The (Re)construction of Ukrainian Identity During Revolutions

by

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or purpose.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources have been acknowledged.

Anastasiya Byesyedina

This dissertation did not use any generative Artificial Intelligence tools in research or in any part of the preparation of this thesis.

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Dedicated to the people of Ukraine: to those who have fallen, and to those who continue the fight for freedom.

Abstract

Ukrainians define their identity on their own terms, an approach that has underpinned the Revolution of Dignity and continues to shape the ongoing resilience against Russian blatant aggression. This study focuses on investigating the pivotal role of revolutions – the 2004 Orange Revolution and particularly the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity – in mobilising the (re)construction of Ukrainian collective memory, education, and religion. Identity's malleable nature comes to light during revolts and exposes historical contestations that demonstrate Ukraine's contested identity. The process of identity formation is not flawless. Ukraine's case demonstrates the importance of embracing the "messy" process because it exposes moments of cohesion in nation-building. Statues, street art, school history textbooks and history classrooms, and sacred places capture Ukraine's attempts at reviving Ukrainian national distinctiveness, but not without contention. Guided by collected empirical data (photographs, interviews, school history textbooks), this dissertation utilises an in-depth approach (visual analysis, thick description, semiotic analysis) to investigating and analysing the role of civil society, elites, teachers, and religious actors in reshaping Ukrainian identity during and following revolutions. The findings in this study contribute to contextualising the source of Ukraine's bravery and resilience, which has captured global attention following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The Revolution of Dignity was a defining moment for many aspects of Ukrainian identity, including the presence of self-determination and resilience.

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Abbreviations

MESU: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

OUN: Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists

PSPU: Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine

ROC: Russian Orthodox Church

UAOC: Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church

UGCC: Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

UINM: Ukrainian Institute of National Memory

UNR: Ukrainian National Republic

UOCKP: Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate

UOCMP: Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate

UPA: Ukrainian Insurgent Army

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When Kyiv's graphite Lenin fell flat on his face at my feet, I could not help but wonder whether Ukraine's engagement with the Soviet past had come to an end and Ukraine's nationalism has found a new beginning. While my fingers lost all sense of touch in the sub-zero weather, I remember recording the transformed vicinity of Maidan Nezalezhnosti Square in the winter of 2013-2014 with excitement. Khreshchatyk Street was transformed into a camp ground of tents (Figure 1) and bonfires were lit by the central post office. Nearly slipping on the frozen coble road of Hrushevsky Street, I was struck by the burnt archways of Dynamo Stadium (Figure 2). Beyond them in the distance stood a wall of riot police, Berkut. My gaze then turned to two protesters who were catching their breath by the facade of a building whose walls were sprayed with graffiti stencils of Ukrainian writers. Wearing helmets and mismatched winter clothes, the men smiled as I took their photo (Figure 3). Lost in a crowd of thousands singing the Ukrainian hymn, I understood that the revolution around me meant significant change for Ukraine. Witnessing the events of the Revolution of Dignity inspired me to write my Honours thesis in 2016, and now, my doctoral dissertation.

Having moved to Kyiv from Sydney in June 2022 to be with my family, the majority of my dissertation has been written in circumstances of war. If I had remained in Sydney, the ethos of my dissertation might have been different than what it is now. These pages witnessed death and survived terror, blackouts, sleep deprivation, and demoralisation. While created in dire times, my work here is bound by relentless hope for survival and curiosity about Ukraine's national resilience. One of the first items that I continuously snatched before running to the underground metro shelter during every Russian air-raid assault has been the laptop on which this dissertation has been conceived. I speak of my dissertation as something with soul, an animate object, because it was the very "thing" that kept me sane and hopeful. During Russia's bombardments of Kyiv, which often followed electricity outages, I persistently saw my thesis as an effort worth saving, completing, and, most importantly, sharing. Living in a war-zone furthered my understanding of my dissertations' significance. Observing and witnessing Ukraine's ongoing will to survive Russia's invasion and blatant aggression has fuelled my motivation to research Ukrainian identity in a way that considers the Revolution of Dignity as the source of Ukraine's self-deterministic nature. In my quest to investigate Ukraine's journey of identity formation, I first looked to history.

Figure 1: Kyiv, Khreshchatyk Street (Byesyedina 2013).

Figure 2: Kyiv, Hrushevsky Street (Byesyedina 2013).

Figure 3: Kyiv, Hrushevsky Street protesters (Byesyedina 2013).

Ukraine's incohesive consolidation of identity

Historical legacies and experiences play a major role in shaping the course of cultural, economic, and political developments of post-communist countries (Hrytsak 2004 p. 231; Liber 2016). History has played a vital role in Ukraine's turbulent process of identity (re)construction. As flagged by Kravchenko (2015, p. 447), Ukraine is particularly sensitive to history due to the fact that its experience as a sovereign state was only ever periodic. Indeed, long periods of existence under the reign of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have led to considerable Russification in most of Ukraine (Reznik 2016, pp. 750-752), an experience which has hindered a cohesive (re)construction of identity. During the Soviet Union, Ukraine was one of the most Sovietised and Russified republics among other Soviet republics (Kravchenko 2015, p. 447) whose identity was exploited by the Soviet nationality policies in various ways (Kappler 2003). Furthermore, until the end of the Soviet era, attitudes toward Soviet rule and Ukraine's political status remained ambiguous, and Ukraine in general lacked the clear trajectory of other republics, like the Baltic states, towards separation from the USSR (Shevel 2014, p. 147). Ukraine has confronted obstacles of a "post-post-communist transition", one occurring after the initial phases of the post-communist transition, which have been carried out poorly on political, economic, and social fronts in the 1990s (Kubicek 2009, p. 324). National identity has been a source of intellectual and political elite agendas since Ukraine broke away from the Soviet Union (Korostelina 2013). While Ukraine gained independence in 1991, national identity did not consolidate in a similar way (Wilson 1997;

Hrytsenko 1998; Riabchuk 2000). Revolutions are sites where Ukraine's identity (re)construction process gains coherence.

While extensive and specific polling and survey data that pertains to the question of shifts in the cohesiveness in Ukrainian identity is largely unavailable, the data from the 1990s and 2020s aids in depicting a trajectory towards a form of cohesion. Survey results from 1991 captured Ukrainian students' views on the project of national rebirth as lacking in unanimity and intergration where their national values were not deeply ingrained; they were not predisposed to civic action; and they placed universal values above national ones (Harasymiw 2002, pp. 228-230). 20 years later, representative population survey from 2020 indicated that Ukrainian youth are more likely to exhibit greater potential for social cohesion explained by preference for the Ukrainian language, positive attitudes toward decentralisation reform, and a high degree of identification with the national, regional, civic, local, hromada, and European identity types (Deineko et. al 2025, p. 28). While the data limits the opportunity to make a clear generalisation, an overall shift nonetheless depicts a significant change in Ukrainian society. The value of national distinctiveness that plays a major role in consolidating Ukrainian identity has strengthened over time. A way of interpreting and understanding an explanation for this shift is to consider Ukrainian revolutions following 1991 independence.

Particularly, the Revolution of Dignity illuminates moments of national determination in shaping identity. While this dissertation does not investigate Ukraine from 2022 onwards, my research here is valuable in contextualising Ukraine's experience of national determination prior to the Russian full-scale invasion because it debunks Vladimir Putin's chauvinistic calculations of invading Ukrainian territory, which did not account for Ukrainian national resilience. Media discourses have characterised Ukraine's defiance of Russia's full-scale invasion since February 24, 2022, as an extraordinary and spontaneous spike in resistance (Collins & Spencer 2022; Hutchinson 2023) and even predicted Kyiv to "fall in 72 hours" (Carafano 2022). Ukraine's bravery against Russia's ongoing blatant aggression and invasion is undoubtedly commendable, however its determination for survival did not materialise overnight. While I argue that identity is fluid and Ukraine's experience of identity formation has been turbulent due to the problematic impact of historical events and the presence external forces, the Revolution of Dignity has been highly influential in revealing the self-deterministic nature of Ukrainian identity.

Before progressing with revision of scholarship on Ukrainian revolutions and identity, it is important to establish how the concept of nationalism and revolution are being used in this thesis. Nationalism is understood as a political phenomenon linked to the idea of self-determination or political autonomy (Anderson 1983; Anderson 2006; Breuilly 1993). A drive for self-determination

in the process of identity formation, which is contested. Self-determination is understood as a belief that people have a right to determine their own political future and development of freedom (Mill 1859). Revolution is defined as a process of mass mobilisation and the transformation of an existing regime. Particularly, in defining a modern revolution Arendt (1963) explains that it is a radical attempt to rupture with the past in the pursuit of freedom and a new beginning, often involving violence. Both revolutions, the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 experienced mass mobilisation where the regime was at stake. However, the latter experienced state violence and resulted in a radical ousting of government, and an effective expression of nationalism and national resistance.

The Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity

The Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 are events that have mobilised Ukrainian identity and are cases of central focus in this dissertation. Before examining the importance of these revolutions in Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction, it is important to contextualise the events. The 2004 Orange Revolution erupted because Ukraine's ruling elite resorted to fraud in order to preserve power. On November 21 2004, non-partisan exit polls depicted a commanding lead to presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko. However, when the official results came in, Viktor Yanukovych, the favourite of Ukraine's corrupt elite, had beaten the challenger by 2.5 percent (Karatnycky 2005, pp. 35-36). Motivated by many factors, including national, civic, and economic concerns (Beissinger 2011), Ukrainians gathered on Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti Square and following a third round of elections on December 26, Yushchenko was announced as the winner. In comparison to Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, which have experienced their own versions of a coloured revolution, Ukraine's Orange Revolution has demonstrated signs of making democratic progress via revolutionary stale-mate (Hale 2006). That is, Yanukovych's efforts to prevent democracy may have inadvertently undermined a critical source of strength for a patronal president, making revolution more likely (Hale 2006, p. 305). Instantly reacting to the events of 2004, some academics named the Orange Revolution a democratic break-through because it has aided in replacing a semi-authoritarian government with a democratic government that instituted free and fair elections (Stepanenko 2005; Wilson 2005; Stepan 2005; Hale 2006), while others have scrutinised the role of external forces (McFaul 2007), brought to light mobilisation of cultural cleavages (Beissinger 2013), and even questioned the appropriateness of terming the Orange Revolution as a revolution (Katchanovski 2008).

Development of civil society, the rise of a significant middle class, increased awareness of the ruling elite's corruption, experienced leadership, and resilience of independent media have all been cited as outcomes of the Orange Revolution (Karatnycky 2005, pp. 43-44). Some scholarship

considered the events of the Orange Revolution to be instances of successful civil mobilisation (Wilson 2005; Kuzio 2005; Karatnycky 2005; Aslund & McFall 2006; Kuzio 2007; Diuk 2013; Shekhovtsov 2013) while others have argued that the event demonstrated Ukraine's weak civil society (Lane 2008), illustrating that the fragmentation of the authoritarian state structure requires more attention as a factor for the political turnover (Way 2005, p. 127). While public mistrust in media and presidency persisted following the Orange Revolution (White & McAllister, 2009), McFaul (2007, p. 48) eloquently concluded that democratisation does not develop on a gradual (and straightforward) path.

Although Ukrainian democracy did not consolidate after the Orange Revolution, the movement should be considered as an instance of democratic breakthrough. Furthermore, the events of 2004 have brought to surface the role of nationalism and the presence of clashing identities in Ukraine (Kuzio 2010). While changes to Ukrainian identity were not as pronounced as in the Revolution of Dignity, this dissertation treats and acknowledges the Orange Revolution as a significant event in Ukraine's first strides of reshaping national identity. The Orange Revolution played a significant role in stopping Ukraine from turning authoritarian and demonstrated the country's democratic trajectory, but it did not result in a break from the Soviet experience. As will become apparent in the empirics and analysis, more attention is devoted to the Revolution of Dignity because the event's trauma of violence and the presence of civil collective activism led to a more pronounced transformation of Ukrainian identity and the strengthening of national cohesion.

While the Orange Revolution was peaceful, short, and characterised by mainly one focal point – to overturn fraudulent elections – the Revolution of Dignity by comparison was violent, long, and involved multiple focal points that have impacted the aims and motivations of the movement (Popova 2014, p. 65; Onuch 2014). Before the Revolution of Dignity, there was the Euromaidan. Predominately led by university students since November 21 2013, Euromaidan was a response to Yanukovych's decision to reject the European Union association agreement in favour of Russian appeasement. "Euro" signifying support for European determination, and "maidan" for location, which is Maidan Nezalezhnosti. However, following the violent beating of student protesters and journalists by Berkut, the revolution gained a different meaning and name overnight. Thousands of protesters flooded Kyiv's city streets in outrage at the state's decision to use violence against protesters on November 30, 2013 (Onuch 2014; Diuk 2014). From December 1 2013 until late February 2014, Maidan's vicinity witnessed thousands of people gathering in a stand-off against the pro-Russian state corruption and violence. The expression "Revolution of Dignity" was first officially coined by Svyatoslav Shevchuk, the Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, condemning the state's use of violence (Avvakumov 2016, p. 36). From here onward, this dissertation will refer to the movement as the Revolution of Dignity.

The Revolution of Dignity saw the mobilisation of a civil society (Pridham 2014; Gatskova & Gatskova 2016) and Ukrainian nationalism (Kulyk 2016). The events of 2013-2014 have consolidated the presence of civic identity, seen in the activism of volunteer groups, NGOs, churches, and journalism (Shapovalova & Burlyuk 2018). The events and agents of the Revolution of Dignity have been chronologically studied (Wynnyckyj & Plokhy 2019) and scholarship has brought together spectacular efforts in the study of civil society from various disciplines (Marples & Mills 2014; Falsini & Umland 2018). In addition, Ukrainian scholarship began investigating the characteristics and motivations of the movement's civil society (Reznik 2016; Smyth 2018). The protesters that flooded Kyiv's city center streets were of middle class origins with predominantly democratic goals that were not dependent upon linguistic differences (Onuch 2014). While the majority of the protesters were ordinary citizens, the participation of far-right parties, such as Svoboda and Right Sector, were not excluded from the protest coalition (Shekhovtsov & Umland 2014). The internet and online platforms enabled mobilisation of collective activism by providing alternative and uncensored coverage of the protests (Leshchenko 2014; Bohdanova 2014), transforming communities into networks and think-tanks in the aftermath of the revolution (Orlova 2016; MacDuffee Metzger & Tucker 2017; Axyonova & Schoppner 2018). The Revolution of Dignity – in conjunction with Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in the east of Ukraine – has also led scholars to examine Ukraine's political transformation, foreign policy between Russia and Europe, and the impact of geopolitical players (Bachmann & Lyubashenko 2014; Wilson 2014; Götz 2015; Marples & Mills 2015; Bertelsen 2016; Sakwa 2016; and Worschech 2017).

A divided and diverse Ukrainian society

In the context of Ukraine's Russified past, studies have pointed to the presence of competing identities, particularly following Ukrainian revolutions (Shulman 2005; Kuzio 2010; Beissinger 2013; Reznik 2016; Kulyk 2016). Some studies have relied on West versus East division in order to investigate Ukrainian identity (Katchanovski 2006; Arel 2011). However, scholarship has also problematised the oversimplification of such an approach by presenting the importance of paying attention to diverse and multilayered identities that exist within the division (Zhurzhenko 2002; Zakharchenko 2013). Studies have also recommended caution over correlations between language, ethnicity, and political orientations of Ukrainian citizens (Wilson 2002; Arel 2014) because Ukrainian politics and identity is fluid and pluralistic in nature. Notably, Shulman (2005) has proposed that there are distinct ethnic Ukrainian and eastern Slavic forms of nationalism in Ukraine, which are competing for supremacy. Furthering Shulman's 2005 study, Riabchuk (2015) highlighted that the peculiarity of Ukraine's divided society is not on the basis of the West and East dichotomy as it misinterprets the complexity of Ukrainian identity. The main divide in Ukraine is neither Ukrainian/Russian, Ukrainophone/Russophone, nor West/East. The division

runs primarily about identity inasmuch as each group insists that its members represent the "true" Ukrainianness, whereas their opponents represent some sort of historical deviation (Riabchuk 2015, pp. 139-140).

This dissertation contributes to Riabchuk's work by demonstrating that Ukrainian contestations about identity emerge more vividly during times of revolt, which is investigated through collective memory, education, and religion. Contesting history and identity are part of the process of identity (re)construction. While identity poralisation is not a unique factor in Ukraine's experience, identity contestation during revolutions is treated as a marker of identity transformation. Specifically, this dissertation refers to competing identities in terms of distinictive national identity that sees itself exclusively as Ukrainian, that is, it isolates itself from Russian polity, and Russian and Soviet past versus a competing narrative of closeness to Russian and Soviet past. Thus, when referring to "diversity" in Ukrainian identity, I am demonstrating the process of identity contestation between two competing narratives that have become more visible following the Revolution of Dignity. Furthermore, this dissertation adopts the understanding that identity and identity's content (collective memory, education, and religion) is malleable and situational (Mikheieva & Shevel, 2021). This dissertation treats revolutions as sites of identity formation. Scholarship has intently studied the (re)construction of Ukrainian collective memory, language and education, and religion.

Collective Memory

Collective memory and national identity are closely related in the construction of Ukrainian society (Torbakov 2011; Kulyk 2013). Memory of the past has affected Ukraine's formation of a common national identity (Shevel 2016). The state and civil society play a vital role in mobilising collective memory, particularly during and following revolutions. Plokhii (2017) has argued that the Orange Revolution has contributed to memory wars, dividing Ukrainian society into Soviet era proponents and ethnonationalists. Following the Orange Revolution, Holodomor has become a subject of contestation amongst elites (Zhurzhenko 2011) where speeches have served as a source of tracing how the state shapes past grievances (Klid & Motyl 2012). Indeed, elites manipulate cultural projections in order to empower their interests within political discourses (Narvselius 2007; Shevel 2014). For example, while Yushchenko revived Ukrainian nationalistic historic narratives (Shevel 2014, p. 157), Yanukovych explicitly embraced pro-Russian Soviet East identity (Riabchuk 2012, p. 445) through memory policy changes. Furthermore, historians and institutions have been investigated as agents in the process of identity (re)construction. The Revolution of Dignity has mobilised the role of historians as agents of memory restoration as part of the postcolonial process (Yurchuk 2021). Museums have also become venues of projecting and developing collective memory narratives of the Revolution of Dignity (Hodland 2015).

After the Revolution of Dignity, the new government took major steps to break from Russian influence (Shevel 2016, p. 258). In particular, the 2015 "Decommunisation Law" radically attempted to rid Ukrainian history of the enduring Soviet legacy visible in public spaces, including the renaming of streets and removal of statues and monuments. While the process has been defended as a victory over the totalitarian communist legacy (Oliinyk & Kuzio 2021), some studies have critiqued the Decommunisation campaign (Csilla et al. 2017) cautioning against the weakening of liberal values (Marples 2018). The process and implementation of Decommunisation in Ukraine has been thoroughly studied (Kasianov 2016; Marples 2018). Scholarship has traced the renaming of streets (Gnatiuk 2018; Kovalov 2022; Liudmyla 2023) in Kharkiv (Tahtaulova 2017; Kutsenko 2020), Kyiv (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk 2020; Males & Deineka 2020), and Krivyi Rih (Kudriavtseva 2020). However, the implementation of laws has looked different in practice than in theory. For example, local agency (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk 2024) and public attitudes impact the decision-making process of renaming streets and removing statues (Musiyezdov et al. 2022). In some cases, the compliance with the "Decommunisation Law" was affected by decisions taken at the regional and local level (Kovalov 2022). Gnatiuk et al.'s (2024) most recent longitudinal analysis of Kyiv's renaming practices highlighted a caveat in the process of Decommunisation: following the initial period of political transition, toponymy experience drastic changes, but later on, once the resource of ideologically 'wrong' street names is exhausted, ideologically neutral names become the primary targets of renaming. The latter studies have sparked my interest in the search of objects that have not been changed or took a long time for the "Decommunisation Law" to take effect. Because, as the rich literature above demonstrates, renaming of streets has been comprehensively studied, my attention turned to statues and monuments.

Monuments are an important source for investigating the trajectory of Ukrainian collective memory. Prior to state enforced de-Sovietisation of Ukrainian memory, Lenin statues were spontaneously toppled by the protesters of the Revolution of Dignity. Gaidai (2017) first examined the removal of Lenin monuments with a special focus on central Ukraine. The toppling of Lenin statues sparked reactions from Ukrainians (Liubarets 2016), some expressing uncertainty about "Leninfall" (Gaidai 2021). Another area of interest in the study of collective memory has been the political framing of Leninfall on television and documentaries (Pshenychnykh 2020) which has helped understand how visual medium plays a vital role in framing memory discourses and shaping historical events (Gorbenko 2010). The process of dismantling of Soviet monuments (Filev & Kurganskii 2022; Deschepper 2025) saw cases where the statue of Lenin was transformed into Ukrainian Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa (Klymenko 2020), a case that proves the transformative nature of collective memory. My dissertation extends on the work of Klymenko (2020) by comparatively investigating the transformation of two Lenin statues, one in Kyiv and the other in

Odesa. A close-up analysis of Kyiv's and Odesa's Lenin transformations offers an insight into the agency of civil society in the process of collective memory (re)construction. The comparison of two Lenin statues sheds light on the pluralistic nature of Ukrainian society in their treatment of the past. Furthermore, while scholarship has focused on the removal and transformation of statues, there appears to be a gap in understanding the fate of statues that have been left untouched or have been left undisturbed for a long time before being removed. Yekelchyk's (2021) work stands out by introducing the concept of "symbolic plasticity", demonstrating the reappropriation of Kyiv's monuments. This dissertation contributes to Yekelchyk's study by investigating the complexity of controversial Soviet and Russian imperial statues that have been left untouched or maintained for a long period of time before being finally removed in order to demonstrate the presence of contesting identities in Ukraine.

Transformations of public spaces impact collective memory. Mural art in Ukraine has evolved since the Soviet Union where Ukrainian revolutions gave rise to street art (Abyzov & Chuieva 2021) that has displayed patriotic narratives (Pavlichenko 2023). Specifically, the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity has seen an influx of mural art, which is an indicator of social transformation (Britsyana & Golovakha 2005; Leahy 2023) and identity construction (Leahy 2020). Building on the work of Leahy (2020 & 2023) this dissertation proposes to investigate and analyse how murals and graffiti demonstrate the involvement of multiple actors in the (re)construction of Ukrainian identity. Empirical data from fieldwork is used to depict the spontaneous and curated examples of street art, which help understand the impact of the Revolution of Dignity in transforming collective memory of public spaces in Kyiv.

Language & Education

Language has played a crucial role in Ukraine's attempts at reforming its national identity. Russian language endured as the de facto official language during the Soviet Union with Ukrainian labelled as a "low language", resulting in the emergence of politics of language correctness (Bilaniuk 2005 p. 14). Russification of Ukrainian schools during the Soviet Union led to the near eradication of Ukrainian schools (Arel 1995), impacting identity formation. Furthermore, newly independent Ukraine inherited a large number of people who considered themselves Russians by nationality, and even larger number of those who retain their ethnonational self-designation as Ukrainians but have a preference of speaking Russian (Kulyk 2018 p. 120). Restoring the status and use of Ukrainian language has therefore been a challenge for the state and Ukrainian people. In Ukraine's case, language use does not always equal to language identity (Kulyk 2013). While Ukraine embarked on language policy changes since gaining independence (Stepanenko 2003), including the Ukraininisation of the education sector (Janmaat 1999), language has become a source of

manipulation by elites who have weaponised language cleavages to foster votes (Charnysh 2013; Moser 2013; Fedinec & Csernicskó 2017). Following the Orange Revolution, language and nationality were shown to be markers that play a role in voting preferences (Constant et al. 2011), ideologies (Seals 2019), attitudes, policy preferences, and opinions on historical memory (Kulyk 2011).

Kulyk has dedicated his career to researching Ukrainian language and has meticulously traced attitudes and changes in language policy and practice. Kulyk's 2018 study reported that following the Revolution of Dignity exclusive Ukrainian identification has increased and Russian speakers began reading and listening to Ukrainian more than before. Furthermore, while the 2013-2014 events led to a surge in nationalising collective memory, Kulyk (2019) has argued that the state has refrained from a resolute promotion of the Ukrainian language. Initial studies that traced language use in the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity demonstrated that Ukrainians who are Russian speakers continue to insist their national loyalty while abandoning a switch to their native language (Kulyk 2016), even on social media platforms (Slobozhan 2022). However, Ukrainian society has been responsive to major changes such as revolutions and wars, demonstrating the malleable nature of identity (Kulyk & Hale 2022). Palinska (2023) found a positive trend in Ukrainian language use in function spheres and its status in Central and Southern Ukraine. Furthermore, more Ukrainians began thinking of Ukraine as their homeland (Pop-Eleches & Robertson 2018). Kulyk's (2025) most recent study shows that Ukrainians are slowly shifting away from Russian language during wartime, indicating that Ukrainian national identity is slowly transforming.

While small steps were made in consolidating Ukrainian language, the education front has witnessed rapid changes in its curriculum of Ukrainian history. School history textbooks embody national politics of elites through narratives of Ukrainian identity and boundaries (Korostelina 2011). The Ukrainian history curriculum and school textbooks have been a source of investigation by scholars who have been interested in tracing changes in identity and history narratives (Popson 2001; Janmaat 2002 & 2006; Marples 2007; Zajda 2009; Korostelina 2010; Klymenko 2014; Bessonova 2019; Kasianov 2022; Verbytska 2023). Scholarship has focused much needed attention to the content of school history textbooks, leaving the visual, front covers, understudied. This dissertation fills the knowledge gap by tracing and analysing the front covers of Year 11 Ukrainian school history textbooks in order to demonstrate identity narrative changes that coincide with presidency turnover. Visual rhetoric plays a significant role in revealing the state's process of identity (re)construction.

While textbooks represent state mandated interpretations of Ukrainian identity, school history teachers have been involved in the process of influencing the content of class instruction (Pine et

al. 2004; Rodgers 2007; Korostelina 2015; Pryshchepa 2022). Rodgers' (2006) study revealed regional differences in teachers' approaches to teaching Ukrainian history. In the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity, teachers' political and regionalist sympathies have been reported to have created pockets of post-Soviet nostalgia and pro-Russian sentiment in eastern and south-eastern regions of Ukraine (Yekelchyk 2025, p. 182). Following the lead of the scholars above, this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of teacher mediation of Ukrainian history narratives in classrooms. Interviews with Kyiv's history school teachers reveal how state instructions are contested in classrooms. As will be shown, teachers have the freedom to digress from curricular outlines in order to teach interpretations of histories they find "true". Such behaviour is indicative of Ukraine's diverse identity.

Lastly, it is important to note my decision to omit a thematic focus on language in this dissertation. In the early stages of drafting my thesis proposal I planned to include an empirical chapter on language that would focus on language policy analysis. However, after re-reading well established scholarship on Ukrainian language and progressing well into research and writing, it became apparent that I did not have empirics on language that balanced the standard of contributions and orginiality made in the completed empirical chapters on collective memory, education, and religion. While language preferences and switching between Russian and Ukrainian in private is an area of opportunity for future research to track revival of Ukrainian language at the expense of Russian, these shifts have become more apparent following 2022 (Kulyk 2025), which is outside of this dissertation's scope and focus. Furthermore, tracing changes in language practice requires methods that fall outside of this dissertation's interpretivist methodological contribution. For example, tracing private language practice involves the acknowledgement that people might conceal their preferred language in the fear of judgement. Survey design techniques - which are outside of this dissertation's methodological focus – can reveal concealed information by using indirect questions that reduce social desirability bias.

