition, the European Union and Ukraine restarted a new Association Agreement in 2017. However, despite such accords providing many of the economic benefits of integration, pro-European protests continue into 2020, demonstrating the semiotic and etymological importance of full ascendance (Gotev 2019).

Some postfunctionalist scholars find it difficult to proscribe policy recommendations following a retroactive discourse analysis (Börzel and Thomas Risse 2009: 217-20). In my research, however, the scope can be expanded to examine similar narrative discourses across the world. Even at the core of Wallerstein's model, populist leaders are being elected along a general rejection of the Washington Consensus. The success of these often-authoritarian figures comes at a time when the European Union is entrenching itself further into its assumed role as a purely economic institution while consistently falling short of building significant non-economic 'pull factors' to potential members (Sakwa 2015: 564). Because the European Union has been so effective at reducing its own role to that of a financial institution, far-right Eurosceptics such as Nigel Farage, Victor Orbán, and the German AfD party have been able to broadcast their own constructed ideas of Europe, in their cases based on their ethnic perceptions of 'Europeanness.' Although these leaders' attempts at nation building have clearly been persuasive, there are other metrics or ideals that the European Union can foster Europeanization from an integrational perspective. As Schimmer (2009) says, '...collective identity is a variable — not a constant — and I foresee no reason to believe that Europeans will not be able to add a more comprehensive regional identity to all those that they already bear.' (215).

Notes

i. For further theoretical applications of how postfunctionalist identity could lead to EU disintegration, see: Frank Schimmelfennig, Ch. 6: "Theorizing Crisis in European Integration," taken from: Desmond Dinan, Neill Nugent, and William E. Paterson (eds.) *The European Union in Crisis* (Macmillan Education UK, 2017).

ii. For further information on Putin's belief in the Ukrainian identarian binary, see: Goble, "Huntington Profoundly Wrong about Ukraine, Kyiv Historian Says" and Hrytsak, "Rethinking Ukraine."

iii. In their previously cited work, Eijk and Franklin (2004) discuss both the future outlooks of identity in questions of European identity and the role of "Europeanness" in early European integration.

iv. The European Union has long considered their institutional role in identity making. For further reading, see: European Commission, "EU-Ukraine Relations Factsheet," Text, European External Action Service, June 10, 2020; European Commission, "PCA with Ukraine Enters into Force," Text, February 27, 1998.

v. For the role of European institutions on hailing Poland's success, see: European Commission, "Graph of the Week: Poland's Success Story," 2015.

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