Religion

The role of religion has significantly changed in Ukraine following the Revolution of Dignity. Since 2000, public opinion polls indicate that the church has the highest level of public trust compared to other social institutions (Razumkov Center 2023). Indeed, at a time when Yanukovych's state behaved immorally towards its citizens, religious institutions stepped forward to support Ukrainian society (Kochan 2016), embodying a moral authority (Shlikhta 2016). Deep distrust in state institutions along with weak legitimacy of the new government has given religious organisations the opportunity to take a special niche in society (Searle 2015). For example, multiple religious authorities used Maidan Nezalezhnosti as a space for public speaking, which is an indication of

church agency in civil discourse (Panych 2015). The Revolution of Dignity has led to the increased civic role of Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Protestant churches (Horkusha & Fylypovych 2015; Cherenkov et al. 2018). Religious participation in the protests demonstrated a moment where religious values were intertwined with civil aspects of identity (Horkusha & Fylypovych 2015). For example, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's students were the first to gather during Euromaidan protests and the church's patriarch-emeritus Lubomyr Husar frequently appeared on Maidan Nezalezhnosti supporting protesters with prayer and council (Avvakumov 2016, p. 35). Cherenekov, Kalenychenko, and Antoshevskyy's (2018) study has shown the revival of the voluntary movement in Ukraine's Christian community where some faiths, such as the Greek Catholics and Protestants, have been involved in military service following the Revolution of Dignity and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine.

The 2013-2014 protests have also brought to light divisions in Orthodoxy (Kravchuk & Bremer 2016). Political positioning of Ukrainian churches has previously been researched through discourse analysis of interviews, official addresses, social media posts, and public statements (Denysenko 2014; Shestopalets 2020). While the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate actively participated in the protests, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate maintained a neutral stance, preserving control of key Ukrainian Orthodox shrines (Hurak & Kobuta 2021). Furthermore, the latter church has been described as a tool of Russian soft power (Hudson 2018) which has demonised liturgical activities in Ukraine as a betrayal of the Russian world (Gergało-Dąbek 2021). Following Petro Poroshenko's presidential inauguration, the state opted for a close relationship between nationalism and religion and took steps to grant Ukrainian Orthodoxy autocephaly in 2019 (Shestopalets 2020).

Divisions and civic aspects of religious identity are themes that dominate current scholarship on the study of Ukrainian religion following the Revolution of Dignity. My dissertation offers a novel way of investigating religious participation in the movement by investigating sacred spaces. Using gathered fieldwork data, sacred sites of Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery and the Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael and the Ukrainian New Martyrs are analysed as locations of Ukrainian identity (re)construction. In-depth focus on the events that occurred on these sites reveal the agency of Orthodoxy and Greek Catholics in protecting collective activism and formation and consolidation of memory.

Research Objective & Contribution

Identity is malleable and susceptible to change (Chandra 2009 & 2012). The central thesis of this dissertation argues that revolutions are moments that trigger the process of identity (re)construction by civil society, elites, and religious actors who converse and dispute about the correct version of national identity. The Orange Revolution in 2004 and especially, the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 mobilised Ukrainian civil society, elites, and religious actors in the process of identity (re)construction. Ukraine's process of nation-building and identity construction following the 1991 independence from the Soviet Union has not been seamless because accumulative historical factors have presented challenges for a cohesive formation of identity. However, the Revolution of Dignity was an event that stimulated the process of reconstructing Ukrainian nationalism, which can be traced in collective memory, education, and religion. The Orange Revolution and especially the Revolution of Dignity have caused diverse conversations about ways of remembering the past, how the past should be studied, and the need for religious guardianship of national identity. Specifically, the events of 2013-2014 exemplify that in the presence of a hostile and violent state, strides to reconstruct a distinctive Ukrainian national identity can be traced in collective memory, education, and religion, but not without the challenge of contestation. Conversations and contestations about the "correct" version of national identity amongst civilians, elites, teachers, and churches are a result of a contested Ukrainian identity, which has been influenced by a history of repression and brought to surface following revolutions.

This dissertation contributes to three broader literatures. Firstly, within the constructivist debates on national identity, the argument of this dissertation advances a theory of identity creation and change. Borrowing the conceptual understanding of identity from Anderson's (1983 & 2006) and Chandra's (2009) work, identity is understood as something that is continually renewed and always changing. The empirics of my dissertation demonstrate the importance of critical circumstances that make identity reformation more visible. Particularly how revolutions operate as temporal sites in which multiple actors – state and non-state – actively negotiate collective self-understandings. The negotiations about identity stabilise into broader cohesion. Cohesion is observed and identified when symbolic reframing is institutionalised and/or reinforced through memory politics, education, and in religious sacred sites. Revolution plays a vital role in influencing the society to revisit memories and reach to history in order to reshape its imagination of self (Anderson 1983). Furthermore, what stands out as a lesson from Ukraine's case is that fairly recent events have impact on national cohesion. Scholarship on nationalism explains that national identity is forged in cataclysmic and traumatic events (Suny 2001). Ukraine's case depicts the process of forging national cohesion through revolutions; particularly the Revolution of Dignity. While socieites can battle over memories, historical grievances, and narratives about the past, recent events

(revolutions) have the power to revive the process of identity reformation and bring about national cohesion.

Secondly, the findings of this dissertation contribute to scholarship on contentious politics and revolution by showing how revived historical grievances and unmet expectations of previous revolutionary attempts interact with symbolic campaigns to produce durable identity effects. My gathered empirics demonstrate how violence can impact national cohesion and collective activism. Specifically, how historical grievances have been revived and mobilised (Gurr 1993), and frustrations have led to collective action (Davies 1963). Ukraine's case demonstrates the significance of a revolution in a society's process of acquiring national cohesion. Since 1991, Ukraine experienced a slow process of national cohesion. While short-lived, the 2004 Orange Revolution demonstrated collective capabilities and new expectations. Learning from the 2004 disappointment in expectations and confronting state violence in 2013-2104 resulted in a successful civil mobilisation and the production of durable identity effects. Lastly, methodologically and empirically, the findings in this dissertation bring together interpretivist methods and novel primary evidence to trace how symbolic, institutional, and ritual mechanisms jointly shape post-revolutionary identity. For example, the analysis of contested monument maintenance; methods that emphasise the visual over the textual in order to demonstrate state sponsored identity shifts in education; and with the focus on sacred spaces, this dissertation produces an original contribution to studies of religion.

Collective memory, education, and religion have been chosen as dimensions for analysing identity because within these dimensions changes in identity (re)construction are directly observed, traced, and investigated. While especially following the Revolution of Dignity expressions of Ukrainian national distinctiveness are found to be more visible in the process of identity (re)construction, the presence of contestation over identity and the past between multiple actors is traced in collective memory, education, and religion. Furthermore, as mentioned above, scholarship has devoted remarkable efforts to the study of collective memory, education, and religion, however, my dissertation has found gaps and opportunities in the vast research of these dimensions of identity that have been left unpursued and unexplained. The value of this dissertation lies in the close inspection of the selected dimensions of identity. Methods of content analysis, semiotics, and thick description help reveal the messy and complex process of Ukrainian identity (re)construction that demystify the seamlessness of the process. The close inspection of collective memory, education, and religion shows that while Ukrainian national distinctiveness becomes more cohesive, it continues to be met with contestation. The unique value of studying changes to Ukrainian collective memory, education, and religion during revolutions is learning of the presence of Ukrainian inherent determination and resilience in protecting identity when it is met with force and violence.

The overarching contribution of my dissertation aims to demonstrate that the Revolution of Dignity's mobilisation of the (re)construction of national identity is a testament of Ukrainian national determination and resilience, which existed long before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Ukraine's history of subjugation to Russification policies during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union are experiences of suppression that have precisely moulded a society determined to be resilient against state oppression (internal and external influences) of national identity, which can be directly traced in moments during the Revolution of Dignity. It is important to note the usage of two terms throughout the dissertation: "determination" and "self-determination". When referring to "determination", I mean a mindset of persistence and resilience of Ukrainian people to accomplish a goal. When using the word "self-determination" I mean the belief that Ukrainian people have a right to determine their own political future.

Lastly, I propose to briefly consider where Ukraine's experience stands in comparison to its neighbours in order to understand what is significant and valuable about Ukraine's identity (re)construction experience. While processes of nation- and state-building have been relatively consolidated and democracy has been stabilised in 21st century Western Europe, Ukraine's battle for an independent and democratic path – and ultimately, survival in the face of Russia's blatant aggression – continues to this day. Ukraine's closest neighbours have found ways of consolidating their nationalism, reforming democratically, or conforming to Russian expansionism. For example, Poland experienced a re-birth of nationalism and conservatism; Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia swiftly succeeded in gaining independence from the Soviet Union and implemented nationalist policies to consolidate national identity; and Belarus has long succumbed to autocracy and accepted its satellite status to Russia. While it is important to acknowledge that post-Soviet societies continue to experience identity contestation, what stands out as a distictive lesson from Ukraine's experience is its fairly recent efforts to consolidate a distinctively Ukrainian national identity. Specifically, in the context of Ukraine's historical struggles of liberation from Russian Empirial and Soviet repression, the significance of the Revolution of Dignity becomes apparent: national identity is forged. Ukrainian experiences investigated in this thesis are distinctive because they showcase a nation's ability to withstand an aggressor's ongoing obsession with sphere of influence and demonstrate the forging of effective national resistence. A way of understanding Ukraine's enduring resilience to oppression is to look at the events of the Revolution of Dignity.

Thesis Outline

This dissertation is composed of eight chapters. Chapter 2 Research Design details data collection and data analysis methods, which primarily fall into the interpretivist approach of studying identity. Visual data and interviews have been collected to investigate Ukraine's identity (re)construction process in collective memory, education, and religion using methods of visual analysis. In order to contextualise relevant historical events of collective memory, education, and religion, this dissertation presents the respective historical chapter prior to its appropriate empirical chapter. Chapter 3 History of Collective Memory presents relevant contextualisation of Ukraine's collective memory experiences before proceeding to the empirical chapter, Chapter 4 Collective Memory. Chapter 5 History of Education outlines Ukraine's schooling experiences during the Soviet Union and independence period before presenting empirical findings of Chapter 6 Education. Chapter 7 History of Religion depicts Ukraine's conflicting Orthodox history and Chapter 8 Religion presents empirical findings. Lastly, Chapter 9 Discussion & Conclusion discuss and overview this dissertation's findings, and comment on the future of Ukrainian identity studies.

The three empirical chapters present a close analysis of the selected elements of identity. The findings in each empirical chapter work to support the overarching argument of this dissertation, which deems that revolutions are sites of identity (re)construction. The Revolution of Dignity has mobilised the agency of elites, civil society, teachers, and religious actors in the process of reforming Ukrainian identity. Specifically, the 2013-2014 events have played a significant role in triggering Ukrainian determination to protect a distinctive Ukrainian national identity, but not without challenge and contestation. The selected elements of identity demonstrate that the process of identity (re)construction is not seamless because Ukrainian identity is diverse. Diversity in identity invites contestation and dialogue about the fate of the past and the direction of collective memory, education, and religion. Furthermore, the three empirical chapters present the opportunity to demonstrate the strengths of in-depth qualitative analysis which helps reveal coherence in the messy process of identity (re)construction.

Chapter 4 Collective Memory reveals how the Revolution of Dignity has impacted collective memory dialogue about Ukraine's Soviet and Russian tsarist past. How Ukrainian society mediates the removal and maintenance of controversial statues and expresses patriotic sentiments in street art is indicative of the process of identity (re)construction. Most importantly, the investigation of statue treatment and the creation of street art demonstrates that the process of identity (re)construction is not seamless due to the presence of malleable and diverse identity narratives. The investigation of Kyiv and Odesa's diverging experiences in the process of transforming Lenin statues and the maintenance of controversial Soviet and Russian tsarist statues is indicative of history's role in shaping different experiences of the past, which come to surface following the

Revolution of Dignity. While Ukrainian society partakes in the removal and maintenance of contested statues, public spaces witness transformations in the form of street art, which mobilises nationalistic legacies and memories of sacrifice.

Chapter 6 Education demonstrates the role of elites and teachers in mediating historical narratives in Ukrainian school history classrooms following revolutions. While elites express their national versions of Ukrainian identity, teachers mediate state sponsored narratives in their classrooms. School history textbook covers reveal how the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity have impacted how elites form national identity. On the other hand, interviews of school history teachers reveal that on the ground, the (re)construction of national identity is far from seamless. State mandated identity is not necessarily trickled down to the classroom because teachers challenge official narratives of history. Thus, revolutions trigger contestations about historical narratives, depicting the presence of diverse identities, indicating that Ukrainian identity is fluid.

Lastly, Chapter 8 Religion investigates how sacred spaces are significant sites of identity (re)construction during and following the Revolution of Dignity. Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery case exemplifies the role of religious actors in transforming their sacred space in order to guard collective activism and by extension Ukrainian ethnic identity. Furthermore, the creation of sacred space, as shown in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's case, demonstrates the role of religion in guarding sacrificial memory, which helps consolidate national identity.

Chapter 2: Research Design

Introduction & Positionality

This chapter outlines the backbone of this dissertation's data gathering and data analysis which are used to support the arguments in Chapter 4 Collective Memory, Chapter 6 Education, and Chapter 8 Religion. This chapter begins with a reflection of positionality, which has impacted data collection, data interpretation, and expertise in Ukrainian identity. Photographs, interviews, and school history textbooks are data which were used to investigate the impact of Revolution of Dignity on the (re)construction of Ukrainian collective memory, education, and religion. Lastly, this chapter outlines and justifies the selection and usage of data analysis methods, which are visual analysis, thick description, semiotic analysis, analysis of street art, and interview analysis.

Before detailing the nature of collected data, it is important to openly address my positionality because it impacted the gathering and interpretive aspect of the research process. Born in Kyiv, I hold dual Ukrainian and Australian citizenship, and I am proficient in both Ukrainian and Russian languages. My understanding of Kyiv's topography, Ukrainian cultural norms, and proficiency in both Ukrainian and Russian have aided me in gathering primary data for research. My awareness of Kyiv's topography and infrastructure has guided my photographic documentation of monuments, statues, and religious spaces, and the collection of relevant schooling materials. I received the Faculty Doctoral Travel Scheme grant from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at The University of Sydney in July 2019 which allowed me to travel to Kyiv in 2019-2020 to conduct fieldwork. The selection criteria for the eligibility of the awarded grant were determined on the importance of the research proposal and a demonstration that travel for data collection was essential for the completion of research. My fieldwork in Kyiv has allowed me to gain access to relevant sources which could not be accessed remotely or online. Accessing and documenting data in Kyiv was accomplished by navigating familiar territory. For example, it was easy for me to locate, find, and purchase used school history textbooks from a book market in the Pochaina neighbourhood because I was familiar with the location.

Fluency in Ukrainian and Russian has helped me collect data, translate data, interpret language, and communicate with interviewee participants. Language is a significant and complex aspect of Ukrainian diverse identity. Furthermore, language is not the sole marker of identity, which is an important factor to acknowledge when studying Ukraine. While Ukrainian is the official state language, Russian is often spoken in private settings. My understanding of language and cultural sensitivity led to a successful approval to conducti semi-structured interviews in September 2020

by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Sydney. My proficiency in both Ukrainian and Russian languages allowed me to assess and gage the appropriate language with which to conduct the interviews. Welcoming the participant to establish their language of choice created an unspoken level of comfort and openness that would not have been intuitively accomplished by a researcher of a non-Ukrainian background. Perceived belonging to the in-group has helped me create and enhance trust and openness with my participants who were comfortable to share with me their contacts who then became new participants for my interviews. Furthermore, my fluency in Ukrainian and Russian has helped me efficiently translate statue titles, interview data, and school history covers.

Additionally, it is important to flag that I used photographic data from the 2013-2014 period that was collected prior to commencing my doctorate. I observed the Revolution of Dignity in the winter of 2013-2014 during my family visit in Kyiv. I engaged in digitally capturing and observing the events of the Revolution of Dignity as a Ukrainian citizen, not a researcher, where my memory forms a lot of the descriptions and recollection of the events in the empirical chapters of this dissertation. The photographs that I took in 2013-2014 were gathered with no motive or intention of conducting research, which means that the events that were captured are authentic moments from the perspective of a citizen. While I cite appropriate academic and media sources to guide the reader through the events of the Revolution of Dignity, some events are guided by the photographs that I captured during the winter of 2013-2014. These photographs are significant data that depicts the physical transformation of public and religious spaces that contributes to supporting the objective of this research, which is to observe, trace, and analyse the (re)construction of identity.

Lastly, I believe it is important to disclose personal circumstances that shape my expertise and empathy for Ukraine's experience of identity (re)construction. Since 2022, I have moved to Kyiv and have witnessed Russian aggression first hand. A large portion of this dissertation has been written during black outs, in candle light, and in the underground metro shelter when Russia was shelling my neighbourhood. I have been living in Kyiv for over three years and my experience of living in a war zone has shaped my solidity towards Ukraine, and most importantly, eagerness to study Ukrainian identity. Compassion is required when investigating identity formation because to put simply, identity is made of people, not abstract things, and from where I am writing, identity formation and identity survival are real things that are fought for every day. Ukraine's process of identity formation entails struggles and suffering that stem from a spectrum of old and new. Russian interferences in Ukrainian self-determination and I believe that me being in Kyiv, on the ground, has improved my expertise about Ukrainian identity.

Data Collection

Photographs

The contribution of this dissertation relies on empirical data, which includes photographs, school history textbooks, and interviews. This research uses four sets of photographic data, which includes primary photographs from the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv, John Sydor's publicly available photographs on Facebook of the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery during the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity, primary photographs from 2016 fieldwork for my Honours thesis, and primary photographs from 2019-2020, and 2023 fieldwork. Primary photographs from 2013-2014 document the mobilisation of protesters, the toppling of the first Lenin statue, the sub-zero climate, and graffiti in public spaces. The secondary photographs depict the activism of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the protesters, and the transformation of the Monastery from a priest's perspective. Sydor is a priest at the Monastery and was involved in the 2013-2014 protests on the territory of the Church. It should be noted that photography is generally forbidden in Orthodox holy places where Sydor's photographs form a significant scope of visual data that captured the transformations and activism of the church and civil society during the Revolution of Dignity.

Primary photographs from 2016 fieldwork capture street art transformation in Kyiv. Lastly, the 2019-2020 and 2023 primary photographs capture Kyiv's Soviet monuments and the transformation of Kyiv's Lenin. The pooled visual data is significant in capturing the agency of protesters, street artists, and the church in the construction of Ukrainian collective memory, and religion.

Interviews

After successfully gaining ethics approval in 2020 I conducted 20–40-minute semi-structured interviews online. I interviewed two school history teachers, a representative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MESU), a representative of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM), and Sydor. I contacted all participants in 2019 while in Kyiv and planned interview appointments online (Skype and Viber) once my ethics was cleared in 2020. The interviews aided in capturing the agency of educators and a priest in the process of (re)constructing Ukrainian identity. I recruited two teachers for interviews from two public schools in Kyiv, one in Holosiivs'kyi district and the other in Shevchenkivs'kyi district. In 2019 I approached the administration office of both schools and made appointments to interview the respective history teachers in 2020. The semi-structured questions for education representatives focused on understanding the Ukrainian education system, the Ukrainian curriculum and guidelines for teaching Ukrainian history, and the changes in curriculum guidelines over time. It should be noted

that both teachers are anonymous and will be referred to as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. Furthermore, both teachers declined to be recorded but opted for note-taking of their responses. Lastly, it is important to flag that I interviewed only two teachers because COVID limited the ability to recruit more interviewees.

The recruitment of the MESU representative and Sydor was possible with an academic contact at Kyiv's Central State Archives of Public Organisations of Ukraine who connected me with my future participants. The MESU representative agreed to be interviewed via the phone, preferred note taking rather voice recording, and opted to remain anonymous. Sydor agreed to be recorded and did not mind to be identified because his participation in the Revolution of Dignity was publicly available information that did not put his welfare at risk. The semi-structured questions for Sydor engaged with retrieving details about his role in the 2013-2014 protests, specifically, his involvement in ringing the Monastery's bells during violent clashes between protesters and the security forces. Lastly, I recruited the UINM representative during my fieldtrip in Kyiv in 2019 by a walk-in appointment to the ministry. The UINM representative preferred a recorded interview and opted to remain anonymous. The semi-structured questions for the UINM representative inquired about the changes in Ukrainian collective memory policies and the process of Decommunisation Laws. The last interview's data was not included in the empirical chapters because the information provided by the UINM representative was used to understand the scope of Ukrainian collective memory practices, which was helpful in narrowing down the focus of the research.

School History Textbooks

Lastly, I collected three Year 11 Ukrainian history textbooks. In 2020, I located and purchased two second-hand school history textbooks from a local book market in Kyiv, Pochaina, and retrieved the third, 2019 textbook, online. The textbooks are "History of Ukraine, Year 11, condensed notes" by Serednyts'ka, H. V (2007), "History of Ukraine, Year 11, standard level, academic level" by Pometun, O. I and Hupan, N. M (2011), and "History of Ukraine, Year 11, profiled level" by Vlasov, V. S and Kul'chyts'kyy, S, V (2019). Year 11 was selected as the primary year for analysis because the curriculum covers content from WWII through to twenty-first century Ukraine. During this historical period, Ukraine transitioned from a Soviet republic to a sovereign state where the experience has been a source of state contention, making the selected class year a suitable source for analysing elite agency in reconstructing historical narratives. In order to visualise the agency of the state in manipulating the official historical narrative in Year 11 Ukrainian history textbook covers, the publication years selected are representative of three different presidencies. The 2007 publication is from Viktor Yushchenko's presidency (2005 to 2010), the 2011 publication

is from Viktor Yanukovych's presidency (2010 to 2014), and the 2019 publication is from Petro Poroshenko's term as president (2014 to 2019).

Data Analysis

Visual Analysis

The photographs of monuments, street art, school history textbook covers, and Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery, Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael & the Ukrainian New Martyr, and the Revolution of Dignity protests are data that are significant in visually depicting and tracing Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction in collective memory, education, and religion. This thesis treats visuals artefacts as a tool to uncover, reveal, and convey aspects of the complex process of Ukrainian identity construction during and following revolutions. This thesis follows the leads of scholars who have comprehensively explored the significance of images framing, representing, and capturing identity (Campbell 2007; Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison & Nicholson 2013; Hansen 2014; Bleiker 2018; MacKenzie 2020). Images and visual artefacts are saturated in identity politics. This dissertation treats the photograph as a source of capturing identity construction by multiple actors. The multiplicity of actors is determined by what is captured in the photograph. For example, in Chapter 4 Collective Memory, the photographs of Lenin statues and their transformations depict the authority of the state, civil society, and an artist behind the toppling and disfiguring of the figures. In Chapter 6 Education, the covers of school history textbooks were produced in line with the state's guidelines of the curriculum. Lastly, Chapter 8 Religion utilises photographs of holy places in order to trace and investigate the role of religious figures in transforming sacred space.

Photographs are treated as a record of reality that help reveal mechanisms that often go unnoticed. The primary and secondary photographs collected from fieldwork in Kyiv include the following visual artefacts: statues, monuments, street art, school textbook covers, and religious spaces. I am interested in using the photographs in order to investigate the transformation and maintenance of statues and monuments, creation of street art, construction of historical narratives on history school textbook covers, and the transformation and maintenance of religious sacred spaces because these visual artefacts directly depict the process of Ukrainian identity construction and the diverse involvement of elites, civil society, and religious actors. In order to make sense of these visual artefacts captured in photographic data, this dissertation implements thick description and semiotic analysis. As noted by Bleiker (2015), images are too complex to be assessed through a single method. Multiple methods are used in this study because in combination they help interpret, uncover, and trace the presence of identity (re)construction process during and following

revolutions by elites, civil society, and religious actors.

Thick Description

Thick description is used to analyse the transformation – and at times maintenance – of visual artefacts and experiences of individuals interviewed, which help make sense of Ukraine's process of identity construction during and following revolutions. This method of analysis was chosen because it establishes the significance of an experience or the sequence of events, which is important in the investigation of identity (re)construction. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (Denzin 1989, p. 83; Holloway 1997, p. 154). Thick description analysis pays attention to the details of context, history, and actors, which are essential factors that contribute to the process of identity (re)construction.

This dissertation will utilise Ponterotto's (2006, pp. 542-543) understanding of thick description which combines the work of Ryle (1971), Geertz (1973), Denzin (1989), Holloway (1997), and Schwandt (2001) in order to extract five essential components of thick description. Firstly, thick description involves accurately describing and interpreting social actions within the appropriate context in which the social action took place. Detailing relevant history and activism of multiple actors in the revolutions will form a vital basis of analysis. Secondly, thick description captures the thoughts, emotions, and web of social interaction among observed participants in their operating context. While this dissertation does not observe participants, this component will be applied to analysing interview responses and visual data. Thirdly, a central feature to interpreting social actions entails assigning motivations and intentions for the said social actions. In conjunction with visual analysis, thick description will trace the roles of multiple actors in the (re)construction of Ukrainian identity during revolutions. The fourth element included the context, and the specifics of, the social actions that are well described that the reader experiences a sense of verisimilitude as they read the researcher's account. Together with visual artefacts, thick description will provide the depth and detail needed to understand the significance of the events of the Revolution of Dignity in mobilising national identity. Lastly, thick description of social actions promotes thick interpretation of these actions, which lead to thick meaning of the findings. A close inspection of the Revolution of Dignity allows for an understanding of Ukrainian determination to find cohesion in the process of identity (re)construction, which will be demonstrated and investigated in collective memory, education, and religion.

Utilising the method of thick description allows for an intricate understanding of Ukraine's complex process of identity construction which becomes more apparent by paying close attention to details. Rich description of data enables to reveal the meanings and motivations of multiple

actors, including Ukrainian presidents, protesters, street artists, school teachers, and religious mediators. Thick description contributes to a robust understanding of Ukraine's process of identity establishment as it demystifies the agency of multiple actors in the discussion of Ukrainian nationalism. This dissertation contributes to empowering political scientists to utilise the method of thick description as it aids to bring clarity to the complex process of identity construction.

Semiotic Analysis

This dissertation combines and overlaps the use of thick description with semiotic analysis when examining the visual artefacts. Visual artefacts are objects that produce identity where the method of semiotics helps scrutinise the meaning of the visual object. According to Barthes (1977 p. 19), images contain meaning where ideological associations are created through language and visuals. For Barthes, particularly the image contains culture that is saturated by familiar associations that are of immediate relevance to the audience. Semiotic analysis is a useful interdisciplinary method that aids in uncovering the meaning created in the visual by paying close attention to the object of analysis. This dissertation follows the lead of semiotic analysis by borrowing the in-depth approach to investigating visual artefacts, specifically, monuments. The method follows identifying the object, understanding the associated meaning, and following through uncovering the underlying significance of the object in the production of identity.

This dissertation will utilise the Bellentani & Panico's (2016, pp. 29-39) useful approach to analysing monuments as it uncovers both visual and political dimensions of meaning making. The visual component includes categories of dimension (large/small, wide/narrow, tall/short), location (degree of elevation, distance/proximity, angle of interaction), materials of construction (solidity/hollowness, texture of the surface), topological organisation (form, shape), eidetic organisation (regularity/irregularity, curvature), and chromatic organisation (colours, brightness/opacity, lighting. These criteria will be used a guide when analysing statues and monuments in Chapter 4 Collective Memory and Chapter 8 Religion. The visual dimension is helpful in uncovering symbolism and representations that the monument or statue embodies. Lastly, the political dimension questions the intention of the monument, construction of discourse, and formation of identity. Political elites use monuments to set political agendas and to legitimate or reinforce the primacy of their political authority (Bellentani & Panico 2016, p. 39). The political dimension helps interrogate the actors, authority, and identity being formed in the monument or statue.

Analysis of Street Art

Chaffee's (1993, pp. 6-7) factors of visual impact will be used as a guide for the analysis of street

art in Chapter 4 Collective Memory by paying attention to three components: colour and design, positioning, and street art as form. Colour and design consider expression of emotion and meaning portrayed in the street art, while positioning requires the analysis of graffiti or mural location and its significance to constructing narrative. Lastly, the form assesses the complexity of the message and symbolism expressed in street art. For example, a graffiti tag does not contain as much detail nor complex depth as a mural. Chaffee's approach to analysing graffiti and murals is helpful in understanding expressions of identity during and following the Revolution of Dignity.

Interviews

The interviews are used in Chapter 6 Education and Chapter 8 Religion as direct quotes and paraphrased in order to depict the actor's intentions and involvement in the process of identity (re)construction following revolutions. The initial aim of conducting interviews with education representatives, the UIMN representative, and Sydor was to gain insight into contextual knowledge of Ukrainian history and politics from educational, state level, and religious perspectives. However, after analysing the interview transcripts, it became apparent to me that the answers of the participants conveyed much more complex findings about the process of identity (re)construction in Ukraine following revolutions than I initially thought. For example, I initially interviewed two teachers in order to understand the discourses of historical narratives presents in the education system, but after thorough analysis of the interview transcripts I discovered that the historical themes that the teachers referred to represented their perception of the correct Ukrainian national identity. While the insights traced from two teacher interviews do not aid in generalising findings about the complexity of identity formation, these interviews aid in proving the presence of mediation of history in classrooms. As mentioned before, the factor of COVID prohibited from recruiting more teachers for interviews in order to strengthen the findings in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, some interviews guided me towards refining the contribution of my empirical chapters. For example, the UIMN interview insights about the process of decommunisation led me to investigating statues and monuments that were left untouched by the law; a complication in the process of (re)constructing collective memory that I initially ignored as insignificant. Lastly, the interview with Sydor is used to understand the events and transformations that took place in the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery. Sydor's role as a bell ringer of the Monastery during the Revolution of Dignity means that his insights are relevant to exposing the role, authority, and activism of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate in mobilising nationalistic sentiments.

Chapter 3: History of Collective Memory

Introduction & Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise Ukraine's experience with memory by reviewing moments from Russian imperialist and Soviet history, and exploring the state of political memory in post-Soviet Ukraine. The empirical chapter on collective memory, Chapter 4, treats statues and street art as objects that reveal Ukraine's process of collective memory (re)construction. But before commencing with the investigation of Soviet and Russian imperial monuments, graffiti, and murals, it is important to consider historical moments that have impacted Ukraine's conception of self. This chapter does not exhaustively cover the entirety of Ukraine's history that has impacted Ukraine's memory politics, but rather focuses on a few vital periods and events that directly relate to revealing the process of identity (re)construction investigated in Chapter 4. Considering Russification policies that have impacted Ukrainian memory alongside more specific experiences of both cities – Kyiv's striving for resilience and Odesa's imperialist past – will bring clarity to the actions and responses investigated in the next chapter. The first section covers Russian imperial and Soviet policies and discourses that have suppressed Ukrainian identity and memory. Key historical experiences of Kyiv and Odesa will be discussed in sections two and three. Reviewing some of the events that have shaped both cities will help understand their relationship with memory during and following the Revolution of Dignity. Section four depicts the state of Ukraine's memory politics and attitudes since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and explores the significance of the 2015 "Decommunisation Law". Lastly, section five establishes the significance of the "Leninfall" which saw the largest removal of Lenin statues since Ukraine's independence.

1. Russian tsarist and Soviet policies

The Russian Empire (1721-1917) utilised Russification policies and repressive discourses to assimilate Ukrainians and establish imperial dominion over Ukrainian ethnic lands. Notably, following the emergence of Russian nationalism in the nineteenth century, Russification and the narrative of "Little Russia" were significant in shaping the Russian nation and its myth-making at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty and ethnic liberties. Kappeler (2003, p. 8) notes that precisely when Ukrainian intellectuals who began to develop their own national movement and presented a threat to the all-Russian nation, Russian authorities responded with persecution of Ukrainian language and culture from 1863 until 1906. 1863 saw the banning of Ukrainian books and publications by Peter Valuev, a Russian minister (Remy 2017 p. 44). This policy stopped Ukrainian from being used in schools, churches, and places of culture, such as theatres, mandating Russian

as the dominant language. The 1876 Ems Ukaz saw Alexander II expand the 1863 ban which included plays and music in Ukrainian, as well as the prohibition of importing Ukrainian publications from abroad (ibid p. 87). Russification policies aimed to discredit Ukrainian language and culture and enforce a Russian identity. Around the same time, the term "Little Russia" gradually developed the derogatory meaning of Ukrainian ethnic lands, the inferior part of Russia (Kappeler 2003, p. 14). The Russian Empire actively repressed Ukrainian identity through policies and through the falsification of history, which impacted contemporary Ukraine's process of dealing with history and memory. The imperial Russian cultural landscape – represented in Ukraine by Orthodox churches and monasteries, as well as memorials complexes, monuments, and other symbols – was compatible with the symbols of the "Little Russian" myth (Kravchenko 2015, p. 452).

Ukraine also played a significant role in the Soviet nation-state building process. Joseph Stalin reanimated the "Little Russian" ethnocultural element in the project of constructing a monolith Soviet Union (Kravchenko 2015, p. 450). Derogatory narratives projected historical claims and in doing so directly constructed enduring and misleading memories for Ukrainian people. While Ukrainian historians challenged Russian imperial narratives of the past in the 1920s, the imperial "Russian brotherhood" narrative reappeared in the 1930s and 1940s under the guise of the "friendship of peoples" banner (von Hagen 1995, p. 665). Yekelchyk (2016, p. 92) explains that during Stalin's era, the production of Ukrainian history books demanded that the rhetoric emphasise the influence of progressive Russian culture in Ukraine. Additionally, in the process of shaping Soviet Ukraine's superficial uniformity, Soviet authorities also utilised the symbolism of war, particularly the "Great October Socialist Revolution" and the "Great Fatherland War" were regularly featured in ritual practices (Kravchenko 2015, p. 452). As will become evident in the next chapter's analysis of maintained monuments of Mykola Shchors and Mykola Vatutin, Soviet symbolism mobilised myths about war in order to mould a victorious perception of history and authority in Ukraine. Similar to the response of the Russian Empire to the Ukrainian national movement, the Soviet authorities saw Ukrainian nationalism as a threat to the Soviet Union's existence (Kuzio 2017, p. 291). Yekelchyk (2004, p. 52) points out that Ukrainians "could venerate their past as long as it complimented, but did not compete with the story of Russian imperial pursuits". The accumulation of Russian imperial and Soviet repression of Ukrainian historical realities has contributed to modern contestations about memory and the fate of monuments following the Revolution of Dignity.

2. Kyiv

Kyiv was absorbed by the Russian Empire following the partition of Poland in 1797 where the city

became a strategic administrative capital of a gubernia (province) (Kubijovyc et al 2017). Kyiv became the main political, economic, and cultural centre for an entire region (Bilenky 2018, p. 16). While the Russification policies and derogatory discourses discussed above applied to Kyiv, the city's struggle for liberation from Russian imperial rule has played an important role in shaping nationalistic legacies, which have been mobilised in the Revolution of Dignity. The activism of Ukrainian intellectuals in Kyiv was vital in legitimising Ukrainian heritage through writing that made it possible for Ukrainian people to imagine and think about themselves in national terms during repressive times (Anderson 1983). Russian imperial restrictions on Ukrainian literature were applied because of struggle against the Ukrainian national movement, but bans failed to curtail the development of Ukrainian literature in the Russian Empire (Remy 2017, p. 43). Particularly, the Ukrainophile movement saw Ukrainian academics establish societies and take up prominent positions in prestigious institutions. The Ukrainophile movement was established in 1834 in Kyiv University, whose first rector and founder of Ukrainian histography was Mykhailo Maksymovych who encouraged further study of local history (Hills 2013, p. 319). Maksymovych also established the Kievlianin, an historical almanac that reported the efforts of local Orthodox leaders and Cossacks to preserve the values and faith of the Kyivan Rus' princes over the centuries (ibid). In 1847, the first Ukrainian nationalist organisation, the Cyrillo-Methodian Society, was led by Ukrainian historian Mykola Kostomarov (Remy 2017, p. 43). The society included one of Ukraine's iconic poets, Taras Shevchenko, whose work was confiscated by Russian authorities after the discovery of anti-tsarist poems (Antokhii et al. 2004). Shevchenko's writing, poetry, and paintings were significant in influencing Ukraine's modern literary scene and in shaping national identity, which will become apparent in the analysis of graffiti in the next chapter. The efforts of Ukrainian academics in Kyiv to preserve Ukrainian language and culture demonstrates Ukraine's historical sense of resilience that continues to shape modern Ukraine's determination to preserve identity, as witnessed by the events of the Revolution of Dignity.

Although the Cyrillo-Methodian Society was uncovered by the tsarist authorities and its members arrested, "Kyiv, the ancient capital of Rus, situated on the boundary of the former Hetmanate and serving as the administrative centre of the Russian provinces of Right-Bank Ukraine, firmly assumed the role of captain of the Ukrainian national movement" (Plokhy 2005, p. 19). Volodymyr Antonovych played a role in educating the peasantry in the countryside and later joined forces with the members of the Cyrillo-Methodian Society who had completed their terms of exile to create Hromada (Klid 1992). Hromada was a discussion group devoted to preserving the unique history and culture of Ukrainian lands, and collaborated on Ukrainian language publishing projects, which were subject to surveillance and later, banned on print in Ukrainian (Hillis 2013 p. 320). By 1880s, Mykhailo Drahomanov openly challenged the authority of the Russian tsarist state arguing for a

distinct Ukrainian nation (ibid p. 324). Hillis (2013, p. 326) reports that the 1880s and 1890s saw Kyiv based educated professionals develop Ukrainian national ideas, particularly the development of national histography for Ukraine by Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who later became the head of the Central Rada. Expansion of Ukrainian literature in the last years of the reign of Nicholas I demonstrates that Russian enforced censorship was based on what was written, not in which language it was written – writing perceived as nationalist was censored (Remy 2017, p. 44). Kyiv's experience of contesting Russian tsarist Russification policies and historical narratives shows a source of effective national resilience that has aided in the survival of Ukrainian legacy and memory. Furthermore, the establishment of secret and official institutions, despite surveillance and restrictive bans by tsarist authorities, demonstrates the limits of colonial repression. As will be explored in the following chapter, the legacy of Kyiv's intelligentsia has become a source of visual mobilisation during the 2013-2014 protests.

3. Odesa

Odesa's history and modern identity have been closely impacted by Russian imperial expansionism. Catherine II claimed the founding of Odesa in 1794 as a bastion of the Russian Empire against the Ottomans. The city was built on former Ottoman territory, which was renamed Novorossiya (New Russia) (Sapritsky-Nahum 2023, p. 103). Odesa became the main Russian, then from 1922 Soviet Ukrainian commercial port on the Black Sea (Polese & Wylegala 2008, p. 800). Some areas, previously part of Romania and Moldova, were annexed to Odesa Oblast after the Second World War. The seaport city developed into a model Enlightenment city, coming to stand as one of the most recognisable symbols of Westernisation in the Russian Empire (Kravchenko & Zychowicz 2022, p. 12). In the nineteenth century, Odesa was one of the main centres of tsarist Novorossiya that attracted colonisers from abroad, leading to rapid economic development, making the city the third largest in the Russian Empire (Szeptycki 2016, p. 125). In the twentieth century, Odesa remained one of the most cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse cities, famous for its specific dialect, and mythology, which stemmed from Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Polish, Greek, and European roots (Kravchenko & Zychowicz 2022, p. 13). While Russian authorities established special privileges to Odesa, assigning it the status of a free economic zone, the city also experienced repressive policies (Szeptycki 2016, p. 123). Catherine II's policies in Odesa encompassed serfdom, dissolution of statehood (Cossack Hetmanate), linguistic and cultural suppression, and forced resettlement (Gubkina 2024, p. 82). Kravchenko and Zychowicz (2022, p. 13) note that even though Odesa was made part of the Soviet Union, the city remained a part of the symbolic space of the former empire.

During the Soviet period, authorities celebrated Odesa in ways that suited their ideology, often

appealing to exceptionalism of the city, as it was associated with refuge and holidays for Soviet people (Herlihy 2018, p. 6). Soviet Odesa served a special function as a supplier of satire and humour (ibid p. 5). Furthermore, Odesa became known for its apolitical attitude (Richardson 2008, p. 5). Polese and Wylegala (2008, pp. 800-801) explain that Odesa's local identity was not limited to the standardised and imposed identity of the Soviet Union. Odesa's uniqueness illustrates something that is typical for Ukraine as a whole. Uniqueness in identity resonates in many of Ukraine's cities and can be understood as a consequence of changing state regimes (Richardson 2008, p. 6). Odesa's unique sense of humour is a characteristic that will become prominent in the investigation of Lenin transformation in the next chapter. Under Soviet rule, Odesa did not benefit greatly from the industrial construction that expanded the productive potential of certain areas of the Soviet Union. Its primary economic asset, the port, declined with the substantial drop in its foreign trade (Dallin 2022). Furthermore, Odesa lost some of its prestige, as the tsarist concept of Novorossiya fell out of fashion (Szeptycki 2016 p. 125). Odesa's place and role within Ukraine, its connections to Ukraine's history and culture, past and present, are nowhere to be found in the cultural mass-market product during the Soviet Union, although even by census results ethnic Ukrainians constituted a plurality within the city by the 1950s, and a majority by the 1980s and early 1990s (Chernetsky 2022, p. 45).

Odesa's experiences during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union are significant to note because these histories have inherently shaped Odesa's modern identity. While the Russian Empire undoubtedly shaped the city into its enterprise, it is evident that Odesa also experienced a degree of favouritism by Soviet authorities. Odesa's unique position in history has resulted in its unique approach to (re)constructing its memory following the Revolution of Dignity. The city's attachment to its colonial past will become evident in the next chapter's investigation of Catherine II and Alexander Pushkin monuments. Furthermore, Odesa's unique sense of humour that was consolidated during the Soviet era will become evident in the comic transformation of Lenin in 2015. Therefore, the historical moments discussed in this section are significant in underpinning Odesa's approach to dealing with its past.

4. Memory Politics following 1991 Independence

Following the fall of the Soviet Union a majority of Soviet republics advanced with policies that removed the Soviet past and solidified national identity. The late 1980s and early 1980s saw Soviet satellite states like Poland, Hungary, and Romania enforce the decommunisation of street names by local authorities (Kamiński 2024, pp. 196-197). While Lithuania initiated the repurposing of sites where Soviet monuments stood (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018, p. 105), Azerbaijan, in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, saw the swift removal of Soviet heroes that identified as

Armenian and Russian in the 1990s (Huseynova et al 2019, p.16). In the case of Georgia, the state experienced a second wave of removing Soviet symbolism in its spaces mobilised by Russia's war in South-Ossetia and following the 2003 Revolution of Roses (Frigerio 2021). In contrast, post-Soviet Russia has struggled to reckon with Stalinist repressions and has refrained from critiquing Soviet crimes following exhumation of sites from 1930s atrocities (Adler 2005). Despite different responses to the Soviet past, reflecting different historical experiences, the process of decommunisation was clearly occurring across most post-Soviet republics, with the exceptions of Russia and Belarus. Ukraine on the other hand had no consistent strategy of dealing with its Soviet past since 1991 (Liubarets 2016; Olijnyk & Kuzio 2021). Experts explain that while Ukraine was a multiethnic and multicultural state in the Soviet Union, it became one of the most Sovietised and Russified among other republics (Kravchenko 2015, p. 450). As pointed out in section one, the lengthy presence of Russian repressive policies and myth-making in Ukraine helps explain why Ukraine was the most Sovietised republic.

Besides the impact of Russian imperial and Soviet repression, the Ukrainian political scene since 1991 struggled to devise and implement a clear plan for dealing with the Soviet legacy. Decommunisation at the national level was unmanageable while Communists populated the parliament, government, and local state and self-governance bodies (Kasianov 2024, p. 327). Ukrainian elites saw their conception of memory as non-negotiable and themselves as the owners of the "correct" vision of the past (Shevel 2014, p. 152)[1]. President Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) issued a decree in 2000 and 2001 on removing Soviet symbols, but the implementation was not significant and the efforts were ambivalent (Oliinyk & Kuzio 2021, p. 808). Liubarets (2016, p. 199) explains that the political use of history in Ukraine was limited until 2004 where President

Viktor Yushchenko was the first to focus on restoring historical justice and promoting national revival. Indeed, since the Orange Revolution, conflicts about memory have been stirred by Ukrainian elites. While Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) officially recognised Holodomor as a genocide in 2006 and attempted to recognise nationalist organisations from the interwar and World War II period as fighters for Ukrainian independence (Grytsenko 2017), Viktor Yanukovych's (2010-2014) polar opposite political agenda embraced Russian, Soviet, and east Slavonic identity (Riabchuk 2012, p. 445). As Plokhii (2017) succinctly put it, the 2004 revolution has led to the upheaval of conflicts by those who are proponents of post-Soviet narratives and those who identify with ethnonational and anti-communist sentiments. With the exception of western Ukraine, state efforts to advance with de-Sovietisation of public spaces were insignificant prior to the Revolution of Dignity (Liebich et al. 2019, p. 81; Marples 2018).

[1] Chapter 5 History of Education and Chapter 6 Education spend more time investigating the involvement of elites in shaping official historical narratives.

Following the Revolution of Dignity, the "Decommunisation Law" was designed with the support of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, a government organisation that was established by Yushchenko (Shevel 2016, p. 260). The head of Ukraine's Institute of National Remembrance, Volodymyr Vyatrovych, explained that decommunisation in Ukraine was a result of societal efforts; as a result of Revolution of Dignity (Shvydko 2016). Enforced in April 2015, the law includes Law No. 2558, "On the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) regimes, and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols"; Law No 2538-1, "On the legal status and honouring of fighters for Ukraine's independence in the twentieth century"; Law No. 2539, "On remembering the victory over Nazism in the Second World War"; and Law No. 2540, "On access to the archives of repressive bodies of the communist totalitarian regime from 1917-1991." The "Decommunisation Law" is the first impactful legislative measure taken by the Ukrainian government since 1991 to drastically reshape Soviet and Ukrainian legacies. The package of laws monumentally restructured Ukrainian public spaces. This included the removal of communist symbolism and monuments from public places, renaming of streets, and the embrace of European symbolism. The Soviet term "Great Patriotic War" was replaced with the European "Second World War", and the date of commemoration was changed to May 8 as a "Day of Memory and Reconciliation". The introduction of the poppy as the official symbol for the commemoration of WWII saw the direct deviation from Russian use of the Saint George ribbon.

5. Leninfall

Before the "Decommunisation Law" was enforced, Ukrainian civil society was directly involved in the process of challenging Soviet legacy by toppling of Lenin statues during the wake of the Revolution of Dignity. December 8 2013, marked the first fall of Lenin which led to the Leninfall. Leninfall is a phenomenon that witnessed the mass removal of Lenin statues at the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014. This was a momentous event in the eradication of Soviet heritage as well as the (re)construction of memory politics (Gaidai 2021 p. 46). In order to grasp the significance of Leninfall, it is important to reflect on the fact that in 1991, coming second after Russia, Ukraine had the highest number of Soviet monuments (Chobit 1992, p. 12). Furthermore, in the early 1990s, Lenin statues were removed almost exclusively only in western Ukraine where the anti-Soviet movement was determined to eradicate Soviet symbolism (Gaidai 2021, p. 54). Out of approximately 5,500 Lenin monuments and statues in Ukraine in 1991, all but a few were gone by October 2017 (Plokhii 2017). The largest number of monuments was toppled from 21 to 23 February 2014, just a few days after nearly a hundred protesters were killed in Kyiv by Yanukovych's security forces (ibid, p. 58). The month of February 2014 witnessed the demolition of 320 monuments to Lenin (Plokhii 2017). When Yanukovych fled the country at the end of February 2014, a staggering 340 monuments were demolished in five days, marking the height of

Leninfall (Rozenas & Vlasenko 2022). The fall of Lenin statues is a movement that should be understood as an expression of civil demand for memory policy actions aimed at overcoming communist past and Soviet cultural legacy (Liubarets 2016, p. 205). Indeed, the civil movement of toppling Lenin statues encapsulated a break-through in Ukraine's attempts to reconstruct its past and redefine its nation-building efforts.

Lenin statues experienced a drastic wave of removal where some cities have been creative in their efforts of transforming public spaces in the wake of the Revolution of Dignity retaliations towards Soviet legacy and Yanukovych's violence. The next chapter opens with the investigation of treatment of Lenin statues in Kyiv and Odesa, as well as the maintenance of debateable Soviet and Russian imperial monuments. Histories and events that have been discussed here are worthy of attention as they will become more pronounced in the analysis of statues and street art data in Chapter 4 Collective Memory. The Revolution of Dignity has played a prominent role in resurfacing historical legacies and revealing unique aspects of Ukraine's diverse identity.

Chapter 4: Collective Memory

Introduction & Overview

This chapter leads with an empirical contribution by using gathered visual data to capture Ukraine's process of collective memory construction during and following the Revolution of Dignity. Paying close attention to the transformation of public spaces is significant because the treatment of monuments and creation of street art demonstrates the dynamic involvement of elite and civil agency in the (re)construction of Ukrainian collective memory. Ukraine's case presents an example of national (re)construction, but not a seamless one. As will be seen in Part 1 and Part 2 of Data Analysis, the experiences of Kyiv and Odesa are analysed in order to capture their responses to their past. Both cities were selected because their distinctive histories and social worlds shape their collective and individual identity. A close comparative observation of the treatment of Lenin statues in Kyiv and Odesa captures the diverging impact of Russian tsarist and Soviet history on both cities. Toppling or deforming of statues are transformations that depict regional historical experiences which help capture Ukraine's diverse identities. Contestations about Ukrainian identity were embraced and brought to surface following the Revolution of Dignity, which can be traced through the investigation of collective memory.

Furthermore, this chapter investigates Soviet era and Russian tsarist epoch statues that have been left untouched for a long period of time. The maintenance of controversial monuments of the dead demonstrates the endurance of Soviet and Russian colonial ideological infiltration in Ukraine's process of renewing national identity. While the 2015 "Decommunisation Law" has enforced the speedy removal of Soviet symbolism in public spaces, the process in practice is not seamless. The undisturbed and untouched statues directly capture fissures in collective memory policies and the endurance of Russian repressive legacy in Ukrainian memory. The (re)construction of identity is not a smooth process, especially for a nation that has experienced ongoing external interferences in nation-building. Ukraine's case exemplifies the complexity of renewing national identity while struggling to deal with the repressing past. Lastly, the empirical data on street art in Kyiv aims to contribute to capturing the agency and empowerment of protesters and artists in reshaping Ukrainian national narratives. Spontaneous graffiti markings capture collective activism and the agency of protesters in reviving national heroes during moments of violence. Planned grand mural installations demonstrate the dynamic role of the city council and artists in solidifying sacrificial and national memory. This dissertation's goal is to capture moments of cohesion in Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction which can be directly observed through visual interactions and transformations of public spaces.

This chapter firstly outlines the conceptual framework that builds on Verdery's (1999) work by considering the importance of investigating statue transformations and outlines the significance of street art projections in the process of memory construction. Data Analysis is presented in three parts where collected visual data underpins the findings of this chapter. Part 1 comparatively investigates the transformation of Lenin statues in Kyiv and Odesa in order to demonstrate the role of history in shaping divergent responses that in turn reshape Ukraine's Soviet legacy. Part 2 analyses the maintenance of controversial Soviet statues in Kyiv and Russia colonial statues in Odesa. Mykola Shchors, Mykola Vatutin, Catherine II, and Alexander Pushkin are objects of investigation that reveal the contested process of memory (re)construction and the diversity of Ukrainian identity that has become more apparent in the local conservation of Soviet and Russian colonial legacy. Lastly, Part 3 demonstrates the significance of Kyiv's graffiti and mural art in exposing the process of memory (re)construction in the hands of the protesters and artists. While the graffiti of Taras Shevchenko and Kruty capture civil mobilisation of Ukrainian nationalistic legacies, murals of Serhiy Nihoyan and Lesya Ukrainka reveal the transformation of public space through motifs and symbols of sacrifice and Ukrainian ethnic nationalism. Overall, this chapter captures that the treatment of statues and the marking of paint on the walls are vital visual data that amplify our understanding of the role of elites and civil society in the process of identity (re)construction which became more apparent following the Revolution of Dignity.

Conceptual Framework

Treatment of Statues

Elites play an important role in directing and constructing narratives of the past. Symbols are used to create historical connections and memories. In his research on Russia, Gill (2011, pp. 2-5) refers to this process as the formation of the metanarrative, which is a body of discourse that represents a simplified form of ideology that is then used as a tool of communication between the regime and those who live under it. Symbols are a powerful form of language that simplify complex reality, myths, and ideas in an accessible and simple manner (Gill 2011; Gill 2013). These symbols are representative in the written and the visual, such as street names, monuments, symbols, posters, hymns, and flags, to name a few. Changes in governance, revolutions, and conflicts have often led to the creation and destruction of symbols, like monuments (Forest & Johnson 2011) and renaming of streets (Azaryahu 1997; Azaryahu & Kook 2002; Gill 2005; Gill 2013; Villamil & Balcells 2021). Politically contentious symbols usually memorialise a controversial historical event, personality, or institution (Rozenas & Vlasenko 2022). What makes Ukraine a fascinating case for investigation is the realisation that following 1991 independence, the nation largely preserved Soviet symbolism in public spaces until the Revolution of Dignity. The revolution created an opportunity for discussion and transformation of contentious collective memory by civil and elite society, which can be directly observed through the treatment of statues.

The act of tearing down a statue and raising up a new statue signals a contestation in the universe of meaning that previously endured (Verdery 1999, p. 5). Revolutions are shifts in the political landscape that directly impact identity production, which can be observed through the treatment of monuments and statues. This chapter will build on Verdery's (1999) exceptional work on "dead bodies" animating politics. According to Verdery (1999, p. 6), the statue is representative of the dead body it depicts and this body temporally freezes particular values. Statues are material objects which are occupied with narratives and meaning that are open to multiple interpretations. Tearing down the body means tearing down the values and identities that it once represented. Verdery's work treats the body of the statue as something that embodies politics. This chapter suggests to go one step further and observe in depth the ways in which the body is physically treated. The statue's treatment requires careful attention because it reveals diverging historical experiences and diversity of identity involved in the transformation. Whether torn down or deformed, the transformation is an opportunity to observe the changes as insights into the process of civil society contesting the past in a way that is representative of their identity. Kyiv's aggressive tearing down of Lenin and Odesa's humorous deformation are transformations that demonstrate moments of discontent for the past and most importantly, the complex process of identity (re)construction in Ukraine. The emotion that is attached to the transformation of the statue captures authentic

civil agency in the process of identity formation.

The treatment of the statue also includes attention to the maintenance of the dead body. Leaving the statue untouched signals endurance of the identity within the dead body. A magnitude of scholarly work has focused on Ukraine's "Decommunisation Law" impact (Kozyrska 2016; Marples 2018; Oliinyk & Kuzio 2021; Rozenas & Vlasenko 2022), motives and responses (Shevel 2016; Kasianov 2024) which have predominately centred on the removal and erasure aspects of Soviet symbolism (Liubarets 2016; Plokhii 2017; Gaidai 2021; Deschepper 2025). Contentious Soviet statues that have remained intact or unaffected by the civil Leninfall wave and state laws for a long period of time demonstrate the durability of Russian tsarist and Soviet identity in Ukraine's process of nation-building.

Street Art

Street art changes public space through markings of paint that tell a story. Painting and marking are generally recognised ways of asserting ownership and naming the land (Woods, 1995). Murals act as a communication channel that identifies problems, questions values, makes claims, and suggests alternatives (Chaffee 1993, p.8). While mural art is a planned and premeditated change to public space, graffiti's spontaneous and forbidden nature stains the walls with freedom of expression in moments of passion. Both murals and graffiti are visual projectors of identity and attitudes. Murals provide a visual account of history and memory (Tully 1997, p. 303). While those holding political power dictate the official version of the past, such power is neither complete nor absolute where within the crevices of political culture there are spaces in which resistance to the present and reconstruction of the past is created (Tully 1997). During periods of social unrest, civil society marks symbols and imagery on public spaces to express dissidence, memory, and national identity. The last section of this chapter will examine resistance in crevices of public spaces in order to capture moments of nationalism revived by protesters. While elites sponsor official national narratives and participate in restructuring the landscape of collective memory, street art is a tool of the civil society to express their perception of identity.

Data Analysis

Part 1: Treatment of Lenin

Figure 1: (left) Kyiv's Lenin on Taras Shevchenko Boulevarde (Ackermann & Gobert 2017), Figure 2: (right) Odesa's Lenin on Stovpova Street (Dumskaya.net 2015).

Before commencing with the analysis of the transformed statues of Lenin in Kyiv and Odesa, it is important to observe their original state and intention in order to understand the significance of the deformation. As seen in Figure 1, Kyiv's marbled Lenin stood at the bottom of a park alley that oversaw the Bessarabska Square market in the city centre. Kyiv's Lenin was strategically positioned at the bottom of a slope that met with the cross-section of the Square, visible to onlookers from all directions. The statue stood as a symbolic landmark of Lenin's cult of infiltration across Soviet republics. Travellers and onlookers were reminded of the state's ideology and authority when passing by the statue's grandness. By erecting the monument in 1946 Soviet authorities were attempting to reclaim the symbolic space after the defeat of the Nazis (Plokhii 2017). Kyiv's Lenin was carved in a life-like posture, imitating Lenin preaching his decree to the masses.

Similar to the physical likeness of Kyiv's Lenin, Odesa's gypsum Lenin (Figure 2) stood in a small public park alley on Stovpova Street. As seen in Figure 2, Lenin's authoritative posture along with brutalist features – sharply chiselled physiognomy and oversized physique – compose a righteous and an authoritative appearance. Positioned in a park next to a factory, the workers who would have seen Lenin's statue would interact with the literal and symbolic manifestation of Soviet ideology. The daily ritual of working at the factory and seeing Lenin's statue reinforced proletariat values of collectivism. Soviet ideology blurred the boundary between private and public where Lenin's statue aided in easily infiltrating the social life of those who passed by. Lenin embodied Soviet authority and the body of the statue stood tall to surveillance the masses and diffuse Soviet ideology with little to no effort. Following the Revolution of Dignity, both statues experienced physical transformations, which are demonstrative of shifts in Ukrainian collective memory of Soviet legacy.

Figure 3: (left) Kyiv's Lenin on toppled (Byesyedina 2013), Figure 4: (right) Odesa's Lenin transformed into Darth Vader (Ackermann & Gobert 2017).

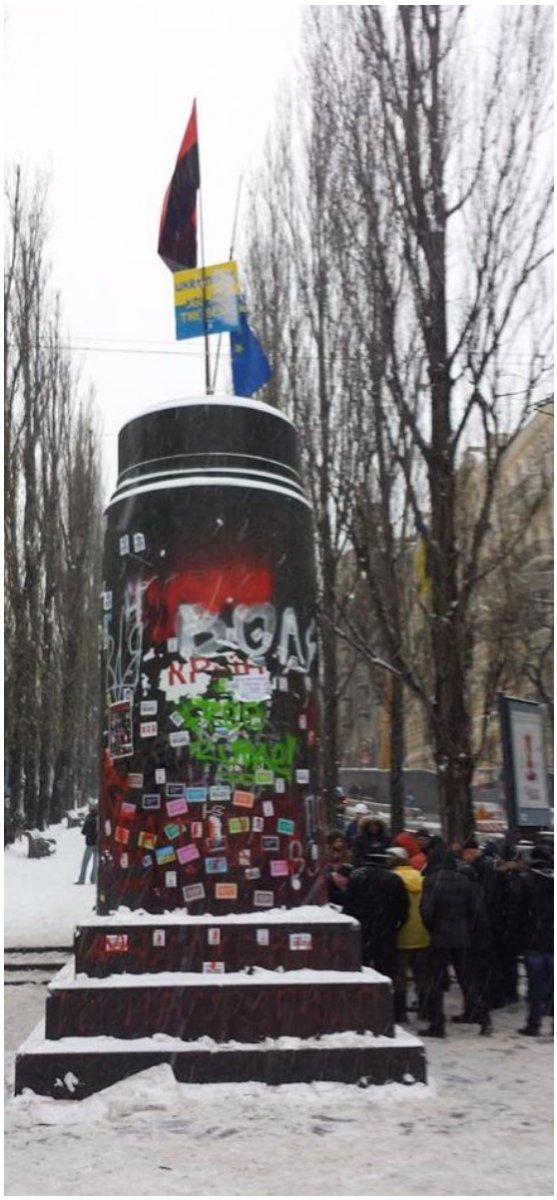


Figure 5: Kyiv's toppled Lenin (Byesyedina 2013)

The divergent treatment and transformation of the Lenin statue in its respective cities demonstrates diversity in Ukraine's treatment of the past, which has come to light following the Revolution of Dignity. Kyiv and Odesa's transformations demonstrate contestation and (re)construction of collective memory by civil society. While Kyiv resorted to aggression in the toppling of Lenin, Odesa's Lenin was comically deformed into a pop-cultural villain: Darth Vader. Another differentiating aspect of both cities is the timing of the transformation. Kyiv's statue was spontaneously and illegally toppled on December 8, 2013, marking the first Lenin fall in the country (Figure 5). While on the other hand, Alexander Milov, a local street artist, planned to deform Odesa's Lenin into an American sci-fi icon in October 2015, following the commencement of the "Decommunisation Law". As indicated in Chapter 3 Collective Memory History, historical experiences have shaped diverse Ukrainian identities. At close inspection, the treatment and transformation of statues in Kyiv and Odesa exposes Ukrainian divergent treatment of the past and by extension, Yanukovych's handling of the protest.

Kyiv's Lenin (Figure 5) was spontaneously toppled two days before the state resorted to violently clearing out protesters from Maidan Nezalezhnosti. At the time of the toppling, members of a far-right political group, Svoboda, along with other protesters were observed tying and heaving Lenin's statue until it hit the ground (Plokhii 2017). The fall of Kyiv's Lenin was significant because it demonstrated spontaneity in the aggressive removal of the statue, which Ukraine, particularly Kyiv, has not witnessed since 1991. The toppling signalled a radical confrontation with the Soviet past and retaliation against Yanukovych's government. While riot police, Berkut, have used brutal force in the beating of students on November 30 2013, the protesters responded to the violent

measures of the state by aggressively toppling Lenin. The toppling of Kyiv's Lenin is a depiction of civil society's agency in confronting and challenging the past and present repressions symbolically embodied in the body of the statue. The Revolution of Dignity triggered the revival of Ukraine's process of ridding Ukrainian collective memory from the Soviet past. Kyiv's toppling of Lenin caused a ripple effect across Ukrainian regions where communities were involved in destroying their local Lenin statues (Plokhii 2017). Lenin represented more than just the dead body of a Russian revolutionary, he embodied tsarist, Soviet, and current Russian interference in Ukraine's nation-building efforts. Yanukovych's pro-Russia political agenda along with blatant violence resonated with Kyiv's attitudes towards its Soviet past, and in the act of toppling Lenin, Ukraine's process of (re)constructing national identity began to gain clarity.

The aggressive treatment of Lenin in Kyiv demonstrated an authentic expression of protesters' grievance and resilience against Yanukovych's pro-Russian and violent government. The transformation was vicious and the brutality in the treatment of Kyiv's Lenin captured the determination of the protestors to reclaim space. The act of toppling Lenin, mounting Ukrainian (yellow and blue) and far-right nationalist flags (red and black), and marking the podium with nationalistic graffiti and stickers are all symbols of national identity that were used to claim physical territory and clear space for new memory. Since the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity, I observed protesters enforce the word-of-mouth rules against misdemeanour and alcohol intake. The measures were enforced by the collective due to the presence of street hooligans, known as "titushky", who disguised themselves as protesters in order to provoke violence, which would have conveniently justified state's repressive response (Chekh 2020). The aggressive treatment of Kyiv's Lenin was seen as an exception to the revolution's common rule of conduct because the statue represented a foreign Soviet and an enduring repressive Russian presence. The gesture of mounting flags and smearing the podium with nationalist symbols is similar to marking territory during war, which delineates one side from the other, the protesters from the violent pro-Russian state.

While Kyiv's Lenin was spontaneously and violently toppled, Odesa's Lenin was deformed in a planned and humorous way. As seen in Figure 4, the posture, size and the draping of the pants are recognisable features of Lenin which are now covered in deep black, with the additions of armour and helmet to complete the Darth Vader transformation. An artefact of recognisable Western popular culture, Darth Vader invites mockery of Lenin who sits cloaked under an American iconic villain. The comic transformation mocks Soviet legacy by distorting the sacred icon of communism, Lenin, into the profane and polar opposite, the product of American liberal culture. Furthermore, the humorous Lenin to Vader transformation empowers the audience to reflect on Lenin's often forgotten and blurred totalitarian characteristics in apolitical Odesa. By deforming

Lenin's body into a recognisable fictional villain, Soviet atrocities and Russian recent aggression against Ukraine (illegal annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine) are brought to surface. Odesa's comic identity is demonstrated in the humorous deformation of the Lenin statue, an emotion that holds resonance with the local community. Resorting to humour rather than aggression also exposes Odesa's unique approach to (re)constructing its relationship with the Soviet past. Once highly praised by the Soviet Union as the city of comedy, Odesa ironically used its sense of humour to humiliate Lenin and the Soviet past, and in the process of the deformation, reshape collective memory.

Odesa's deformation of Lenin into Darth Vader also transformed and adapted the public space to its audience, encouraging unconventional interaction with the new object. By installing a WIFI modem in Darth Vader's helmet, Milov (re)constructed the once stale presence of Lenin into a functional object. Removing the dead and outdated Lenin into a product of modernity, the internet. The striking statue upgrade is suggestive of Ukraine's transition from the Soviet past towards inventive ways of expressing dismissal of the past and identity. Odesa's experience of transforming Lenin demonstrates artistically curated agency in dealing with the Soviet past. Odesa's Lenin deformation happened following the enforcement of the "Decommunisation Laws", which indicates planned intention and the mobilisation of local creativity in the process of reshaping Odesa's Soviet spaces. However, while encasing Lenin in Darth Vader is indicative of Ukraine's determination to reshape the past, the contestation of Soviet legacy continues to persist. The outer appearance, Darth Vader, challenges but also shields the Soviet past, which remains in the inner shell of the statue as Lenin. Unlike Kyiv's Lenin which was physically removed, Odesa's Lenin is masked rather than toppled, which suggests hesitation of completely ridding Ukrainian collective memory of Soviet legacy. Odesa's case portrays the malleable nature of identity and contestations that are involved in reshaping the past. The treatment of Lenin statues is indicative of a shift towards challenging the Soviet past, but the memory of the past cannot be easily erased in a state that was under Soviet control for 70 years.

Figure 6: Installation of “Middle Way” in Kyiv (Byesyedina 2020)

Figure 7: Installation of "Confrontation" in Kyiv (Byesyedina 2020)

Following Kyiv's toppling of Lenin, the statue's podium has remained bare and the surrounding space has witnessed transformation that is suggestive of Ukraine's ongoing process of dealing with the Soviet past, shaping new memories, and (re)constructing public space. In 2018 Kyiv City State Administration (2018) revealed a new art object, "Middle Way" (Figure 6), which was created by a Romanian sculptor, Bogdan *Rață*, symbolising friendship and conversation. The object was initiated by the Romanian Embassy and the Mayor of Kyiv City, Vitali Klitschko (ibid). The collaboration between two neighbouring states which have experienced Soviet repressions suggests that Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity has had a regional effect on challenging Soviet legacy. Furthermore, the involvement of regional agency in the process of transforming controversial space can be interpreted as an attempt of Ukraine's determination towards European identification. While the initial transformation of Lenin's space was mobilised by civil nationalist agency, the space's malleable fate was handed over to administrative actors. When looking at

Figure 6, the giant blue masculine hand stemmed from the ground with the palm facing the space where Lenin once stood. The imagery that is often associated with cult leaders is portrayed through stances and gesticulation of hands as symbols of power and authority. This gesture is significant in challenging and revealing Soviet tyrant past. The hand's gesture reproduces an authoritative symbol to deflate the authority of once standing Lenin. Furthermore, the size of the hand blocks the gaze of onlookers from glancing at the space that was once dominated by Lenin. By reshaping the space of where Lenin once stood, Ukraine continues to (re)construct collective memory following the Revolution of Dignity.

Furthermore, 2019 saw the installation of yet another art object in Kyiv, which demonstrates Ukraine's ongoing process of reshaping collective memory. Titled "Confrontation" (Figure 7), the art object was created by Oleksii Zolotariov who was the winner of the Price of Freedom competition organised by the Ukraine Crisis Media Center (2019), a non-government organisation which was created following the Revolution of Dignity. The installation demonstrates diversity of actors in reshaping space that once symbolised totalitarian past. Curating creative competitions to reshape the space invites interpretations and expressions of civil actors in constructing new memory. Kyiv's ongoing fixation with transforming the space indicates determination in filling the site's void with new memory, which demonstrates the fluid nature of identity (re)construction. The object's abstract shape and confronting size dwarfs the podium's void, inviting the public to interpret the installation's meaning and reflect on the site's change. Furthermore, as seen in Figure 7, the sphere had been vandalised with "USSR" graffiti marking in red, which demonstrates the ongoing presence of Ukrainian contestation about Soviet legacy.

Part 2: Maintained Statues

While Lenin statues experienced swift removal or disfigurement by civil society and later, the enforcement of the 2015 "Decommunisation Law", not all statues that have a connection to Russia's repressive legacy were removed. As demonstrated in Part 1, statues of Lenin were targeted in cities like Kyiv and Odesa because Lenin's iconography – perceived as general knowledge to Ukrainians – easily resonated with Soviet repression and Yanukovych's violent and pro-Russian regime. Unlike Lenin, statues of Soviet military figures in Kyiv – Mykola Shchors and Mykola Vatutin – and Russian colonial figures in Odesa – empress Catherine II and poet Alexander Pushkin – were maintained for a long period following the Revolution of Dignity[2]. On the surface level, the maintenance of controversial Soviet and Russian colonial statues in Ukraine demonstrates loop holes in state memory policies. While the Decommunisation policy's exceptions played a role in prohibiting the removal of Mykola Shchors and Mykola Vatutin in Kyiv, the law completely excludes Russian colonial era symbolism from demolition, which has led to the legal maintenance of Catherine II and Alexander Pushkin monuments in Odesa. However, at closer inspection, the maintenance of Kyiv's and Odesa's statues captures the endurance of past legacies and complexity in the process of reshaping collective memory. The Revolution of Dignity has led to the resurfacing of divergent historical experiences of both cities that can be observed in the maintenance of respective controversial statues. In maintaining their corresponding statues both cities portray attachments to specific historical narratives which were once widely manufactured by repressive elites of the past.

Law No. 317-VIII (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015), Article 1 states that the exception to the removal of Soviet totalitarian symbolism requires the object (memorial or monument) to either relate to the expulsion and resistance of Nazi occupiers from Ukraine or contribute to the development of Ukrainian science and culture. Furthermore, Article 4 indicates that removal of symbolism is prohibited on gravestones located on burial grounds, places of honourable burials, and on the territory of cemeteries. Despite an object's link to Soviet heritage, the law's exclusions are designed to conserve memory of Ukrainian heroism and innovation, and protect sacred grounds. Furthermore, monuments and memorials of such nature are further protected by a cultural heritage Law 1805-III. In order to override the protection status of such objects, local

[2] It should be noted that since commencing research, conducting fieldwork, data collection, and writing, this dissertation initially categorised Shchors, Vatutin, and Catherine II as maintained monuments. However, due to recent developments, the three statues have been removed. Vatutin was removed in February 2023, Shchors in December 2023, Catherine II in December 2022. The recent demolition of these statues does not detract from the logic of the arguments presented in this section of Data Analysis. The longevity of the statues' maintenance demonstrates the endurance of Russian legacy in Ukrainian cities and the complexity in (re)constructing collective memory following revolt.

governments are involved in filing a petition for removal. The exceptions to the law that prohibit the eradication of some Soviet symbolism present an administrative problem for communities that would like to remove such objects from their public spaces. While Kyiv's Soviet statues fall under the exclusion of Decommunisation Law No. 317-VIII and protection of Law 1805-III, Odesa's colonial era statues are protected by the latter.

Figure 8: Kyiv's Mykola Shchors (Byesyedina 2020)

Located at an intersection of Symon Petliury Street and Taras Shevchenko Boulevard – the same Boulevard that was once home to Lenin as shown in Part 1 – the statue of Mykola Shchors (Figure 8) displayed the Soviet commander in his primal might. In the wake of the Russian Revolution, Mykola Shchors was a Russian commander who led the Red Army units during the capture and occupation of Kyiv in 1919. Shchors became the first temporary head of Kyiv conquered by the Red Army, and on behalf of the temporary Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine signed the first Soviet orders in Russian (Yefimenko 2022). While Shchors' historical significance in Kyiv is temporary, his imagery was a source of Joseph Stalin's Soviet propaganda

in Ukraine that inflated Soviet heroism and falsified an amiable relationship between Ukraine and the Soviet Union. Stalin adapted the cult image of the commander to Ukrainian realities in order to manufacture positive memories of Ukraine's first interaction with the Red Army. Following Stalin's genocide of Ukrainians by famine, Holodomor (1932-1933), the Soviet Union produced Soviet images of Ukrainians in order to demonstrate the closeness of Ukrainian people and the Red Army where this was done using the image of Shchors in Ukraine (Yefimenko 2022). For example, Stalin commissioned Oleksander Dovzhenko's (Soviet Ukrainian filmmaker) production of the 1939 biopic film 'Shchors". Before 1935, a majority of Soviet journalists and scholars did not know well of Shchors; the film constructed a cult hero status to the name that did not exist prior to its production (Liber, 1997, pp. 271-273; Yekelchyk 2002). Following WWII, the Soviet Union continued to produce Shchors' heroism in Ukraine, which led to the erection of his equestrian statue in Kyiv in 1954.

Shchors' statue in Kyiv symbolises the endurance of Soviet manipulation of Ukrainian collective memory. Kyiv's long maintenance of the statue implies an enduring appeasement of contested Soviet history which clashes with Ukrainian nationalistic narratives that emerged following the Revolution of Dignity. The maintenance of Shchors in the capital of Ukraine depicts the presence of diverse identities that are attached to clashing memories of the past. In leading the occupation of Kyiv, Shchors symbolised the downfall of the newly formed Ukrainian National Republic (UNR, 1919-1920), which sought freedom from the Russian Empire just to be occupied by the Soviet Union. In 2009 the statue was added to the register of cultural heritage sites of national importance (Artymyshyn 2022) and on December 9 2023, Kyiv City State Administration dismantled and relocated Shchors to an aviation museum. Having outlived the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity, Shchors' statue demonstrates an example of the endurance of Soviet myth-making in Kyiv's collective memory, but not without contestation. As seen in Figure 8, Shchors experienced vandalism, which suggests civil activism in contesting Soviet legacy and challenging the commander's positive imagery. The word "KAT" in Ukrainian translates to "torturer", "punisher", or "executioner". When considering the seven-ton grandness of the statue that could not be physical challenged by those who opposed the maintenance of Shchors, marking of rhetoric was a conveniently available tool in expressing discontent.

Figure 9: Kyiv's Mykola Shchors prior to removal (Byesyedina 2023)

The graffiti and markings on Shchors' statue signify the ongoing lively debate about the status of Soviet repressive history. As seen in Figure 9, prior to demolition in winter of 2023, the podium was transformed by more graffiti markings. "Demolish me already", "torturer", "fought against the UNR", "topple me", "killer", and "criminal" are expressions that are marked on the podium of the statue. The graffiti expressions contested the sanitised image of Shchors which was glorified in Soviet Ukrainian history and in turn dismantled Shchors' myth. In addition, the expressions are indicative of a civil society that continues to challenge state's lack of enforcement of memory policy, utilising vandalism as a tool to contest controversial memory of the past. Furthermore, it is important to reflect that Shchors' statue saw an increase in vandalism in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. While the Revolution of Dignity impacted the momentum of Ukraine's process of challenging Ukrainian memory of repressive Soviet legacy, Russia's war in Ukraine consolidated the process. Soviet legacy endures in Ukrainian public spaces and meets resistance, a process that demonstrates diverging narratives that compete to construct Ukrainian identity. Shchors' case is significant because it exemplifies that the process of memory reformation is not simple but is rather met with policy challenges, public contestation, and experiences the

endurance of repressive historical narrative in spaces that are determined to revive national identity.

Figure 10: Kyiv's Mykola Vatutin (Byesyedina 2019)

Mykola Vatutin's statue (Figure 10) in Kyiv further exemplifies how contentious history and sacred space present a challenge for Ukraine's process of (re)constructing memory. Vatutin was a Russian commander of the Soviet Army who took part in liberating Ukrainian cities from German Nazi occupation (Marples 2007, pp. 157-158). While Vatutin was glorified by Soviet authorities, at closer inspection, Vatutin's role in liberating Kyiv involved questionable tactics that resulted in heavy casualties of Ukrainian soldiers. Marples (2007, p. 158) specifies that under Vatutin's command, approximately 250,000 mobilised Ukrainian young men supposedly perished in the cold waters of the Dnipro River during combat against Nazi Germans. Furthermore, it has been speculated that the callousness of the tragedy resulted in Vatutin's execution in 1944 by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) who were motivated to liberate Ukraine from the Soviet Union and Nazi German occupation (ibid; Hrynevych 2003 & 2005). UPA were the first Ukrainian insurgent group organised in 1943 following the exile of the UNR's government, who saw the war as an

opportunity to take control of ethnic Ukrainian lands (Yurchuk 2014, pp. 42-46). What makes Vatutin a contentious figure in Ukraine's process of reshaping memory is his role in the repression and persecution of Ukrainian insurgency (Kabatsiy 2023). The Soviet Union saw UPA as a contradiction to the Great Patriotic War myth – which was produced in order to construct a monolithic Soviet identity – resulting in the vilification and criminalisation of the insurgency (Erlacher 2013, p. 290). Furthermore, Soviet vilification of Ukraine's attempts at liberation from Soviet and Nazi occupation has continued to thrive in the rhetoric of the current Russian government who continues to fabricate Ukraine's past and contemporary ties to fascism in order to justify its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Soviet and current Russia's vilification of "Ukrainian fascism" narrative is an important aspect to consider when investigating the contention surrounding Vatutin's endurance in Kyiv because it demonstrates that memory narratives matter in the way state's shape their identity, and by extension, justify foreign policy.

It is evident that some aspects of Vatutin's history are speculative because the Soviet Union censored and fabricated news and histories in order to shape a glorified perception of its legacy, which often meant the vilification of retaliation against Soviet authority. The speculation surrounding Vatutin's role in the deaths of Ukrainian military and UPA's involvement in Vatutin's assassination demonstrates the complex aspect of recovering historical reality and dealing with collective memory in contemporary Ukraine. Vatutin's role in Ukrainian history presents a conundrum for Ukraine's process of memory revaluation since Vatutin simultaneously symbolises Ukraine's heroism against German Nazi occupation and military crimes against the Ukrainians in the Soviet Army. Kyiv's conflicting relationship with Vatutin's legacy is directly demonstrated in the maintenance of his statue following the Revolution of Dignity. Vatutin's example exposes the complexity of decision making involved in distilling contentious historical legacy which does not fit an absolute category of "right" or "wrong", heroic or repressive narrative. Erected in 1948, the statue was placed above Vatutin's grave, making the site immune to the "Decommunisation Law". Furthermore, the statue was registered under heritage status (Law 1805-III) in 2010 (Kabatsiy 2023), suggesting that some aspects of Ukraine's process of reshaping Soviet legacy in public spaces remained stagnant. It is also important to take into account the year 2010 which saw President Viktor Yanukovych, an ideologically pro-Russian and pro-Soviet driven elite, who might have played a role in conserving Soviet legacy. Protected by law, Vatutin's statue exemplifies Ukraine's contested process of revaluating its Soviet heritage despite the wave of nationalism following the Revolution of Dignity.

Figure 11: Police guard Vatutin in 2018 (Hromadske 2018)

Prior to Vatutin's demolition in 2023, there was an attempt at toppling that reignited the contentious nature of the monument and Soviet legacy. In April 2018, on the anniversary of Vatutin's death, members of a nationalistic organisation vandalised the monument with red paint while some came to commemorate the commander with flowers (Ukrinform 2018). Specifically, there was an attempt to topple the statue by representatives of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) who brought a ladder and sledgehammer to the site, but were stopped by police forces (ibid). A police representative of Kyiv police, Andriy Kryshchenko, explained that the demolition of Vatutin's statue was illegal since the monument stands on masses of graves, making the process of removal challenging (Hromadske 2018). As seen in Figure 11, police encircled Vatutin's monument, safeguarding the body and its contested history. The 2018 clashes demonstrate that while the law has limited the removal of Vatutin's statue following the Revolution of Dignity, Ukrainian society continued to converse about Soviet legacy. While some commemorate the Soviet legacy, the activism of OUN representatives demonstrates the ongoing resurfacing of contention about the Soviet Union's heroic imagine during the Second World War. Furthermore, the sheer volume of police securing the site captures Ukraine's contention over Vatutin's legacy, which at times of confrontation is subjected to state monitoring of conflict. In 2019, the newly appointed head of the Ukrainian Istitute of National Rememberance, Anton Drobovych, explained that despite of Vatutin's involvement in crimes against Ukrainian people,

Vatutin's monument could be removed only if the law is modifyed (Ukrinform 2019).

Lastly, Vatutin's statue in Kyiv demonstrates that the dead might wield more power than the living in the process of (re)constructing collective memory. Erecting monuments of military figures to commemorate and glorify their legacy is a common practice by nations. Ukraine's case presents situations where the enforcer of legacy, the Soviet Union, is long gone, but the remaining relics, the statue and the grave, continue to present the newly independent nation with a challenge in the process of (re)constructing memory. Vatutin's body and statue were used to enforce Soviet memory of war, disparage speculations about Vatutin's ethical misconduct, and most importantly, impose the Soviet identity onto Ukrainian memory. An inscription on the base of the statue reads "To General Vatutin from the Ukrainian People". Clashing with Vatutin's questionable legacy on Ukrainian soil, the rhetoric of the inscription fabricates a forced narrative of how the glorification of Vatutin came to being, that is, by the assertiveness of the "Ukrainian People". As if to say that the Ukrainian people practically played a direct role in the burial and erecting of the statue in Vatutin's honour. The inscription attempts to enforce and internalise the Soviet identity and the Ukrainian identity into one. Furthermore, the peculiarity of Vatutin, a Russian-native, buried in Kyiv, suggests that the dead body played a role in occupying Ukrainian memory and physical space with Soviet memory. Vatutin's statue and grave were placed in Mariinsky Park, which is no stranger to the dead. Following the Red Army's occupation of Kyiv, the Soviets turned the square of Mariinsky Park, a public park in the centre of the city, into a necropolis. In 1918, the Soviets buried Red Army soldiers and Ukrainian fighters in two nameless mass graves (Kucheruk 2019). The historical significance of 1918 burials relate to the case of Vatutin because it demonstrates how the Soviets used the dead in occupying public spaces and memory. As an extension of Soviet legacy, Vatutin's statue continues to maintain a grip on the direction of memory (re)construction. Vatutin's example shows that Soviet legacy lingers in Ukraine's attempts of (re)constructing collective memory, demonstrating that the process is far from seamless. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Vatutin's statue was removed in 2023 demonstrating that the war was the tipping point that has led to the weakening of Soviet symbolic legacy in Ukrainian public spaces and the strengthening of Ukrainian national distinctiveness.

Figure 12: Odesa's Catherine II (Artymyshyn, 2022)

While Kyiv's Shchors and Vatutin statues demonstrate the complicated maintenance of repressive Soviet legacy in public spaces, Odesa's Catherine II and Alexander Pushkin monuments represent the city's contested attachment to Russian colonial past. Surrounded by her four principal administrators (Grigorii Potemkin, Prince Platon Zubov, Jose De Ribas, and Franz De Voland), the Russian empress (Figure 12) stands on top of a pillar overseeing the city she claimed to have founded. Catherine II was erected in Odesa in 1900. In 1920 the Bolsheviks pulled Catherine II down and, in her place, installed the monument to Karl Marx (Herlihy 2006, p. 17). In 1977 Marx gave way to a Soviet realist rendition of the 1905 Battleship Potemkin mutineers (ibid). Finally, in 2007, a new monument to Catherine II was placed where the original statue had stood (ibid). What makes Catherine II statue in Odesa a compelling case for study is her defiance of Ukraine's political changes, which demonstrates the enduring attachment of imperial legacy in Odesa's politics of collective memory.

Some Ukrainian elites have used Russian imperial symbolism to challenge Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction. Catherine II's revival in 2007 sees the involvement of a local elite in

mobilising Russian imperial memory through physical changes to public spaces. Ruslan Tarpan, Odesa's council member and member of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (1994-2010), initiated the reconstruction of the monument in 2007 (Istorychna Pravda, 2022). Active from 1996 until 2022, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU) ideology maintained the Soviet Marxist-Leninist tradition, calling for the reunification of the Union with ex-USSR states (Ishchenko 2023, p. 667). At first glance, it might seem paradoxical for an ultra-leftist elite to initiate the reconstruction of a Russian imperial symbol that contradicts party ideology. However, Russian imperial and Soviet identities are interwoven and continue to present Ukraine with a challenge at (re)constructing the past because both Russian legacies played a role in repressing Ukrainian identity. Furthermore, pro-Russian elites that are involved in memory politics demonstrate the heterogenous nature of Ukrainian identity. Russian imperial and Soviet influence in Ukraine's memory did not cease to exist following 1991 and can be traced through the maintenance of Russian imperial monuments. Elites play a role in mobilising colonial history that is familiar to the local context in order to reshape national identity fitting to their political views. Odesa's acceptance and maintenance of colonial symbolism following the Revolution of Dignity also points to the city's inherent attachment to Catherine II myth.

Tarpan's initiative to re-install Catherine II reveals the endurance of Russian imperialism in contradicting the attempts of a newly independent Ukraine at reviving national identity. The PSPU is an example of Russian ideological presence in Ukraine's process of nation building which has been influential in preserving Odesa's memory of Catherine II. The revival of Catherine II statue is not a random choice when considering Odesa's colonial past and Russia's ongoing obsession to reclaim land once occupied during its imperial might. Furthermore, in hindsight of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the installation and maintenance of Russian imperial symbolism in Ukraine can be considered as an enduring tool of soft power used to destabilise the European leaning trajectory of Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Odesa emerged as an integral facet of the Russian Empire's military expansion into the Black Sea region (Gubkina 2024, p. 81). Russia's current foreign policy in Ukraine points to Russia's aims of reviving imperial boarders through blatant force and mobilisation of imperial rhetoric (Putin, 2021) and symbolism via proxy elites. Symbols play a vital role in shaping memory that can be influenced by elites, particularly when the symbol is receptive to the local community's heritage. Odesa's example demonstrates that while elites play a role in shaping memories, unique colonial experiences of the city result in the embrace of colonial symbols. While Ukraine rid its cities of Lenin statues following the Revolution of Dignity, it is evident that in some cases regional identities have been selective about their reconceptualization of Russian repressive legacy in their memory, which is seen in the maintenance of Catherine II after 2014.

Figure 13: Odesa's Catherine II vandalised (Callaghan, 2022)

Odesa's attachment to Catherine II demonstrates the effectiveness of Russification policies in impacting the city's perception of its own identity. Furthermore, Odesa's case puts into perspective the peculiarity of Ukraine's memory politics owed to the state's fairly recent (re)construction of national identity mobilised by the Revolution of Dignity. While Ukraine's 2015 "Decommunisation Law" targets the Soviet past in order to illuminate repressive history and uphold Ukrainian nationalism in the removal of Soviet totalitarian symbolism, Russian colonial history is not considered on the policy agenda, although it is the primal source of repressive legacy. Currently, Ukraine does not have a memory law that treats Russian colonial symbolism as repressive, despite of colonial Russification history which continues to impact the fabric of Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction, clearly exemplified through the enduring maintenance of Catherine II. The presence of Russian colonial legacy in Ukraine's collective memory depicts the complexity of choices nations make in removing or retaining parts of a repressive past. Where do nations draw the line on what history was repressive or glorious in the process of (re)constructing memory? One might consider that the imperial past creates a discourse

of romanticization and grandeur, which attracts victims of colonialism to retain attachments to imperial symbolism in public spaces. Odesa's maintenance of Catherine II depicts the city's perception of itself through the lens of Russian imperialism in a way that emphasises the narrative of its creation and downplays the history of repression. Odesa's experience with the empress demonstrates how some identities struggle to come to terms with repressive history. The city's attachment to Russian imperial memory illuminates how Ukraine's diverse historical experiences have produced a plurality of identities, some that consolidate their memory, those that attempt to challenge it, and others that do both.

Odesa's attachment to Russian imperial legacy began to fracture following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, demonstrating the fragility of imperial memory. As seen in Figure 13, in December 2022, civilians attached a noose around Catherine II's neck and placed a red sack on her head. With marks of red paint on the base of the statue's pedestal and graffiti that reads "BE GONE!", Odesites demonstrated their disillusionment with Russia's imperial past. Transforming Catherine II into an executioner in December 2022 led to her removal in December by the city council (BBC News Ukraine, 2022). Catherine II's case suggests that changes in collective memory do not always happen rapidly and that civil conversations about memory in public spaces continue to take place following revolutions. Odesa's case demonstrates that while identity is impacted and shaped by its historical experiences and elites, events like revolts, and more definitively wars, re-mobilise the process of (re)construction with new fervour. The statue's maintenance and final removal demonstrates that identity is fluid and sooner or later the seemingly enduring imperial symbolism is subject to scrutiny. Russian ongoing interferences in Ukraine's self-determination ignited a response of national consolidation seen in the removal of Russian imperial symbolism. While statues are made of solid structure, the narratives and memories they embody are permeable. Odesa's period of preserving the empress' statue cautions against treating statues as objects that capture the absolute essence of national identity because collective memory is subject to contestation. Therefore, the removal of the statue represents the fluid nature of Ukrainian identity.

Figure 14: Odesa's bust of Alexander Pushkin (Gulayeva 2024)

Odesa's experience of maintaining Russian colonial symbolism in its public spaces also extends to Alexander Pushkin. Erected in 1889 on Prymorskyi Boulevard, Pushkin's statue stands in Odesa to this day. Born to Russian nobility, Pushkin (1799-1837) was a poet, novelist, and play writer who had a troubled relationship with the Russian tsarist authority and rose to the title of "Russia's greatest poet", especially following Stalin's memory politics. Pushkin's conflicting relationship with the tsar is relevant to understanding the poet's connection to Odesa. After finding Pushkin's writings offensive, tsarist authority exiled the poet to Odesa for a year (1823-1824) and placed him under the supervision of Governor-General Count Vorontsov where he spent his time writing (Bathea & Davydon 2006 p. 15). Pushkin's accounts of Odesa are contradictory and he was known to only a few people in town (Druzhnikov 2018, p. 135). When back in Moscow, Nicholas I censored Pushkin's work and assigned him the humiliating court title of a courtier (ibid pp.18-21). While Pushkin's life and death during the Russian Empire were tragic, the poet's legacy has become a major discourse in Russian identity construction and consolidation. Pushkin's connection to the Russian patriotic myth needs to be understood in the Soviet context. Dobrenko (2006, p. 203, pp. 207-212) explains that following Stalin's terror, Soviet authority glorified Pushkin in the capacity of a "Russian national poet" in order to project a positive image of Russian identity, which in reality was constrained by trauma and national complexes. Stalinist Pushkin was Russified and his

writing were used as a tool to give meaning to Russian identity (Sandler 2004 p. 1; Dobrenko 2006, p. 212). Therefore, Pushkin's imperial legacy needs to be understood as simultaneously an imperial and Soviet myth that was used to reshape Russian national identity, and in the process, influence the memories of colonised identities.

Despite of the poet's short-lived exile in Odesa, Pushkin's legacy continues to shape the Odesa's collective memory demonstrating the enduring impact of colonial and Soviet narratives. The maintenance of Pushkin (Figure 14) in Odesa can be interpreted as a result of Russian imperial Russification policies that aimed to induce an inferiority complex due to hostility to Ukrainian nationalism. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the subordination of Ukrainian cultural value and the imposition of Russian cultural dominance intended to weaken Ukrainian national identity. While Pushkin does not compare to the explicit imperial authority of Catherine II, the poet's myth represents Russia's enduring imperial culture in Ukrainian collective memory that challenges Ukrainian national identity. Pushkin's bust in Odesa is an object that embodies Russian imperial memory and Soviet propaganda that continue to be a part of Odesa's process of identity construction. Furthermore, when considering Russia's nationalistic myth of Pushkin along its foreign policy – illegal annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas in 2014, and full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 – the statue can be interpreted as a tool of Russia's soft power used to challenge Ukrainian national integrity. The statue is a relic of Russian past and current interferences in Ukraine's process of nation-building and democratic determinacy.

The plurality of Ukrainian identity that is shaped by different historical experiences has become a source of manipulation by Russia but a point of contestation for Ukraine's process of (re)constructing national identity. For example, in 2014, Russian media spread false narratives of Ukraine as a "divided country" in order to justify the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas (Kuzio 2019). While Ukraine's contestations about its past are in reality a part of the nation's identity (re)construction process that involves revaluation or consolidation of memory, the process has become a convenient source for Russia's propaganda machine that justifies war and spreads misconceptions about Ukrainian sovereignty. As seen in Figure 14, the pillar that holds Pushkin's bust has been smeared with red paint in 2024, depicting civil contestation of the symbol's legacy. Ukraine is not a genuinely deeply divided society; it is a nation which gained independence in 1991 and homes diverse identities who are determined to contest their conception of history because their histories are very much alive and relevant to the representation of their identity. Unlike in the case of the Balkans where deep ethnic divides have been underpinned by religious violence (Guelke 2012, p. 14), divisions that occur in Ukraine are based on the direction of Ukraine's nation-building. Pushkin's time in Odesa was temporary but the inscription on the bottom of the bust that reads "to A. S. Pushkin, citizen of Odessa" points to Odesa's inflated infatuation with Russia's national

myth that continues to occupy the city's collective memory. On one hand, Odesa's historical experiences continue to contribute to the current significance to Pushkin that helps in shaping the city's multicultural heritage. On the other, the recent vandalism suggests that Odesa's process of revaluating Pushkin's legacy is far from consolidated, demonstrating the fluid nature of identity. Odesa's contestation about its imperial monuments, whether its preservation or removal, should be understood as an attempt of gaining cohesion in the process of redefining national identity. While the Revolution of Dignity did not immediately lead to Odesa's removal of the statue, its maintenance has illuminated diversity in Ukraine's identity process of identity (re)construction which involves an enduring attachment to Russian imperial legacy.

Part 3: Street Art

While elites play a role in commissioning statues in order to shape official state memory, civil society also participates and responds to the process of identity (re)construction by transforming public spaces through the disfigurement and maintenance of statues – as investigated in Part 1 and Part 2 – and through the use of street art. During and following the Revolution of Dignity, graffiti and murals were used as visual tools of contesting state repression, Ukraine's Soviet memory, and consolidating national identity through the mobilisation of sacrificial and heroic imagery. Taras Shevchenko and Kruty are graffiti examples that reveal civil agency in mobilising national icons in order to challenge Yanukovych's repression of the 2013-2014 protests and by extension momentarily renew nationalistic memory of the past and present. One the other hand, murals of Serhiy Nihoyan and Lesya Ukrainka created visual permanence to Ukrainian national memory.

Graffiti

Figure 15: Stencil of Taras Shevchenko by Sociopath (Byesyedina 2014)

Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) was a Ukrainian poet, writer, and political figure, whose influential work about Ukrainian identity played a vital role in the survival of Ukrainian culture during the Russian Empire. Shevchenko's legacy has become Ukraine's symbol of national distinctiveness where his imagery during the Revolution of Dignity represented Ukraine's reconstruction of national identity. Having been sent to exile by the Russian Empire, Shevchenko's nationalistic writing and activism turned him into a martyr for Ukrainian people during his time, and most importantly, for contemporary Ukraine (Grabowicz 2014, pp. 421-422). Shevchenko's graffiti stencil (Figure 15) appeared during the Revolution of Dignity on Hrushevsky Street which

witnessed state enforced violence and clashes between Berkut and the protesters. Shevchenko's stencil was created by a Ukrainian artist by the nickname of Sociopath. The graffiti installation also featured two other prominent Ukrainian writers, Ivan Franko and Lesya Ukrainka, painted in close proximity on the same face of the building. The stencils were placed on the wall of a building that faced the entrance of the Dynamo Kyiv Stadium, which became a heated borderline location between protesters and the security forces. During the longevity of the revolution, protesters barricaded Hrushevsky Street from Berkut raids that threatened to clear out the city centre's Maidan Nezalezhnosti square.

The graffiti stencil is significant as it represents civil activism in the process of recovering historical legacy that resonated with past and present grievances. Furthermore, the graffiti presence during the protests temporarily captured and produced memory which aided in communicating nationalistic sentiments of the movement. While monuments are commissioned objects whose physicality renders relative longevity, graffiti art is often a temporary marking of paint that helps reveal occurring societal phenomena. Shevchenko's stencil should be treated as an object that captures not only the nationalistic sentiments of the revolution, but most importantly, constructs memory of the revolt through visual symbolism. The graffiti acts as a communicator and coordinator of common knowledge that enables collective activism (Chwe 2001). Given the placement of the stencil, the graffiti acted as a marker, delineating the protester's territory from Berkut's. Furthermore, the stencil aided in visually claiming ownership of space by evoking Shevchenko's rhetoric that resonated with the actions of the protesters. Shevchenko's famous Ukrainian saying written below his silhouette roughly translates to: "the fire does not burn the fierce". The play of words symbolically refers to Ukrainian resilience that has been shaped by historical experiences of repression. The saying insinuates that Ukrainians do not fear overcoming new obstacles because they have already been shaped and hardened by obstacles of the past. The word "fire" juxtaposed against the orange cocktails Molotov and a bandana covering Shevchenko's lower face connects Ukrainian past to its present strive for independence. Dressing an iconic image of Shevchenko using symbols that resemble the objects used by protesters demonstrates the merging of past and present struggles for independence in order to mobilise collective activism.

Similar to the obstacles Ukrainians faced during the Russian Empire, protesters of the Revolution of Dignity fought against the violence of a corrupt and violent pro-Russian state. Shevchenko's imagery insinuates that Ukrainians are well aware of their history of suffering which they mobilise and reinvent in a moment of revolt. Studying street art during revolutions is vital because visual rhetoric is significant data that captures social phenomena which could not have become apparent otherwise. The stencil instantly bridges historical and modern grievances, depicting Ukraine's enduring strive for self-determination in the process of identity (re)construction. The Revolution

of Dignity is a refining moment for Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction, seen in the mobilisation of nationalistic street art that embodies iconic figures such as Shevchenko. Furthermore, the stencil signals civil assertion of agency in the process of recovering nationalistic memory in order to mobilise collective activism. It is important to note that the graffiti was removed in 2017 by the shop owner of the building that was marked with the stencil (Censor.NET 2017). Graffiti often draws societal debates about whether it is art or vandalism where markings on public or private property are bound for removal. The removal of Shevchenko's stencil demonstrates Ukraine's ongoing process of conversing about the revolution's memory and its significance to public space. Furthermore, the erasure of the graffiti depicts the process of public and private contestations about the appropriate path for Ukraine's national identity. Graffiti is an unguarded object and its vulnerability to removal makes it a significant indicator of Ukraine's ongoing process of identity (re)construction.

Figure 16: "Our Kruty are here" graffiti (Byesyedina 2014)

Figure 17: Close up of "Our Kruty are here" graffiti (Byesyedina 2014)

Similar to Shevchenko's stencil, Figure 16 and 17 capture Ukrainian civil society mobilising nationalistic Ukrainian legacy along with the memory of sacrifice. Figure 16 depicts a close up of the "OUR KRUTY ARE HERE" graffiti[3], which refers to the 1918 Battle of Kruty. The Battle of Kruty saw the mobilisation of a small Ukrainian army that blockaded and delayed the Bolshevik offensive on Kyiv in order for the UNR to secure and declare independence. The name is owed to the location of the battle which was near the Kruty railway station, a strategically important junction on the railroad to Kyiv (Encyclopedia of Ukraine 1988). The battle occurred against the background of several major events in and around Ukraine. Following the proclamation of the UNR in 1917, Bolshevik formations had invaded large parts of the country. In January 1918, the Ukrainian Central Council was in negotiations with the Central Powers concerning the bestowal of protectorate status for UNR by Imperial Germany with a Ukrainian delegation having travelled to Brest-Litovsk to agree conditions (Liubarets 2021, p. 29). Detachments of inexperienced UNR soldiers, mostly cadets and students, were sent to the Kruty railway station to blockade the approaching Bolshevik Army, buying the Ukrainian delegation time for negotiations (ibid, p. 30).

[3] It is important to disclose that I captured this photograph not realising its blurry quality, nor understanding at the time the significance of the graffiti markings. While Figure 15 and 16 poorly depict the message of the graffiti, the markings have been sighted by Ukrainian academia. Maidan Museum (2022) conducted an online round-table discussion between Ukrainian scholars and PhD candidates on the topic of memorialising the Heavenly Hundred where Nadiya Kiss made reference to the presence of "OUR KRUTY ARE HERE" graffiti on Hrushevsky Street.

While eventually the young Ukrainian state was engulfed by the Soviet Union, the Kruty youth became a symbol of national martyrs for many Ukrainians (Klymenko 2019, pp. 98-99). The appearance of Kruty graffiti in the climactic middle of the clashes between protesters and Berkut demonstrates civil reincarnation of Ukrainian heroic and sacrificial narratives that parallel with the events of the Revolution of Dignity.

The authorless graffiti and its placement are significant in recovering historical legacy during revolt because it captures civil activism in the process of mobilising and creating Ukrainian collective memory. The Kruty narrative symbolises heroic sacrifice, an image of national martyrdom, which parallels with the deaths of protesters during the length of the Revolution of Dignity. In mobilising historical cultivation of heroic sacrifice through graffiti, the protesters are forming a new memory of sacrifice bound by real-life events. The authorless, messy, and impromptu stylistic nature of the graffiti writing reveals a moment of spontaneity where sacrificial memory is reincarnated and created by the protesters. Figure 16 captures a mass of protesters gathered by the Dynamo Kyiv Stadium entrance following clashes with Berkut, evident from the dark soot that has stained the pillars of the archway in the background. The graffiti stands in the middle of the street, facing inward, towards the protesters and away from Berkut, which suggests that the collective memory of Kruty was utilised as a tool of communication and motivation for protesters who saw themselves in the heroic imagery of the 1918 battle. Studying the graffiti's temporality might seem like a defeatist approach to tracing identity construction, but in reality, the fleeting and frenzied markings of paint help to precisely visualise a moment of clarity in Ukraine's contested process of identity (re)construction. In that moment, Ukrainians were using nationalistic history to reconfirm the importance of their role in the Revolution of Dignity in shaping Ukrainian identity. Furthermore, Shevchenko's stencil and the Kruty graffiti are both revealing of the revolution's aims that are not just limited to the immediate factor of civil opposition to a violent, pro-Russian, Yanukovych's state. The Revolution of Dignity embodied a grander process at work, the (re)construction of Ukrainian identity, which can be traced through civil mobilisation of cult heroes who serve as visual clues to understanding Ukraine's historic and contemporary strive for national self-determination.

Murals

Figure 18: Serhiy Nihoyan (Byesyedina 2016)

In contrast to the temporal and spontaneous quality of graffiti, murals are large scale commissioned paintings that permanently cover a large portion of a wall. Mural art has been associated with the growing trend of creatively gentrifying neighbourhoods (Rich 2019; Montenegro 2025). However, in Ukraine's case, the rise in murals since 2013 has become an instrument of Ukrainian cultural policy aimed at consolidating national identity (Leahy 2023). When treating murals as indicators of identity construction, the examples of Serhiy Nihoyan and Lesya Ukrainka reveal the mobilisation of Ukrainian sacred symbolism by international artists. The involvement of foreign artists in the process of Kyiv reshaping public spaces following the Revolution of Dignity depicts Ukraine's effort of importing skill while creating curated national imagery through renowned styles, which educate both domestic and international audiences of Ukrainian history. Murals are exceptional visual rhetoric that help trace Ukraine's diverse identity that has come to light following the 2013-2014. The refined quality of murals reveals intricate story telling. Figure 18 depicts the 2015 work of a Portuguese artist Alexandre Farto, better known as Vihls to the art community. Serhiy Nihoyan, an Armenian-Ukrainian protester is depicted on the wall of a building located in the Heavenly Hundred Garden, which is near the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery. Nihoyan was the first protester who was killed by Berkut on Hrushevsky Street on January 22, 2014 (Sindelar 2014). Nihoyan's role and death in the Revolution of Dignity have become epitomized as martyrdom where the mural acts as a medium of conserving sacrificial memory. Similar to Northern Ireland's

iconic Bobby Sands mural that visually revealed sacrificial struggle of Catholics during Protestant repression (Hopkins, 2018), Ukraine's Nihoyan is symbolic of Ukrainian resistance and martyrdom against a violent and pro-Russian Yanukovych's state.

The mural plays a vital role in constructing sacrificial memory that reveals Ukraine's determination in shaping its own national path. The mural depicts Vihl's distinctive style of carving out clay to create a life-like portrait. The image of Nihoyan that has been carved into the wall is the easily recognizable photo of the protester during the Revolution of Dignity. By depicting Nihoyan in his recognizable image through the use of organic material the mural commemorates the life and death of the protester, which helps consolidate the sacrificial memory of the Revolution of Dignity. The carving technique which permanently reshapes and scratches the surface of the wall aids in creating an enduring symbolic memory Nihoyan's martyrdom. The religiously sacred location of the mural near the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery – which will be investigated in Chapter 8 Religion – intensifies a saint like portrayal of Nihoyan to its audience. As will be explored in Chapters 7 and 8, Orthodox spaces are inherently ordained by strict traditions whose spaces rarely undergo transformation. The installation of the mural near the Monastery is revealing of the transformative nature of sacred spaces for sacrificial symbols because motifs of death strengthen memories of loss, resilience, and national identity. Furthermore, Nihoyan's mural captures the diversity of Ukrainian identity involved in guarding Ukrainian national identity during the Revolution of Dignity. Russians, Jews, Tatars, Georgians, Belarusians, and Poles are among the ethnicities that participated in the protests (Sviatnenko & Vinogradov 2014, p. 56). Carving the face of an Armenian-Ukrainian solidifies the diverse aspect of Ukrainian identity that is involved in the process of (re)constructing national identity. Vihls' work has been renowned for carving faces of people important to their communities where the choice of Nihoyan's image educates its audience of the city's recent history of self-determination that came at the cost of sacrifice. The permanence of the mural physically reshapes Kyiv's space which in turn consolidates the collective memory of sacrifice during the Revolution of Dignity.

Figure 19: Lesya Ukrainka (Byesyedina 2016)

Figure 19 depicts the mural of young Lesya Petrivna Kosach-Kvitka (1871-1913), better known by her pseudonym, Lesya Ukrainka, which is revealing of her nationalistic sentiments. Ukrainka is one of Ukraine's most prolific writers, best known for her poems, stories, and songs which express Ukrainian distinctiveness during a time when Ukrainian language and culture were banned in the Russian Empire. Her work and philosophy dealt with ideas of patriotism, resilience, and freedom that bolstered unique aspects of Ukrainian culture (Tarasova 2023, pp. 88-90). Titled "Lily of the Valley" after the first published poem of Ukrainka, the Australian artist Guido Van Helten paid homage to the poet's legacy. Commissioned by CityArt Project, which was by Geo Leros, advisor to Ukraine's Minister of Information (van Helten 2015; Romanenko 2017), the 2015 mural reshaped the Zoloti Vorota neighbourhood's space through the mobilisation of heroic and ethnic symbolism. Located in a lively city centre district known for its historic eleventh century Kyivan Rus relics and Art Nouveau architecture, the mural creates an inviting and aesthetically pleasing space to admire Ukrainian heritage. The mural is painted in complimentary colours of its surroundings where the blending of the muted green and grey tones unifies the spaces'

environment with the elegant depiction of the poet. The vyshyvanka blouse and the faint white lily of the valley instantaneously make Ukrainka's persona recognisable to the local Ukrainian audience. The vyshyvanka is a Ukrainian national garment whose unique embroidery and style represent Ukrainian diverse regions. Dressing Ukrainka in a national costume and using the symbol of the flower to represent her work the mural mobilises Ukrainian ethnic markers in order to consolidate Ukrainian national identity.

Besides her persona and work, Ukrainka plays a major role in the resilience narrative that shapes Ukraine's collective memory and identity. Ukrainka's legacy is closely tied to Ukrainian ethnic identity which survived the Russian tsarist and Soviet repression. Ukrainka's mural reinvents Kyiv's space and memory by drawing attention to Ukrainian cultural endurance and in light of the Revolution of Dignity consolidates Ukrainian national identity. The mural should also be considered in light of the maintained Soviet statues investigated in Part 2 because it broadens the understanding of Ukraine's process of reshaping collective memory. While Soviet legacy remains a part of Ukraine's spaces, mural art has become a new tool of reshaping space and (re)constructing Ukrainian memory. Furthermore, the involvement of an Australian artist in the cultural reconstruction of Kyiv's spaces demonstrates the local administration's efforts to import skill and collaborate with international artistry that might invite tourism from art enthusiasts. Similar to Figure 6 in Part 1, Ukraine's invitation of regional (Romanian) and international artists (Australian) elevates the discussion and (re)construction of memory that plays a vital part in the process of consolidating Ukrianian national identity to its neighbours and allies. Cultural and skill exchange plays a vital role in Ukraine's process of democratic transition and finding cohesion in the process of identity (re)construction. Following the Revolution of Dignity, murals have become an important visual rhetoric that glorifies Ukrainian identity and educates its local, regional, and international audience of Ukrainian history.

Conclusion

This chapter's findings have demonstrated Ukraine's complex process of dealing with the survival of Russian colonial and Soviet symbolism in collective memory. While the events of the Revolution of Dignity have led to the swift removal of Lenin statues, the maintenance of controversial Soviet and colonial era monuments signify disparities about memory that continue fuel Ukraine's identity (re)construction process. How nations deal with the relics of the past – be it as statue or a mural – depicts how they shape their own identity. Comparative insights into Kyiv and Odesa's treatment of statues have brought to surface the role of historical experiences that continue to shape the individual and collective memories of the nation. While examples of notorious figures such as Vatutin and Catherine II depicted the complexity of distilling legacies, the shabby graffiti and murals of Kyiv have captured the importance of visual rhetoric in reshaping Ukrainian memory. Despite of Ukraine's history of repression, Kruty graffiti and the mural of Nihoyan are example that represent Ukraine's determination in resurrecting heroic legacies of the past and present in order to solidify national identity.

Chapter 5: History of Education

Introduction & Overview

The role of this chapter is to provide contextual information about Ukraine's historical experiences that have impacted Ukraine's construction of identity narratives in education. The historical background in this chapter will help understand Ukraine's historical experience of identity repression and indoctrination which have had an accumulative effect on Ukraine's modern perception of self, as will be shown through the analysis of Ukrainian school textbook covers and teacher mediated agency in Chapter 6 Education. In order to comprehend Ukraine's unique experience in frequent national narrative changes in education, it is vital to understand historical events that have shaped such struggles for a cohesive national (re)construction following 1991 independence from the Soviet Union. Ukraine experienced strict prohibition of practicing Ukrainian language and reading publications in Ukrainian during the Russian Empire (from late 19th century until the Bolshevik Revolution), a period of history that is emphasised in this chapter because it is of direct relevance to understanding the impact of history on shifts in historical narratives in Chapter 6 Education. This chapter does not comprehensively cover Ukraine's entire education history, but attempts are made to focus on events that have had a significant impact on Ukraine's process of identity (re)construction following 1991 independence. Similar to the histories presented in Chapter 3 History of Collective Memory and Chapter 7 History of Religion, Russian colonial heritage forms the predominant focus of this chapter because Russian tsarist and Soviet policies have impacted Ukraine's identity formation, which is shown in Chapter 6 Education when tracing visual changes in Ukrainian school history textbook covers and teacher experiences in classrooms. Furthermore, this chapter progresses through Ukrainian experiences of education by paying close attention to language, literacy, and memory because these overlapped elements are vital in informing Ukrainian identity.

Section one begins with an introduction of Russification policies that were implemented against the use and practice of Ukrainian language. Publishing bans and the prohibition of Ukrainian in religious practices is also discussed in order to depict the Russian tsarist motives to degrade Ukrainian nationalism. The Soviet era is investigated in section two where korenizatsiia policy, Soviet ideology and identity, and Joseph Stalin's repressions are discussed in order to demonstrate the continuation of Russian repression of Ukrainian identity. Section three is devoted to explaining Ukraine's process of reforming education following 1991 independence by implementing European standards for examination and schooling. While it is shown that Ukraine made strides to democratise its education standards, section four traces the frequent changes in Ukrainian

language and memory policies during the presidencies of Viktor Yushchenko, Viktor Yanukovych, and Petro Poroshenko. Three presidents have been selected for analysis because, as it will become more apparent in the next chapter, their policies correlate with the shifts in Ukrainian school history textbook covers. Lastly, section five briefly reflects on the experiences of Baltic states, Poland, Belarus, and Russia in the process of reforming national identity in historical narratives following the break-up of the Soviet Union in order to confirm Ukraine's unique experience.

1. Russification Policies during the Russian Empire

Language is an important component of identity where learning and practicing native tongue shapes a national and political identity (Anderson 2006). In Ukraine's experience Russian tsarist Russification policies targeted Ukrainian sovereignty, identity, and language, directly impacting Ukraine's reinvention of statehood and (re)construction of identity following 1991 independence. From the late 17th century until early 20th century, tsarist Russia referred to Ukraine as "Malorossija", which translates to "Little Russia" (Kohut 1988). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the name "Little Russia" was a derogatory term (Dibrova 2017) used to subjugate Ukrainian sovereignty as an extension of the Russian Empire in order to erase traces of Ukrainian origin. The Russian imperial discourse of claiming Ukraine as a hereditary state of tsarist Russia endures in current Russian disinformation narratives (Putin 2021), which even impacts the way the English language refers to Ukraine. For example, Russian spelling of Ukrainian cities – Russian "Kiev" instead of Ukrainian "Kyiv" – and the usage of "the" before Ukraine are normalised practices in the English language when referring to Ukraine because Russian has been perceived by the western world as authoritative language. Specifically, the "the" before Ukraine is not only grammatically incorrect, but it also uses Russia's misinterpreted definition of the word "Ukraine" as "the edge", implying that Ukraine is not a sovereign entity but rather the extension of Russia. The impact of Russian colonialism on Ukraine through the English language is an important observation because it exemplifies the endurance of Russian repression on Ukrainian identity even outside of the eastern European region. The endurance of Russian imperial narratives about Ukrainian origins and sovereignty is of relevance to understanding the messy process of identity construction in Ukrainian school history textbooks, which will be investigated in Chapter 6 Education.

Russification policies targeted Ukrainian language and specifically impacted the practice of religion and publishing. Danylenko & Naienko (2019, p. 23) highlight that Ukrainians used more than one language in their ethnic territories where these languages were objects of hostile language management by the tsarist administration at different stages of the implementation of Russification policies. Church Slavonic of the Ukrainian recension, Ruthenian, and a reformulated vernacular-based language were used by Ukrainians ethnics (ibid, pp.23-24). While Ukrainian books were

subject to both secular and church censorship due to measures taken by Peter I and Russian Orthodoxy (ibid p.24), religious publications were also impacted. Following Moscow Patriarch's subordination of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and the Kyivan Cave Monastery publications and religious texts printed by the Monastery were either burned or heavily censored as a result of direct Russian intervention into the language of Ukrainian liturgical and polemical works (Ohijenko 1950, pp. 119-120; Ohijenko 2007, pp. 363-368). As noted in Chapter 3, Ukrainian intelligentsia, who shaped Ukrainian identity through the arts, were also the target of Russian language policies. In 1847, Kyiv, the members of Cyrillo-Methodian Society – which included renowned Ukrainian historians, poets and writers like Mykola Kostomarov, Taras Shevchenko, and Panteleimon Kulish – were arrested and their works were banned and withdrawn from sale (Fabrikat 2017, p. 156). While ordinary Ukrainian books and the writing of scholarly articles about Ukraine in Russian was forbidden, even the words "Ukraine" and "Hetmanate" were considered illegal and texts that included phrases such as "volia" (freedom in Ukrainian) were censored (Fabrikat 2017, p. 156). It is clear that the Russian Empire targeted ethnic elements of Ukrainian identity in order to constrict Ukrainian nationalism in religious practice and in the imagination of the nation. As will be shown in the next chapter, modern contestations about Ukrainian national identity are the result of historical imperial practices that can be traced on school history textbook covers and in teaching practices.

In 1863 the Russian Minister of Interior, Peter Valuev, circulated the administrative instruction to censor and limit the scope of Ukrainian language publications (Remy 2007, p. 87; Liber 2016, p.24). The purpose of the Valuev circular was to prevent the emergence of a Ukrainian reader (Dibrova 2017, p. 129). Furthermore, the Ems Decree of 1876 was an official wave of policies that restricted Ukrainian publishing and remained in force until 1905 (Remy 2007, p.87). Alexander II approved the recommendations of the Ems Decree of the Imperial Commission that studied the issue of "Ukrainian propaganda" where the Ministry of Education prohibited the instruction of elementary school subjects in Ukrainian language; removed books written in Ukrainian or by Ukrainians in the libraries of elementary and secondary schools throughout Ukraine; took strict inventory of the teaching personnel in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa education districts; expelled suspect students and teachers; and accept as a general rule that teachers in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa educational districts must be Russians (Dibrova 2017, p. 129). Ukrainian language was limited within the Russian Empire from scholarship and science where Ukrainian books were banned and teaching of any subjects in Ukrainian was prohibited following the Ems Decree in 1876 (Kononenko & Holowinsky 2001, p. 213). The tsarist government prohibited Ukrainian publications not only because of its contents, but because of the language. It is therefore evident that the strict policies of the Ems Decree intentionally prohibited the schooling in Ukrainian in order to suppress Ukrainian national identity. Language is an essential element that binds nations where attempts at

erasure of native language directly impact identity formation. As will become apparent in the next chapter, Ukraine's past experience with language and schooling impacts the process of identity construction.

2. Ukraine during the Soviet Period

While Russification of Ukrainian identity by the Russian Empire was overt, the Soviet Union continued to enforce Russification, beginning with covert policies in the 1920s and transitioning to coercive measures in the 1930s. In the early period of Soviet power, the party leadership saw as the importance of education's potential to define the significance of the Russian revolution and consolidate its gains in the imagination of children (Pauly 2014, p. 235). The Soviet curriculum generated a commitment to internationalism and Soviet patriotism (Pine et al. 2004) in a way which maintained links to ethnic diversity, making way to a grander policy: korenizatsiia (indigenization). Korenizatsiia was a strategy for the advancement of non-Russian language and promotion of non-Russians in the Communist Party, republican governments, and trade unions (Pauly 2005, p. 1). The policy was created in order to defuse the hostility the Russian Communist Part provoked among the large non-Russian Soviet population (Liber 1991, p. 15). Korenizatsiia attempted to construct and train a generation of informed and skilled citizens by mobilising links to language where in Ukraine's context, Ukrainianization was seen as a way of achieving a cohesive and diverse society. However, some critics note that Joseph Stalin's policy was a tool to control the national movement in the Soviet Union (Martin 2001). Indeed, in practice, Ukrainianization did not commit to truly developing Ukrainian identity on the pedagogical front. For example, only a minority of teachers knew anything about Ukrainian culture and history in the late 1920s period (Pauly 2005, p. 277; Gilley 2015), which can be interpreted as a result of Russification policies during the Russian Empire that attempted to dismantle Ukrainian scholarship and intelligentsia. Gilley (2015) also points out that Ukrainianization had practical problems, such as a lack of materials and funding where there were difficulties for students who had so far been taught in Russian to switch to the new language. While there was a lack of guidance of direction to Ukrainization, it began to aid in establishing Ukrainian identity where the policy helped redefine what "Ukraine" was (Gilley 2015). The korenizatsiia's commitment to encourage the flourishment of non-Russian diversity had many problems of implementation on the ground, and most importantly, the policy began to present a problem of ethnic nationalism that directly presented a threat to Soviet patriotism.

Figure 1: 1984 Bukvar, Young Lenin (Solod'ko 2013)

The adoption of a liberal approach towards the republics of the USSR in the early 1920s was temporary because the Soviet state soon realised that constructing a homogenous identity, by any means, was key in solidifying and maintaining absolute control of society. In the education sphere, books for Ukrainian children were written in Russian rather than in Ukrainian language and the contents of these books deemphasised Ukrainian national identity in order to create a Soviet identity for non-Russian nationalities (Kononenko & Holowinsky 2001, p. 214). USSR's educational system played an important role in attempting to create a homogenous, Homo Sovieticus (Zinoviev 1985) identity that would help produce conforming, loyal, and abiding citizens in a censored society governed by totalitarianism. For example, the iconography of Lenin in school textbooks was used to construct a Soviet identity. The image of Ilych Lenin covered almost every school textbook during the USSR, (Figure 1) which modelled the vision of an ideal Soviet communist who in theory was a civic activist and liberator of society poisoned by capitalism. It has been argued that the cult of Lenin was used to transition nations in the Soviet Union from religion to identifying with a Soviet identity closely linked to the Party (Tumarkin 1981 & 1983). Lenin became the religion of the state (Riegel 2005) whose politics were not only embedded in the written text, but also through the visual, in the forms of statues and images in school textbooks. Book illustrations during the Soviet Union were vital in creating a visual language to convey

complex and abstract themes to a young audience where the image of Lenin as the leader endured for the longevity of the Union (Swift 2020, p.6). The images in Soviet school textbooks are emphasised here in order to understand the ideological impact of visual rhetoric in book illustrations, which is also traced in the analysis of three Ukrainian history school textbooks in the next chapter.

The 1930s marked an intense period of Russification of all aspects of Soviet life. To be accused of "nationalistic tendencies" was equivalent to the accusation of a crime against "the Soviet Motherland" but the expression of patriotism on the part of Russians was encouraged (Kononenko & Holowinsky 2001, p. 213). Joseph Stalin's tyranny and violence in the 1930's targeted minority groups who posed a threat to his rule and to the overarching state-enforced pan-Russian identity. Critics of Stalin were executed in the 1937 Great Purge, opposition intelligentsia (doctors, academics) were sent to be murdered in the first defensive lines in Second World War, and minorities and dissidents were transported to the Gulag labour camps (Martin 2001; Polian 2004; Barenberg 2014). With the exception of the Russian Orthodox Church (Kalkandjieva 2014), religious rights were suppressed (Ramet 1993; Dickinson 2000), all forms of information and mass communication were state owned (Plamper 2001), and education was a form of indoctrination (Plamper 2001; Brandenberger 2012; Zhukov & Talibova 2018). Repressive policies, censorship, and indoctrination meant that the Soviet identity that emerged was a strictly homogeneous community devoid of national traits. Most importantly, Stalin's 1932-1933 man-made genocide, Holodomor, was a noteworthy policy against Ukrainian identity that caused the death of millions of Ukrainians. The event of Holodomor was censored by the Soviets, and later constructed by Russia as a famine disaster rather than a genocide. Soviet and Russian suppression of historical reality has also caused Ukrainian domestic contestations about Holodomor's status, which will be further discussed in the sub-section below.

Even following the death of Stalin in 1952, Russification endured in less overt ways. In 1959 a law was passed by the Ukraine's Supreme Soviet giving parents a right to choose between Russian and Ukrainian schools of instruction and because instruction at universities was given all in the Russian language, this seemingly egalitarian law enhanced the process of Russification (Kononenko & Holowinsky 2001, p. 214). The availability of instruction in Ukrainian language in Ukrainian schools did not encourage students nor their parents to enrol them in Ukrainian classes because the Russian language was established as prestigious and associated with socioeconomic opportunities and status. Russian language was synonymous with elitism and the centre while Ukrainian belittled as a periphery language of second-class citizens. The Soviet identity did not cease to exist following the break-up of the USSR because the reconstruction of Soviet identity was slower among a subset of the population: post-Soviet identity. While Ukraine broke away from

the Soviet Union in 1991, it had inherited the accumulative repercussions of centuries of policies that supressed Ukrainian identity. Most importantly, the post-Soviet identity survived in the presence of contention about the revival of Ukrainian ethnic identity, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

3. Independent Ukraine Reforming Education

The dissolution of the Soviet Union meant for Ukraine a break away from nearly 70 years under Moscow's constructed identity. It would be a mistake to think that the transition from a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to a newly reclaimed sovereign territory was smooth. Ukraine underwent strong linguistic and cultural Russification in the Soviet period which meant that post-communist education reform became an integral part of nation building (Janmaat 2008). Traces of Soviet influence on Ukrainian identity persisted following 1991 independence and onwards, which can be observed in schooling of history as well as in teacher sentiments. Ukraine gained its independence from the Soviet Union on August 24, 1991 and began making steady reforms in education while battling economic recession. Ukraine experienced educational reforms that aimed to shift its teaching approach towards a pan-European value and methodological systems (Havrylenko et al. 2021) and in doing so modernise schooling, decrease corruption, and nationalise Ukrainian consciousness. The 1991 bill of national identification in education (Berezivska 2020) began to reform national consciousness by reshaping its curriculum but confronted demand, logistical, and distribution problems. 1995-1999 debt to educators led to teacher shortage and publishing houses were not keeping up with newly adapted curriculum demands which meant that schools lacked staff and textbooks (Gavrylenko, 2021). In the first 17 years of independence, Ukraine slowly adapted pan-European, Bologna Process, value system in education. A 12-point marking system was introduced, an additional year to schooling resulted in a 12 Year education system, and external independent assessment exams for admission to higher education were a new requirement (Fimyar 2010; Zakharchuk; 2014; Gavrylenko 2021; Siegień 2024). Some aspects of these changes, such as the 12 Year education system, were briefly reverted during Viktor Yanukovych's administration (2010-2014). While structural shifts in educational reform have been observed to align Ukraine with a European-forward system of teaching and assessment, the content of history education retained a conflict over perceptions of Soviet legacy and Ukrainian nationalism.

4. Ukrainian Presidencies

Three presidents will be analysed in the first empirical section of this chapter. Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010), Viktor Yanukovych (2010-2014), and Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019) have been selected because they have been directly involved in revolutions and in the process of

reconstructing historical narratives in schools. Ukrainian presidential elections are not just about politics and power. A shift in Ukrainian politics greatly impacts national identity. The 2004 presidential election sparked public outrage due to the falsification of votes to advantage Yanukovych, resulting in the mobilisation of the Orange Revolution and ultimately a secured win for Yushchenko. Before the eruption of the 2004 protests, Yushchenko mysteriously got dioxin poisoning (Kupchinsky 2006), an assault that captured a Ukrainian crude political environment which presented a direct threat to the continuation of Ukrainian democratic and independent identity. Yushchenko's coming to power in 2005 was a testament to Ukrainian society's process of democratic transition. Most significantly, Yushchenko's top priority for policy on memory was dedicated to Holodomor, Joseph Stalin's 1932-1933 artificial famine. Under Yushchenko's presidency, November 25 was marked as a national Holodomor Victims Remembrance Day (Decree no. 868/2006). Ukraine's Parliament passed a law on November 28, 2006 (Verkhovna Rada) declaring that "the Holodomor of 1932-1933 is genocide of the Ukrainian people". The Ukrainian Institute of National History was also established in 2006 by Yushchenko which was monumental in creating a state funded institution that devoted itself to the study and publication of Ukrainian history. The plan of building a National Museum of Holodomor-Genocide was finally commissioned in 2010. However, Yushchenko's efforts to renew Ukrainian identity and historical trauma that were supressed by the Soviet Union were reversed during Yanukovych's presidency from 2010 to 2014.

The first thing Yanukovych did after his inauguration in 2010 was delete the link to Holodomor on the president's official web page (Motyl 2010, p. 25), which marked the course for undermining the revival of Ukrainian national identity. Yanukovych dismantled constitutional checks on his formal powers and built a mafia-style political system that favoured family and friends. Wilson (2014) pinpointed Yanukovych as a Kremlin proxy, which gave Putin an opportunity to exploit Ukraine's information space and later in 2014, illegally annex Crimea. Besides notoriously imprisoning opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko in 2011, Yanukovych set out to eliminate "nationalist extremes" by promoting pro-Russian foreign policy (Kassianov 2022, p. 156) and seating a pro-Russian radical, Dmytro Tabachnyk, as Minister of Education. History textbook provisions were instructed to tone down anti-Russian sentiments and reduce coverage of historical events that depicted Ukraine victimised by Soviet repression (Kapliuk 2010; Kassianov 2022). Most astonishingly, the Ministers of Education of Ukraine and Russia collaborated and planned to produce a combined reader for history teachers called "Ukraine and Russia at the Crossroads" that aimed to reduce Ukrainian identity to folklore and politically correct history by omitting figures and events that depicted Ukrainian resistance against Russian colonialism (Kassianov 2022, pp. 158-159). Language was also on the agenda of Yanukovych's reforms where a 2012 law granted regional

status to Russian language that undermined the role of the Ukrainian language. Yanukovych was committed to a political alliance with Russia which meant compromising Ukrainian historical trauma, repressing opposition, and rejecting an alignment agreement with the European Union. Anti-Ukrainian politics and corruption amounted to civil frustrations that resulted in the Euromaidan Revolution that was led by Ukrainian youth in the winter of 2013. State beating of peaceful Euromaidan protesters led to the largest protest in Ukraine's modern history: the Revolution of Dignity.

Following the ousting of Yanukovych in early 2014, Ukraine elected Petro Poroshenko – a politician and oligarch known for his chocolate business, Roshen – who swiftly introduced reforms that targeted military, memory, and education. Necessitated by Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and invasion in the east of Ukraine in 2014, Poroshenko established his nationalist agenda by implementing a widespread defence reform. Poroshenko was committed to major structural reforms in armed forces in order to meet NATO standards (Akimenko, 2018). On the education front, decentralisation and affordability reforms were put in place and revival of the nationalistic aspect of Ukrainian history in the curriculum was in motion. The first of its kind, the 2015 "Decommunisation Law" required the banning and removal of Communist symbolism in public spaces and infrastructure, renaming and changing the date of commemorating Second World War, and lifting restrictions to the access of Communist archives in the period of 1917-1991. While the law in practice was gradually implemented, it radically transformed the terrain of Ukrainian collective memory. Yanukovych's 2012 language law that favoured Russian language was repealed by the Parliament in 2014, and in 2019, Ukrainian language was made compulsory in public spheres. Poroshenko's administration focused on regulating and reconstructing Ukrainian identity in a conservative manner by introducing reforms and laws that emphasised the revival of Ukrainian ethnic identity. The history curriculum yet again experienced changes that reflected recent revolutionary experiences and Russia's war in the east of Ukraine.

5. National Transitions of post-Soviet Neighbours

It should not come as a surprise that elites shape national narratives to their visions of identity, but what is worthy of attention in Ukraine's case is the frequency of change in the national narrative, which will be investigated in the next chapter. Unlike its surrounding neighbours, Ukraine has experienced constant shifts in identity (re)construction, struggling to position itself between a post-Soviet identity and a reviving Ukrainian identity. In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, language was a central feature that characterised and solidified national and educational transitions. In the Baltic region, Russian ceased to be the language of many schools and has rapidly been replaced in universities (Coulby 2013, pp. 11-12). All three Baltic states rapidly shifted their curricula towards re-invention of a national culture, which included the rebirth of poets, artists, important scientific and technological developments, sacred landscapes being rediscovered (Coulby 2013, p. 16). Poland also experienced consolidation of national identity following the fall of the Soviet Union. In the wake of the Second World War, Poland became an almost homogenous nation-state with a predominantly Polish speaking and Catholic population. The establishment of a homogenous national Polish state has been the enduring aim of modern Polish nationalism since the end of the nineteenth century (Jaskułowski et al. 2018). For example, textbooks that were used by Wroclaw history teachers marginalised national minorities and constructed a unilinear story of the Polish nation (ibid 2018).

Russian education, on the other hand experienced short liberalisation in the early 1990s and then progressed to the restoration of a Soviet-style system in the new century that promotes curricular uniformity and ideological indoctrination (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020, p. 283). Nostalgia for the past and an emphasis of historical greatness are continued to be accentuated in Russian school history textbooks (Zajda & Zajda 2005). In Belarus, a large portion of the society supported the preservation of the USSR where the process of nation building has barely begun and even the development of the state language and culture were in their infancy (Marples 2003, p. 21). Belarus has had only one elected president, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, and experienced slow social and economic changes along with a low level of mass support for the nationalistic opposition (Hutcheson & Korosteleva 2006, p.14). In history classrooms, the Soviet view of history dominates Belarusian narratives about teaching the WWII and the Holocaust (Zadora 2017). Ukraine's experiences in reforming national narratives in schools stand in clear contrast to its surrounding neighbours where attempts to construct a cohesive national identity will be shown through the analysis of school history textbook cover changes and teacher sentiments in history classrooms in Chapter 6.

Overall, this chapter has shown that there is a historical trail of Ukrainian repression that has had a direct impact on Ukraine's modern ability to construct a cohesive and homogenous society. Ukraine adopted European-leaning education reforms following 1991 independence, but historical experiences, Russian meddling in politics, and frequent turnover of state ideology perpetuated conflict over identity where a struggle emerged between a pro-Russian/Soviet identity and a Ukrainian nationalist revival. Post-Soviet identity has become a hindrance to Ukrainian national identity that can be directly observed in the shifts of historical narratives on the front covers of school history textbooks and the imposing sentiments of history teachers. Revolutions have also played a role in swaying nation-building towards a nationalistic trajectory. While the national momentum of 2004 failed, the 2013-14 revolution had a more radical and enduring impact on identity construction. As the state sets guidelines for the schooling of history and there appears to be a durable attempt by the state to solidify Ukrainian nationalism from 2014 onward, the nature of discussions in history classrooms continue to contradict state enforced identity. As shown in the next chapter, teachers intercept state sponsored historical narratives in their classrooms which suggests the continued cycle of contesting identities. Identity matters and its contesting presence is directly observed on the covers of school history textbooks and teacher mediated agency in classrooms.

Chapter 6: Education

Introduction & Overview

As shown in Chapter 5 History of Education, Ukraine's historical experiences of Russification policies have impaired post 1991 Ukraine's ability to construct an enduring identity. Battles over the trajectory of nation-building are fought on the streets, in textbooks, and in classrooms. Multiple actors are involved in the process of identity (re)construction where Ukraine's case study provides the opportunity to investigate the roles of elites and teachers in constructing historical narratives which in turn form national identity. Political elites play a major role in guiding the construction of historical narratives that impact society's perceptions of their identity, history, and collective memory. As discussed in Chapter 3 History of Collective Memory, Chapter 5 History of Education, and Chapter 7 History of Religion, the lack of a cohesive Ukrainian identity formation process following the 1991 independence is attributed to repressive historical experiences and the discord in political transitions. What is striking about Ukraine's schooling experience is that every four years, the Ukrainian presidency has made changes to the official narrative of Ukrainian identity, which over time has resulted in competing versions of Ukrainian identity in school history textbooks. State-led identity construction is funnelled from the President to the Ministry of Education, which designs curriculums and provides a guideline for history textbook authors and history teachers. Elites are therefore responsible for filtering and delivering historical narratives to their pupils. But what happens to the trajectory of identity construction when curriculums are rewritten every few years following frequent elite ideological changes and revolutions? Most importantly, what does the process of constructing identity look like in a classroom where history teachers mediate and contradict official historical narratives to suit their own interpretations?

The findings in this chapter reinforce the overarching argument of the thesis by showing that revolutions trigger the process of identity (re)construction, which can be traced in school history textbook covers and teacher experiences in classrooms. Furthermore, this chapter develops the argument of identity fluidity by investigating attempts of elites and teachers to revive Ukrainian ethnic identity, particularly following the Revolution of Dignity. The process of re-establishing Ukrainian ethnic nationalism by elites and teachers is not a seamless process, which is traced and analysed in the visual shifts of school history textbook covers and teacher perceptions of Ukrainian history. This chapter argues that the 2004 and 2013-2014 events provide a significant opportunity to trace the competing roles of elites and mediating actors, teachers, in mobilising change in history construction, which results in competing historical narratives that attempt to (re)construct Ukrainian identity. Competing historical narratives written into textbooks and instructed in

classrooms are demonstrative of Ukraine's turbulent process of identity construction. While attempts by elites and teachers are made to revive ethnic identity in history textbook covers and history classrooms following the events of the Revolution of Dignity, revival of Ukrainian identity is not done without challenge and contestation about the correct version of national identity. This chapter's findings reinforce the central argument that the process of identity construction is not seamless by offering in-depth insights into the schooling of Ukrainian history by elites and teachers.

This chapter's dedication is to show that narratives about Ukrainian grievances and national identity that have resurfaced during times of revolt, in textbook visual narratives, and in history classrooms form pivotal sites for investigation of attempted solidification or erasure of ethnic identity by elites and teachers. Change in governance is directly followed by a change in the visual rhetoric of Ukrainian school history textbooks. Ukraine's complex history and turbulent process of identity construction will begin to make sense by looking at the covers of school history textbooks because visual rhetoric conveys identity. This chapter proposes to read school history textbooks by their covers because they depict a visual transition in elite efforts to change the course of Ukrainian history, creating contesting narratives of Ukrainian identity. Ukraine's revolutions have led to presidencies which aligned themselves with either pro-Ukrainian narratives or pro-Russian/Soviet narratives. Divisive narratives demonstrate that Ukraine's experiences in the Soviet Union have resulted in a modern divided society whose contentions about identity can be observed through the changing covers of school history textbooks.

Visual historical narratives form identity, which means that it is important to trace and analyse how visual changes in historical narratives in schools impact the process of identity formation. While presidencies set the identity agenda and the Education Ministry distributes rigid curriculums and standards for school history books and lesson structures, the mediated agency of a history teacher is impactful on the process of identity construction on the ground. Teachers' mediated agency in challenging state-led identity and crafting lessons to their personal preference is a moment of rebellion that captures the fluid nature of Ukraine's society that is in continuous dialogue about the trajectory of its identity. Both the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity presented Ukrainian elites with opportunities to either challenge or welcome the enduring presence of post-Soviet identity in the nation-building process where this contentious dynamic is visible in school history textbooks and further implicated in classroom experiences guided by the mediated agency of teachers who rival state enforced identity.

Lastly, this chapter argues that classrooms that witness teachers contesting the official curriculum are suggestive of the ongoing presence of conflicting historical perceptions of identity that are a product of Russian colonialism and political shifts that take place in Ukrainian government. Post-Soviet and pro-Russian historical perceptions which are a sediment of their time are met with resistance from the growing presence of a Ukrainian distictive national identity, particularly following the Revolution of Dignity. Sources of disputes about Ukrainian origins, sovereignty, and identity stem from Russian imperial and Soviet propaganda and repressive policies that subordinated Ukrainian nationalism and society. As mentioned in Chapter 3 History of Collective Memory and Chapter 7 History of Religion, while Russification policies were not successful in erasing Ukrainian society, they created a space of continuous contention about the credibility of Ukrainian identity, memory, and sovereignty that has directly disrupted a cohesive process of nation-building following Ukraine's break-away from the Soviet Union. Furthermore, when school history textbooks are frequently re-written this perpetuates a space for generations of Ukrainians to conflict over historical narratives and by extension their identity. While textbooks provide fixed evidence of historical narratives sponsored by the state, classrooms are spaces for the dialogue about the trajectory of Ukrainian identity construction where teachers have the ability to question elite's loyalties and the endurance of state supplied national narratives.

Before commencing with Data Analysis, I present a conceptual framework that justifies the significance of analysing book covers and the concept of mediated teachers. Data Analysis is presented in two parts where collected data underpins the findings of this chapter. Part 1 of Data Analysis is devoted to analysing the front and back covers of Ukrainian school history textbooks. Three Year 11 textbooks have been sourced, two from Kyiv's second-hand book market and one found online. "History of Ukraine, Year 11, condensed notes" by Serednyts'ka, H. V (2007) from Yushchenko's era, "History of Ukraine, Year 11, standard level, academic level" by Pometun, O. I and Hupan, N. M (2011) from Yushchenko's era, and Vlasov, V. S and Kul'chyts'kyy, S, V (2019) from Poroshenko's era. These textbooks have been selected because of their availability and accessibility. The Year 11 Ukrainian history book covers the period between the end of the Second World War, 1939, up to modern Ukraine. The analysis of the school history textbook front covers will follow chronological order. The visual analysis will reveal that the 2007 textbook resembled Yushchenko's nationalist revival politics where the patriotic images on the cover construct Ukrainian identity in a democratic and European-leaning trajectory. The 2011 textbook cover experienced a drastic visual shift towards Soviet nostalgia where utopian photographs from the Soviet era revived a synthetic connection between Ukrainian and Soviet identity. Lastly, the 2019 textbook's photographs revive Ukrainian accomplishments in the past and present in order to construct an enduring ethnic Ukrainian identity. It should be noted that because the 2019 textbook

is an electronic version, the back cover is not available for analysis.

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that the authors of school textbooks are required to strictly follow the guidelines directed by the Ministry of Education, which reviews and screens the text prior to publication. The three textbooks are slightly different in their rank. Students with an excelled proficiency in a specific subject can pursue enrolling in streamlined secondary schools. Standard schools provide the standard level of education in line with the basic curriculum while gymnasiums and lyceums, academic standard schools, are provided for students in secondary education with specialised training in a subject area. Most prolific subjects that are streamlined in these secondary schools fall in the category of sciences, mathematics, language, and humanities. The 2007 textbook is used by schools of all standards while both the 2011 and 2019 textbooks are designed for academic standard schools. The distinction of standard level depicts a student's interest and proficiency in the subject.

Lastly, Part 2 of Data Analysis investigates the mediated roles of two Kyiv based school teachers along with their insights about Ukraine's education system behind the scenes. As mentioned in Chapter 2 Research Design, semi-structured questions have helped gauge the unexpected teacher mediation of curriculums in history classrooms. While COVID presented a direct challenge to recruiting more interviewees, which would have helped make generalised assumptions about what majority of history teachers do in Ukrainian history classrooms, the insights that I was able to attain are revealing of the mediation of at least two teachers. The close-up approach of interviewing two teachers contributes towards investigating personal insights into the lives of teachers who hold strong beliefs about the correct version of history and practices in history classrooms. While teachers revealed opposing attitudes and admitted to changing the structure and content of their history classes, it also becomes apparent that the changes to the textbooks and curriculums mandated by the Ministry of Education are not smoothly transitioned on the ground. Schools do not keep up with the pressure of supplying updated history textbooks and curriculums, and when they do keep up with changes, old materials are destroyed. Teacher mediation should be understood in the context of Ukraine's changing political scene. The two teachers that I interviewed cannot keep up with the changes made by the state and in taking matters into their hands they reveal their mediating role in history (re)construction. The frequent changes to Ukraine's history education in schools demonstrate an incohesive process of constructing identity where teachers feel the need to implement their own beliefs in classrooms in order to address perceived gaps in historical narratives.

Teacher 1 has been teaching history to Year 5 and 9 students for 12 years and was involved in the 2004 and 2013-14 revolutions in Ukraine. Teacher 2 has been teaching history for over 10 years to a variety of class years and has not been involved in revolutions. Interview insights from Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 illustrate their diverging mediated agency when reflecting on "true" history, changes in curriculum, and history textbooks. Teacher 1's mediation illustrates an explicitly traditionalist and pro-Ukrainian nationalistic approach, while in contrast, Teacher 2 represents a mediation that is tilted towards an anti-revolutionary approach. It is vital to note that the interview questions did not explicitly ask teacher's roles in changing history interpretation in their classrooms. The teacher's mediation is deduced from their responses to questions that targeted understanding the changes in education and historical textbooks, which makes their answers authentic in demonstrating real attitudes and sentiments.

Conceptual Framework

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how identity drives multiple actors to pursue the reconstruction of Ukrainian history in ways they know best, which results in competing versions of Ukrainian identity. Elites supply the official state perception of Ukrainian history, which can be traced through curriculums changes that are directly depicted on the front covers of school history textbooks. New presidency means new identity and these shifts are captured through the visual rhetoric on history textbook covers. Content analysis has played a major role in the predominant body of literature that has investigated shifts in school history textbook narratives. This chapter wants to bring to light the importance of images and symbols depicting identity on history textbook covers.

Visual data is enriched with meaning-making that directly impacts identity construction. While not all students are merited with reading the entirety of their assigned school literature, the textbook's cover remains visible on their desk for the entirety of the school year, constructing a narrative of Ukrainian identity with little to no effort. The first empirical section of this chapter, Part 1, shows the importance of studying visual data in constructing identity on school history textbooks because visual rhetoric can expose shifts in identity that cannot be revealed by written rhetoric. The second empirical section, Part 2, contributes towards understanding the agency of teachers in defying state sponsored narratives in their classrooms. Teachers are adaptive, knowledgeable, and cunning actors who reshape their history lessons in a way they deem correct. Interviews with two history school teachers will demonstrate that the mediated agency of teachers in history construction captures Ukraine's overarchingly complex and divisive process of identity construction. Overall, the contribution of this chapter captures through visual data and insights from teachers how revolutions impact the construction of Ukrainian history, revealing the contesting and fluid state of the formation process.

"Reading" the History Textbook by its Cover

Academics have provided a rigorous foundation for understanding Ukraine's European leaning educational reforms that played an integral part of nation-building following independence from the Soviet Union (Fimyar 2010; Havrylenki et al. 2021; Siegień 2024). While Ukraine made steps towards reshaping its educational reforms, scholars have pointed to the importance of observing shifts in historical accounts found in schooling textbooks. The discourse of "nation" has been traced in the first ten years since Ukraine's independence (Popson 2001). In addition, Ukraine's portrayal of Russian and Soviet identity (Janmaat 2007) and depiction of ideology, the state, and nation-building (Zajda 2009) have also been subject to analysis. Useful comparisons have also demonstrated regional shifts in historical narratives. Bessonova (2019) compared Ukrainian and Belorussian school textbook approach to the Cold War narrative while Korostelina (2010) and

Kassianov (2022) have indicated drifts in perception of common past between Ukraine and Russia.

This chapter's contribution will develop the academic body of research on Ukrainian historical narratives by focusing on the visual aspect when comparing textbooks from different presidential administrations. While previous academic work predominantly devoted much-needed attention to the rhetorical content of the textbooks from different time periods, this dissertation proposes to close the textbook entirely and attribute all focus to the cover. An image on a cover can capture multiple narratives simultaneously. Furthermore, images are able to communicate history in a simple and accessible way. This chapter's efforts are dedicated to analysing and tracing visual differences in three Year 11 school history textbooks that are representative of three different presidential eras, which display opposing historical narratives. The visual method of tracing will assist in depicting the roles of elites reshaping the contentious terrain of Ukrainian historical narratives over time on the covers of school history textbooks. Tracing the continuity or erasure of symbolism in school history textbooks through visual analysis will help make better sense of Ukraine's struggle to gain a cohesive process in nation-building. It will become clear in Part 1 of Data Analysis that the turnover of presidential political ideologies correlates with the changes on the covers of textbooks.

The rapid and reciprocal relationship between presidency and textbook changes is suggestive of an inherent behaviour of Ukrainian process of nation-building following 1991 independence. Frequent textbook changes are uncharacteristic in a stable democratic state but this behaviour appears to be a natural aspect of Ukraine's nation-building. The swinging of the state supplied historical pendulum is suggestive of Ukraine's struggle to produce a cohesive and enduring national identity due to its historical preconditions alongside Russia's meddling in Ukraine's politics. As pointed out by Shevel (2014, p. 152), Ukrainian elites tend to see collective memory as non-negotiable, legitimising their authority by consolidating histories that resonate with their politics. Post-Soviet identity lingers in Ukrainian identity construction where elites utilise nostalgia through image to solidify anti-Ukrainian narratives. Imagery can capture and freeze time and allow future generation the fullest possible mnemonic access to important individuals and events from their collective past (Zerubavel 1996, pp. 292-293). Nostalgia is a powerful tool in mobilising identity narratives that bind collective awareness on the basis of the past. "Nostalgia is a state arising out of present conditions as much as out of the past itself" (Gabriel 1993, p. 121). Furthermore, nostalgia uses the past but is not a product of it; rather it is the contemporary concerns which lead to a particular annexation of the past (Davis 1979). Visual rhetoric condenses and captures memories that are reminiscent of the past. Nostalgia is a powerful tool in Ukrainian elite's construction of Ukrainian identity. Elites that have aligned themselves with Russia, and therefore the Soviet past, mobilise Soviet utopian narratives that shift the trajectory of Ukrainian nation-

building.

The break-up of the Soviet Union did not lead to the diffusion of the Soviet identity, it rather remained and has been garnered and weaponised by elites. The school history textbooks from 2014 onwards exemplify a process of attempted solidification of national identity that stands in contrast to the efforts of presidential predecessors. The Revolution of Dignity played a vital role in drastically changing the trajectory of Ukraine's identity construction that can be visible in the ousting of Yanukovych as well as the changes on the covers of school history textbooks. This dissertation traces visual historical narrative shifts in school history textbooks while taking into consideration the added layer of complexity in the role of teachers who supply their counterposing interpretations of curriculum. Tracing visual historical narrative shifts in history textbooks alongside an analysis of the mediated role of school history teachers will provide an expansive understanding of Ukraine's turbulent identity construction in the dimension of education.

Teacher Mediation

While the state provides a rigid curriculum and a standard for history textbook publications, teachers act in accordance with their own socialisation and background (Lindsay and Ginsburg 1995). Teachers are capable of advocating narratives in classrooms that contradict national laws and constitutions, endorsing norms and beliefs that reflect their character and identity (Berkman & Plutzer 2010). Furthermore, certain comprehension techniques and teacher authority contribute to the transmission of historical information (Wills 2005). There is therefore a difference between official historical narratives and tensions that stem from below and teachers even acknowledge their role on vykhovannia (socialisation) of students (Richerdson 2004). Rigorous research on Ukraine's education has inquired about the inheritance of negative stereotypes about education in teaching methods and strategies (Koshmanova & Ravchyna, 2008) as well as the shifts in teacher ideology following education reform (Kutsyuruba 2016). Scholars who are in pursuit of understanding schooling of history are in agreement that teachers bring their own historical perceptions to the classrooms. Pine et al.'s (2004) interviews depicted responses from teachers and students to state sponsored identity, demonstrating the presence of contention in classrooms. Comprehensive studies have also determined that teachers are active in negotiating historical narratives where their specific regionality impacts their perceptions of Ukrainian history (Konieczna-Salamatin et al. 2018; Yekelchyk 2025) and a teachers' personal attitude and preconceived notions influence political memory (Pryshchepa 2021).

Studies conducted in 2011-2012 showed that Ukrainian history teachers reproduce national identity in their classrooms by altering the teaching program and textbook narratives (Korostelina 2013) as well as creating conflicting narratives in classrooms (Korostelina 2015). Building on the

insights established by Korostelina's (2013 & 2015) studies and the literature body above, this chapter demonstrates the divisive nature of history teachers' sentiments that contributes to their transgressions in the history classrooms. The second empirical section of this chapter demonstrates the impact of revolutions on solidifying teacher's identities and motivations to reconstruct official historical narratives. Teachers continue to alter and adjust school history lessons in order to meet their perceptions that closely tie in with their activism or non-activism in collective action. Building on Zerubavel's work on "mnemonic communities" (1996, pp. 286-289), S. Will (2005 b) suggests that classrooms are critical mnemonic workplaces where teachers and students are able to draw on a diversity of cultural resources for remembering multiple, and at times contradictory, pasts. Ukrainian teachers present contradictory narratives of the past to their students and thereby take part in the process of (re)constructing Ukrainian identity. While the history narratives on the covers of school history textbooks from 2014 onwards portray solidification of Ukrainian national identity, it will be demonstrated that teachers continue to dispute and disrupt official narratives in their classrooms which captures an underlining characteristic of Ukraine's conflicting identity (re)construction process.

Part 2 of Data Analysis contributes towards understanding the role of teachers in contesting curriculum guidelines and re-shaping identity in the wake of revolutions. *Teacher mediation* (Parker 1987; Bain 2006; Hawkey 2003) is a term used in this chapter and refers to the autonomy and discretion of schoolteachers in dispersing their own vision of historical narratives in classrooms. The endorsement of historical narratives is not strictly confined to official guidelines found in the history textbooks. Teachers form an integral part of mediating the construction of Ukrainian history – and by extension identity – in their classrooms, further implicating the malleable nature of Ukrainian identity. Teachers are the first point of contact and authority in classroom settings and their interpretation of historical events plays a vital role in the construction of Ukrainian identity in the student body. Teachers who transgress from the official learning outcomes of the curriculum do so in order to suit their personal beliefs that have been shaped by their experiences. Historical interpretations of teachers mediate official historical narratives and create an environment of conflicting historical understanding that impacts student understanding of the nation.

The activism of teacher mediation demonstrates that the supposedly rigid education hierarchy can be challenged. The objective of this chapter is to use collected interview data to make sense of what happens behind the supposedly rigid educational structure. A low salary does not incentivise nor explain the behaviour and efforts of Ukrainian history teachers in meddling with lesson plans and curriculums. Identity plays a crucial role in teacher urges to mediate official historical narratives. Ukraine's incoherent process of nation-building created a space for contention that is

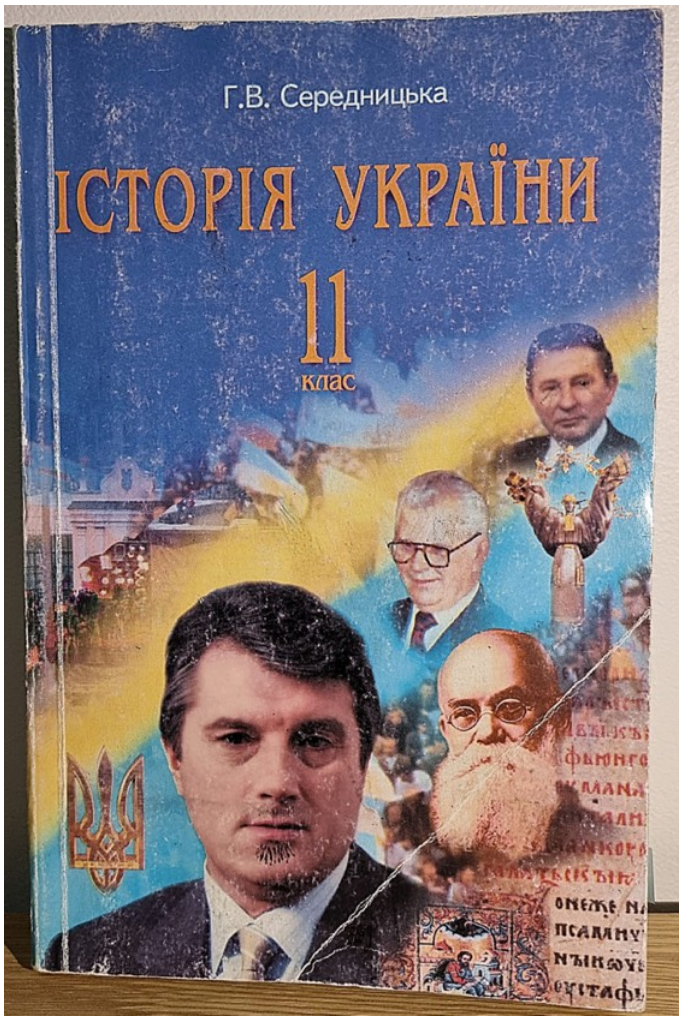
exploited by teachers. History teachers care about history, and therefore identity construction. While governments change, history teachers remain in their positions, observing changes and making independent judgements on how to fix the fluctuating process of nation-building in education. Not able to impact construction of identity from the top, teachers devote their attention to the privacy of their classrooms where they can "fix" and "discipline" the construction process to their vision. Students reap the consequences of teacher's frustration and in the process are exposed to competing narratives about Ukrainian identity. Classrooms are not rigid spaces, but rather flexible environments that experience teacher-imposed identity politics, a phenomenon that demonstrates Ukraine's contested nature of identity construction.

Data Analysis

Part 1: Covers of Ukrainian History Textbooks

Viktor Yushchenko: progressive nationalist

Figure 1: Serednyts'ka 2007, History of Ukraine Year 11, Front Cover.



The history textbook cover from Yushchenko's time as president of Ukraine depicts symbols, figures, and events that construct a nationalist narrative. Serednyts'ka's 2007 Year 11 textbook cover (Figure 1) is dominated with imagery that is instantaneously associated with Viktor Yushchenko's victory following the 2004 Orange Revolution. The front cover depicts modern political figures, Ukrainian national symbolism and colours, and faded imagery of the Orange Revolution and religious text. The order and size of Ukrainian political figures displayed on the front cover depicts a narrative of progress and nationalism. It is bold for the photograph of Yushchenko to dominate the lower half of the cover, which draws immediate attention of the reader to the authority and importance of the current president whose political progressiveness stands in contrast to the stagnant politics of his post-Soviet predecessors: Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994) and Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005). Former president Kravchuk was the first president of

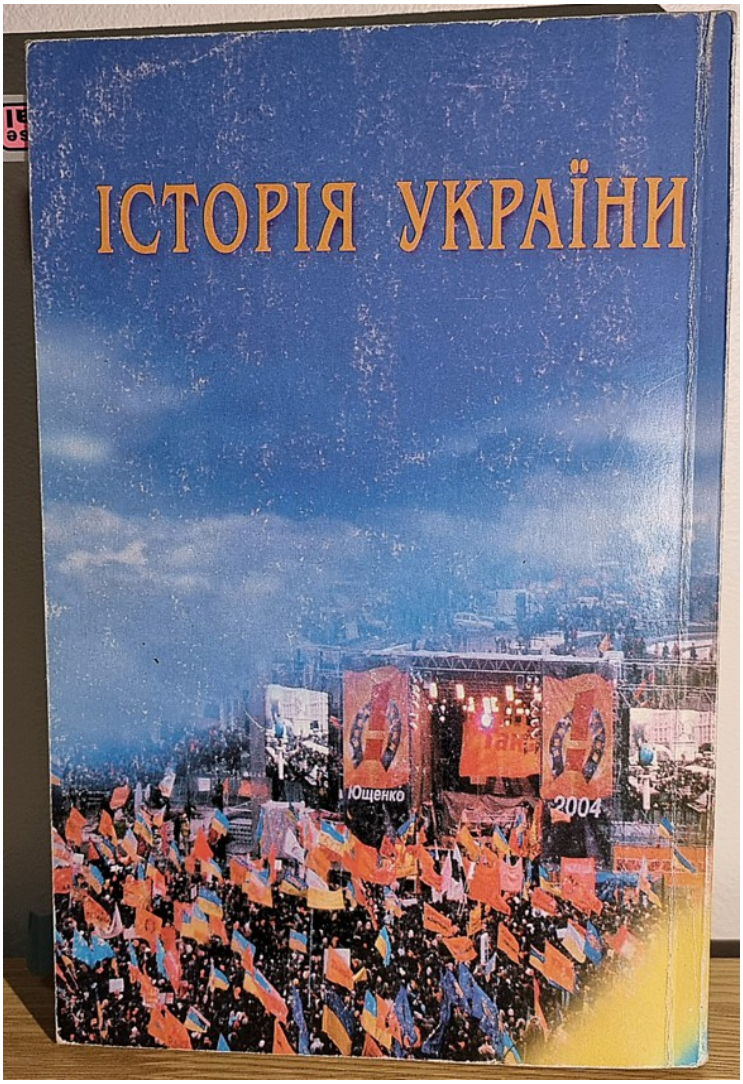
independent Ukraine who converted to nationalist politics after serving the position as Communist Party functionary. The Kravchuk era's politics captured the moment where Ukrainian national revivalism became stagnant. A post-Soviet elite governed independent Ukraine where the rhetoric changed but elitism endured at the expense of reviving Ukrainian nationalism. Following Kravchuk, Kuchma's presidency was implicated in corruption, crime, and censoring of public press (Kuzio 2005). Kuchma and his surrounding political elites were involved in the disappearance and mutilating murder of a journalist in 2000, Georgiy Gongadze, who documented state corruption. Kuchma's politics depicted a backward trajectory of Ukrainian nation-building, which stands in contrast to Yushchenko's accomplishments during and after the Orange Revolution.

The events of 2004 marked the first moment modern Ukraine revolted against state corruption. The fraudulent election results in 2004 saw the falsification of votes in favour of Viktor Yanukovych, which sparked societal outrage and caused the Orange Revolution that was led by Yushchenko's party "TAK" (translated to "YES" in Ukrainian). The dominant position of Yushchenko's portrait serves to remind its reader of democratic accomplishments that stand in stark contrast to the politics of his predecessors. It is also important to pay attention to the remaining figure on the cover that hovers on the right-hand shoulder of Yushchenko: Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866-1934). Hrushevsky was a significant actor in changing the trajectory of Ukrainian identity construction by producing the first book of Ukrainian history, "History of Ukraine-Rus" in 1898, that traced Ukraine's origins to Kyivan Rus, a narrative that was erased and re-written by the efforts of the Russian Empire's historians. Most importantly, Hrushevsky was the first president in 1918 of the short lived Ukrainian National Republic that was established following the 1917 Russian Revolution and liquidated when Ukraine was absorbed by the Soviet Union by 1921. When recalling that the textbook covers the period of history from 1939 onward, the presence of Hrushevsky is intentional and significant in reviving Ukrainian nationalist narrative.

Students might not read the entire assigned history textbook, but they see its cover on their desk throughout the school year and even commit the sacrilegious: they doodle on it. Interaction with the textbook, even if it is scribbling on the cover, is interaction nonetheless. Yushchenko's face has undergone a slight makeover where additions of a moustache, goatee, and eyeliner were scribbled by a student who was in possession of this book. Kravchuk's face is also altered by a pair of glasses. Scribbling is not an indicative measure of student's national identity but the interaction alone asserts the presence of the cover that dominates the study space where drawing on a moustache or a pair of glasses would suggest visibility and exposure to easily understood and compact visual rhetoric. The Ukrainian coat of arms, tryzub (translated to English from Ukrainian: trident), is seen on the left bottom corner of the front cover, which represents the past and present

of Ukrainian history of state-building. The tryzub has been archeologically traced to Kyivan Rus and was later adopted by modern, post-Soviet, Ukraine as the official state symbol of Ukrainian statehood. The small section on the right-hand corner of the cover depicts Orthodox and Slavonic imagery and scripture that have ancient origins in Ukraine's formation. The tryzub and Orthodox symbols along with the yellow and blue colours of Ukraine's flag that runs diagonally across the cover, and Kyiv's angelic Independence Monument on the right-hand side are all iconic and easily recognisable symbols of modern Ukraine that all serve to construct a patriotic sentiment.

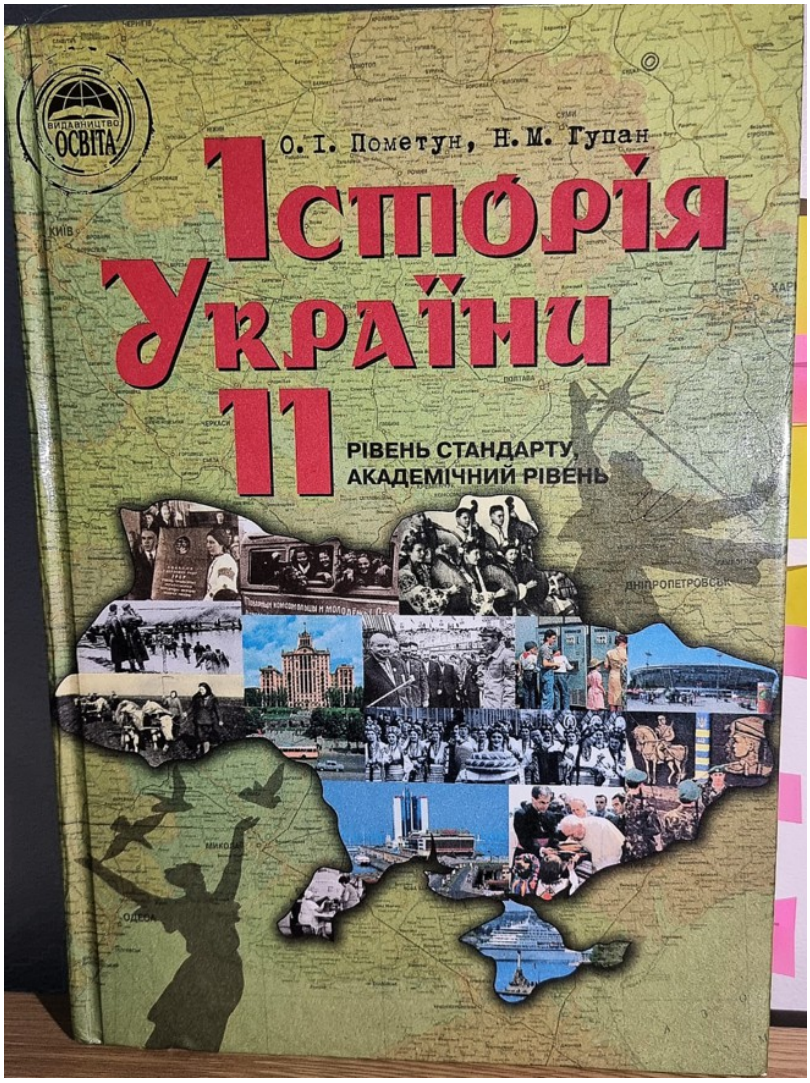
Figure 2: Serednyts'ka 2007, History of Ukraine Year 11, Back Cover.



Democratic progress and celebration of collective action are represented on the front and back cover of the 2007 textbook. The front mid-section of the cover blurs the image of the Orange Revolution in the background but when flipped around, the back cover (Figure 2) displays a striking photo from the 2004 protests. The back cover is dominated by symbols that are explicitly associated with Yushchenko's "TAK" party: exclamation mark, horseshoe, and the colour orange. A mass of people holding orange and Ukrainian flags captures a moment of collective action and the first large-scale revolution in modern Ukraine. What is striking about the both covers of the 2007 textbook is that it depicts the most recent Ukrainian history, although the contents of the textbook cover the period from 1939 and onwards. Omitting Soviet imagery and focusing on symbols, figures, and events that tie closely with Ukrainian ethnic and civic nationalism result in a narrative that tells a democratic trajectory of Ukrainian identity underpinned by ethnic symbolism. The cover predominantly mobilises Yushchenko's victory and the Orange Revolution, most recent events in Ukrainian modern history. Focusing on the present rather than the past indicates that the cover attempts to solidify recent memory of the 2004 events in order to construct an enduring sense of the Orange Revolution's progressive and democratic momentum. The selection of the Orange Revolution as the primary event on the covers of the 2007 textbook is depicted with intention Yushchenko's democratic authority that mobilised and led the revolution. Yushchenko's portrait along with the snapshots from the Orange Revolution depict a historical and politically victorious moment in Ukrainian history. The scene of the revolution on the back cover transports the student visually to the memory of Ukrainian collective activism. The progressive and patriotic narrative portrayed in the 2007 textbook stands in large contrast to the Soviet-laden depiction of history on the 2011 textbook cover.

Viktor Yanukovych: backward-looking Soviet

Figure 3: Pometun & Hupan 2011, History of Ukraine Year 11, Front Cover.



A change in presidency in Ukraine means a change in historical narratives in the school history textbook. The historical narrative is visually changed in Pometun and Hupan's 2011 Ukrainian History textbook for the Year 11 class (Figure 3), resembling romanticised Soviet tropes of patriotism that omits explicit and meaningful ethnic connection to Ukrainian identity. The front cover is dominated by the map of Ukraine where the western and central regions of Ukraine are represented by photographs from the Soviet past and the border of the south and east by photographs of independent Ukraine. The adaptation of Soviet period photographs resonates with the commemoration and celebration of USSR's cultural, agricultural, political, and war time memories that are depicted in a positive light despite Ukraine's negative experience as a republic of the Union. The photographs that are supposed to resemble Ukraine following 1991 independence are bland and stripped of explicit Ukrainian ethnic markers. The 2011 cover reflects Yanukovych's nation-building efforts to foster a connection with the Soviet past and omit tangible modern connections to Ukrainian nationalism. Omitting the Orange Revolution from the cover is

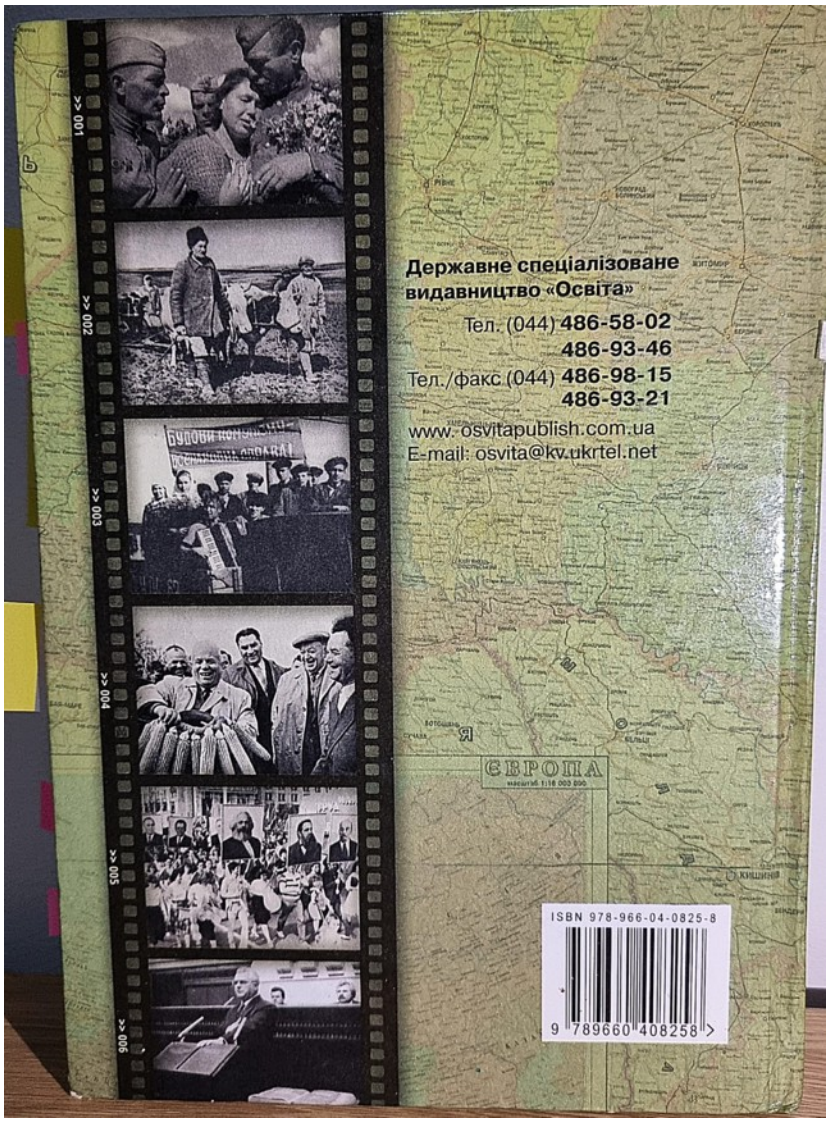
a personal vendetta given that the movement exposed fraudulent votes in Yanukovych's favour and led to victory for Yushchenko. Diverting attention to past narratives disparages Yushchenko's history and belittles the collective significance of the 2004 revolution. The 2011 cover demonstrates elite's participation in reconstructing Ukrainian identity to a version that fits their narrative. The presence of Soviet visual rhetoric rather than more recent historical events undermines Ukraine's recent attempt at democratic transitioning and fosters Soviet nostalgia. Furthermore, the use of Soviet era images on the textbook cover reinforces Yanukovych's policies and alliance with Russia.

The 2011 textbook visually celebrates Ukraine's past rather than twenty years of progress following 1991 independence. This textbook's cover exemplifies a change in elite's rhetoric and most importantly, it directly depicts a moment of political shift in Ukraine's process of nation-building. Yushchenko's progressive and nationalistic politics were reversed by Yanukovych's administration that was committed to renewing Soviet narratives while practicing censorship of political opponents and aligning Ukraine to Russia's sphere of political influence. Beginning from the left and working towards the right, every photograph on the front cover of the textbook depicts a positive and at times utopian version of Ukraine's experience in the Soviet Union and nationalistically insignificant moments following 1991 independence. Known as the breadbasket of the Soviet Union, the photo on the bottom right depicts Ukrainian agriculture and farming. The top right photographs show an award ceremony and gleeful teenage Komsomol pioneers on the bus, both portraying utopian narratives of Soviet state praise and liberated youth. The photograph from Battle of Kyiv in 1941 depicts a positive recounting of history where war is romanticised as a victorious Soviet win rather than a traumatic event that saw Nazi German invasion of Kyiv. There is a continuous pattern among the photographs that detach negative occurrences and traumatic experiences during the Soviet Union, resulting in a polished illusion of the Soviet past. Photographs of Soviet architecture, cultural parades, concerts, gatherings, and everyday life visually construct an idyllic memory of Ukraine's experience in the Soviet Union. The 2011 textbook cover constructs a narrative that allows for post-Soviet identity to endure at the expense of Ukrainian national revival.

The 2011 textbook cover depicts Ukrainian surface level folklore rather than solely independent Ukrainian identity. These two identities differ because the Ukrainian Soviet era identity mobilised by the USSR constructed soft cultural connections to Ukrainian society through music and costume, but connections to religion, language, and sovereignty have been repressed and undermined by policy and Russian dominating culture. The cover depicts black and white photo fragments where musicians are seen playing the bandura (Ukrainian instrument) and Ukrainian women in vyshyvankas (Ukrainian national costume) are paraded by accordion musicians.

Ukrainian cultural features that have not presented Russian colonialism with resistance – unlike language, religion, and sovereignty – were celebrated within the Soviet Union under a banner of diversity. The 2011 textbook cover regurgitates Soviet Union's celebration of folkloric Ukrainian identity that does not present a threat to the endurance of the post-Soviet identity. The photographs on the right capture Ukraine following its independence in an unremarkable way by focusing on imagery that is stripped of explicit national sentiment. Odesa's and Crimea's ports, a visit from the Catholic Church, Ukrainian military, and a sports stadium depict progress in Ukraine's exports, infrastructure, foreign affairs, and state security. However, all of these photographs are absent from explicitly Ukrainian nationalist symbolism. The military photograph shows Ukrainian colours and a trident displayed on a Soviet military mural. The neutrality of the photograph depicts apathy for Ukrainian nationalism which ties closely with Yanukovych's political ambitions of eliminating Yushchenko's nationalistic politics that were once a barrier in 2004 presidential election. The back cover of the textbook (Figure 4) continues to depict Soviet patriotism in positive light through photography. The film roll depicts the embrace of a women and Soviet soldiers, visually mobilising Soviet heroism and victory. Farming and gatherings are once more depicted in order to evoke a sense of patriotism and civic participation. The third photo portrays Ukrainian national identity thriving during the Soviet Union era where the banner proclaims, in Ukrainian: "Communist construction – national cause!". Despite the restrictive censorship of Soviet civilians and treatment of Ukrainian as second in language status, the textbook's visual rhetoric is selective in depicting a positive experience for Ukrainians under the Soviet state. The remaining photographs positively illustrate Soviet elites, Soviet marches, and newly established, Ukrainian parliament.

Figure 4: Pometun & Hupan 2011, History of Ukraine Year 11, Back Cover.

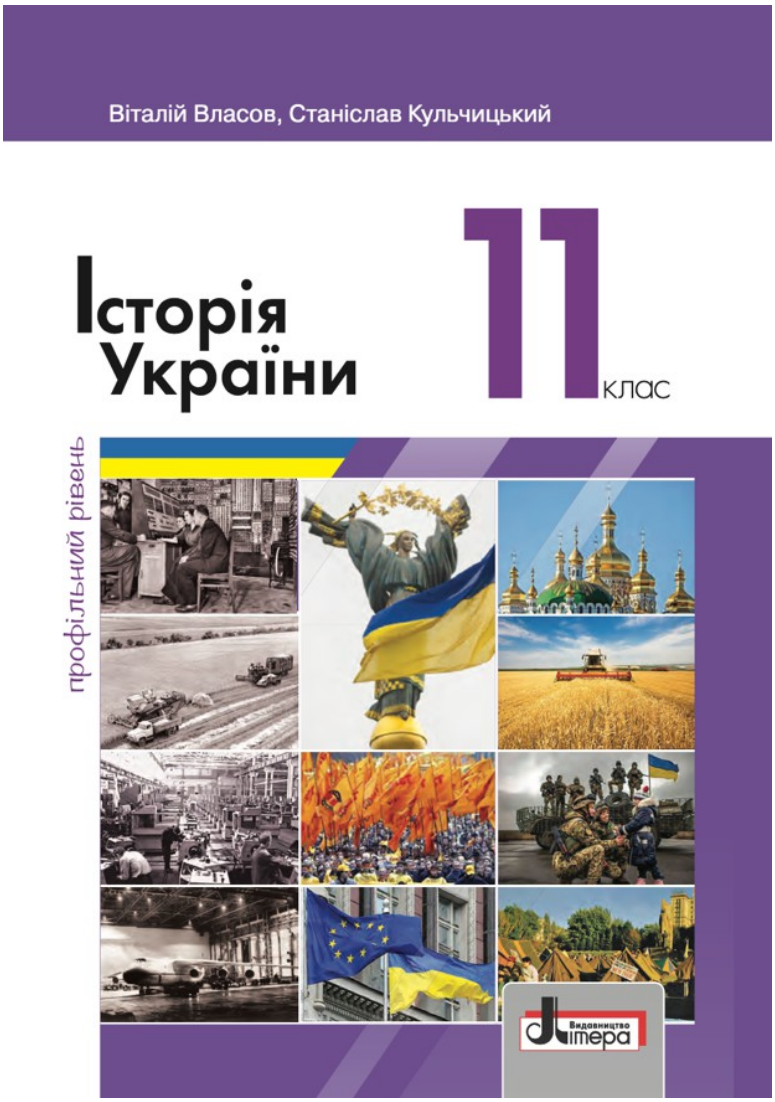


Elites construct narratives that suit their political agenda resulting in an erasure of historical events that clash with their ambitions. Most importantly, the 2011 textbook cover represents the disruptive nature of Ukrainian nation-building where the battle of Ukrainian national identity against the post-Soviet identity is present within historical narratives. While Yushchenko era's textbook in 2007 portrayed recent Ukrainian history, the 2011 version predominantly depicts the past in a bid to recall nostalgic connections between Ukraine and the Soviet Union. By focusing on utopian Soviet history, the textbook becomes a part of the discourse that denies Soviet repression and authoritarianism that have had a traumatic impact on Ukrainian identity. Tangible connections to Ukrainian identity are omitted on the cover 2011 in order to foster connections to the Soviet past and reinforce Yanukovych's political alliance with Russia, resulting in a narrative that detaches Ukrainian nation-building from a nationalist trajectory. The 2011 textbook cover exemplifies how Soviet identity can be re-mobilised by elites in the construction of modern

Ukrainian identity.

Petro Poroshenko: nationalist

Figure 5: Vlasov and Kul'chyts'kyy 2019, History of Ukraine Year 11, Front Cover.



Vlasov and Kul'chyts'kyy's 2019 Ukrainian History textbook for the Year 11 class captures national revivalism while acknowledging Ukrainian accomplishments during the Soviet era. The 2019 cover uses photographs to celebrate Ukrainian progress where the column in black and white depicts the Soviet past and photographs in colour capture 21st century Ukraine. The colourful photographs are significant in depicting modernity, constructing a narrative of Ukrainian national identity that leans towards progressing away from the Soviet past and towards a democratic future. While Yanukovych's era textbook represented the Soviet past in an exclusively positive manner, Poroshenko's era textbook depicts the Soviet past through scientific and agricultural accomplishments, detaching Ukrainian identity from the Soviet identity. The third wave of school history textbook narrative changes shows that Ukrainian elites are determined to shift and reshape the representation of Ukraine's past and present history where the covers depict a continuity of

shifts and contestations, which are an inherent feature of Ukraine's nation-building process. The 2019 textbook uses photographs that depict civic aspects from the Soviet past and omit Soviet nationalistic symbols – such as parades and flags – that blur the line between Ukrainian identity and Soviet identity. Poroshenko's textbook portrays the Soviet past through factual scientific progress rather than a primordial attachment. Most importantly, the 2019 textbook's cover is dominated by photographs and symbols that construct a nationalist and democratic trajectory of Ukrainian identity. Strikingly, even religion is depicted on the cover, which is unconventional for a Ukrainian secular textbook, but is tied closely to Poroshenko's activism in acquiring independence, autocephaly, for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The 2019 textbook mobilises civic aspects of Soviet legacy that negates nostalgic representations that are visible in the 2011 textbook. The Soviet era photographs on the cover of the 2019 textbook (Figure 5) depict Ukrainian accomplishments in the Soviet Union in a way that separates and detaches Soviet authority as the dominating aspect of the success. Ukrainian inventions by scientists, engineers, and pioneers in the Soviet Union were accredited and recognised exclusively under the banner of the USSR, rather than their ethnic background, which resulted in the discourse of constructing accomplishments as de facto Soviet (Kotovych 2024). Analysing from top to bottom, the first photograph depicts Serhiy Lebedev's team developing the MESM (Small Electronic Computer) in 1951 in Kyiv, an accomplishment that became one of the first computers in Europe. The image reclaims Ukrainian accomplishments and identity from the Soviet era by selectively depicting a scene stripped of emotion and explicit Soviet and communist symbolism. Agriculture is a reoccurring image in the 2019 cover that depicts Ukraine as the "bread basket" of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the east of Ukraine was famous for its steel industry, which is captured in the third photograph.

The last image depicts one of Ukraine's most famous creations in the 1980s, the largest aircraft by weight: Antonov AN-225 Mriya. The photographs that were selected to represent Ukraine's Soviet experience reconstruct and reclaim Ukrainian scientific and agricultural accomplishments as Ukrainian, not purely Soviet. The detachment of Soviet and Ukrainian identity challenges nostalgic and platonic representations of Ukraine's experience in the Soviet Union. It is also important to consider Poroshenko's legislation on decommunisation when observing the cover. Part of the legislation in 2015 saw banning of Soviet and communist symbolism on public infrastructure, not literature or educational materials. Poroshenko's domestic policies are reflected on the cover of the 2019 textbook that does not display symbolism from the Soviet era. Omission of Soviet symbolism does not erase Ukraine's Soviet history, but rather elevates Ukraine's accomplishments and Ukraine's presence in scientific development. Furthermore, when comparing the 2019 textbook to the 2011, the lack of pathos is worthy of attention. While 2011 constructed a positive

image of Ukraine's experience in the Soviet Union through photographs of people and elites smiling, the 2019 cover is vacant of emotional attachment. Detachment from pathos suggests deflating the primordial attachment of Ukrainian identity to the Soviet identity that was produced during the Soviet Union and later reproduced by Yanukovych's presidency.

Civic and ethnic visual representations of Ukrainian modern identity dominate the remaining part of the 2019 textbook cover. Photographs of the 2004 Orange Revolution, the infamous 1990 Revolution on Granite, the Monument of Independence, and the European and Ukrainian flags mobilise memories of collective activism and construct a democratic aspect of Ukrainian identity that was undermined during Yanukovych's presidency. The photographs capture nationalistic and democratic momentum following the Revolution of Dignity that attempt to depict Ukrainian historical urgency for independence and alignment with Europe, not Russia. Including the photograph of the Orange Revolution revives the omitted memory during Yanukovych's era and in doing so renews Ukrainian civic aspects of identity. The Revolution on Granite was a movement that gathered civil society to protest for independence from the Soviet Union. The 2019 textbook cover dramatically shifts the construction of Ukrainian identity that solely relies on reviving Ukrainian civil accomplishments. The photograph in the top right corner depicts the top domes of an Orthodox Church, an image that is highly relevant to the Ukrainian Orthodox process of acquiring independence from Constantinople. Religion is depicted through a civic lens when considering the monumental importance of 2018 when Ukrainian Orthodoxy gaining independence following centuries of subordination under Russian jurisdiction. All of the coloured photographs represent an ongoing theme of independence, be it in agriculture, civic activism, political alignment, religious, or sovereign. The photograph of Ukrainian military depicts Ukraine's ongoing defence against Russian invasion. This is the only image on the cover that depicts explicit emotion that constructs war in a heroic and stoic manner. Furthermore, the academic standard of this school history textbook suggests that the students that used this book were interested in developing their history knowledge for tertiary education in history. When considering the standard of this book's content and academic level of students using it for their studies, it suggests that the student would have engaged with the textbook and its historical narratives with utmost interest.

Part 2: Teacher Identity

Revivalist versus Backslider

History impacts the construction of identity and teachers are influenced by their past experiences that guide the trajectory of their interpretation and instruction of history in class. The interviews of two teachers reveal opposing attitudes and identities that relate to their experiences in Ukraine's revolutions. While Teacher 1 participated in the Orange Revolution and in the Revolution of Dignity, Teacher 2 did not participate in either revolution and expressed negative attitudes towards the events of 2013-2014. Insights from both teachers are revealing of their identity that closely matches their approach to teaching history in the classroom. Teacher 1 explicitly expresses a nationalistic identity while Teacher 2 reflections indirectly expose an anti-Ukrainian identity under the pretence of an objective thinker. The data from the interviews does not enable generalisations about all Ukrainian teachers but is treated in a way that exposes the complexity of Ukraine's identity construction that not only happens at the state level, but also trickles down to teacher positions. Teachers are vessels of identity who use their agency to shape history in their classrooms to their liking and their mediation reveals the complexity of Ukraine's overarching experience in identity construction. Insights from the teachers allow for an opportunity to make sense of Ukraine's identity construction process in education.

The tone and engagement of Teacher 1 during the interview alone exposed their nationalistic sentiments towards Ukrainian history. Initially planned for 20 minutes, the interview turned into an hour and a half discussion dominated by the teacher's eagerness to explain gaps in history textbooks and the state of Ukrainian national identity. Teacher 1 participated in the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity and expressed intricate interest in tracing history narratives that have been written incorrectly or removed altogether in the school history textbooks during their 12-year career. The examples they chose always related to showing the survival of Russian narratives at the expense of Ukrainian nationalism. Teacher 1 drew attention to the erasure of ancient historical figures, such as Volodymyr II Monomakh, whose role was significant in understanding Ukraine's roots of origin to Kyivan Rus. Teacher 1 also emphasised that the rhetoric and detail of explaining the significance of Kyivan Rus in the textbooks always fluctuated where certain definitions were either misrepresented or perceived as myths. The narratives singled out by Teacher 1 signified state conformity to belittling the aggression of Russia throughout history. "In regards to the portrayal of Russia as an explicit aggressor [in history textbooks], well it's usually the state and bureaucracy at fault, not the Russian people…it's the regime". The teacher also referred to "theft of Ukrainian national identity" when explaining their observed error in the school history textbooks. What was striking from the teacher's insights is that they focused on

minor details, such as dates, rhetoric, density of explanation in relation to respective events in the school textbooks and how they were adamant on making these changes visible to their students.

Teacher 1's rhetoric and selection of historical narratives all depicted a sense of loyalty towards Ukrainian identity. They openly expressed their mission to correct distorted history because they are hyper-aware of the impact of history on identity construction. The insights from Teacher 1 suggest that history teachers are mediators of identity construction, where their participation in social movements and sharp observation of political changes during the longevity of their careers empowers them to pursue restructuring the set curriculum. Identity empowers teachers to be part of the process in constructing narratives in ways that in their opinion "fixes" the state sponsored version. Teachers might seem as agents of the Ministry of Education, but at close observation, they are adaptive actors who have learnt to use their mediating position to change the trajectory of history narratives in their classrooms.

Teacher 1's insights and remarks about their students reveals an attitude of revivalism towards teaching Ukrainian history. Teachers are observant of changes in the curriculums and textbooks and are highly aware of history's impact on society. An understanding of how identity shapes the nation motivates teachers to make judgements on the trajectory of identity construction that suits their perspective. Teacher 1 shared that "I have many students in my class that do not know life before war and their parents tell them that Russia is our brother. They think that by speaking Russian, it is a way of being Ukrainian." Their expression depicts their version of what it truly means to be Ukrainian, which means a rejection of the historical narrative of brotherhood between two nations and Russian language. Furthermore, the teacher expressed concern about the performative and surface level nature of Ukraine's identity, claiming that "the conception of Ukrainian identity is loving salo". Salo is cured pork, a Ukrainian dish whose simplicity has been used in anti-Ukrainian slurs by Russians. The teacher's hyper awareness of the discourse of Ukrainian identity in their students represents their commitment to mediate official historical narratives in order to revive Ukrainian nationalism. "Ukrainian culture is not seen as something intellectual to youth. It is not seen as something genuine and integral. But Russian culture, oh Russian culture is seen with respect" (Teacher 1, 2020). Teacher 1 expresses agitation with the trajectory of Ukraine's identity in their classroom and in doing so they reconstruct the trajectory of learning Ukrainian history in their classrooms in an attempt to repress the presence of Russian dominating culture in Ukraine's nation-building process. Furthermore, the remark about Ukrainian culture directly demonstrates their awareness of the importance of education in re-shaping identity and reception of identity. A deep-rooted care for identity drives teachers to mediate in the construction of history in their classroom. Besides participating in both 2004 and 2013-14

revolutions, Teacher 1 continued to express their interest in attending lectures held by the Institute of National Memory in Kyiv and their commitment to bringing extra-curricular literature to class. The teacher is proudly explicit in their activism in the classroom. Teacher 1 is representative of the leftover sediment from the wave of nationalism that followed the Revolution of Dignity that inspires the teacher to mediate the course of learning outcomes in their classroom.

In contrast to Teacher 1, Teacher 2's insights demonstrated an apathy to Ukrainian nationalism, which related to their sentiments and experiences during the Revolution of Dignity. Teacher 2 did not participate in the Revolution of Dignity because in their opinion it was a "violent and unnecessary mess that could have been solved diplomatically". The rhetoric used by the teacher lacked a definitive stance regarding the revolution and they attempted to position themselves as neutral on the subject matter. However, the words and expression do not lack neutrality but rather depict an anti-revolution sentiment when referring to violence and resolution. Claiming that the revolution could have been "solved diplomatically" is rhetoric that on surface level can be perceived as pacifist due to the peaceful connotations of the words. However, when taking into account the objective crimes of the state in killing protesters it becomes apparent that Teacher 2 undermines state responsibility and implies that the protesters are complicit in triggering violence. The Revolution of Dignity witnessed waves of state-initiated violence and for the teacher to remove accountability from the act of violence means that they equated and simplified the definitive roles of the protesters and the state in reality. The vagueness that is attached to the accountability for violence discredits the significance of the revolution and undermines the importance of collective activism. The Revolution of Dignity was a monumental event in Ukraine's modern history where for the first-time millions of Ukrainian protesters crowded the streets against explicit state-led violations of democracy. The teacher's concise and on the surface neutral words captured a depth in their cynicism towards the revolution, collective action, and Ukrainian nationalism. To claim that the revolution could have been solved diplomatically meant that the teacher's perception of the reason that caused the revolution in the first place was skewed towards sympathising with the Yanukovych's state.

Furthermore, Teacher 2 exclaimed that "2013-2014 events caused families to fall apart", explicitly detaching accountability of Yanukovych and Russian intervention and placing it on the protesters. It is significant to point out that the interviewee persistently referred to themselves as an "objective thinker" and that in their instruction of Ukrainian history they were committed to "not politicising things". Yet again, the seeming neutrality of the language used by the teacher underpins their scepticism towards Ukrainian nationalism, which guides their teaching of Ukrainian history. When asked about their approach to teaching Ukrainian history in class, Teacher 2 responded with: "I

follow a scientific approach. I have my own opinions but I keep to a more objective way of seeing and teachings things." When taking into consideration their stated teaching approach and negative sentiments towards collective action it becomes apparent that the teacher equates nationalist markers with subjectivity, an identity that they do not appease. Teacher 2's responses demonstrate resentment, not proclaimed objectivity, towards understanding the aims and causes of the Revolution of Dignity. It is clear that the revolution impacted the teacher's perception of Ukrainian history and identity that guides their pedagogy.

Throughout the interview Teacher 2 attempted to establish themselves as an "objective thinker" which in turn exposed their cynicism towards Ukrainian nationalism and be extension the complexity of their own identity. Ukrainian identity formation following the 1991 independence experienced incoherence which was caused by historical experiences and Russian meddling in modern political affairs. Ukraine's historical trajectory played a vital role in modern Ukraine's incohesive and divisive identity that is present in different layers of society, including teachers. Teacher 2's perceptions have been largely guided by their negative association towards nationalistic markers, an insight that depicts the diversity of Ukrainian identity mobilised in classrooms that does not always necessarily fall in a patriotic sense of identity like Teacher 1. The diversity of Ukrainian identity can be observed through teacher's practices and interpretations in their history classrooms. When questioned about state-led changes on the topic of Holodomor in school history textbooks, Teacher 2 expressed that the thematic block on the subject was not erased during Yanukovych's presidential era and acknowledge that "Holodomor is too politicised and it is difficult to teach a topic that would be delivered correctly as a memory". It was striking to hear a history teacher question the importance of memory and testimony in relation to Holodomor, data that has helped expose the crimes of Stalin's famine genocide of Ukrainians. The teacher's proclamation to be an objective thinker is masked by a regressive practice to discredit nationalistic sentiment with traumatic events in Ukrainian history, which was a similar practice by the Soviet state. Furthermore, Teacher 2 felt it important to note that "students privately do not care about Holodomor". This detail suggests that the teacher's apathy towards the traumatic element of Holodomor is present in the classroom attitudes too. To critique the Revolution of Dignity and skepticize about Holodomor means to backslide in Ukraine's attempt to revive historically repressed identity. Ukraine's identity has undergone Russian imperial and Soviet repression where this practice of discrediting Ukrainian nationalistic sentiments is directly observed in Teacher 2's rhetoric and expression about Ukrainian history.

It is important to highlight that Teacher 2 explicitly claimed to be sceptical about the researcher's curiosity in Ukraine education of history. The proclaimed feeling of scepticism by the teacher

towards the interview captured a moment of deception and transgression in teacher's pedagogy and sentiments. Teacher 2 has undetectably mediated the state sponsored narrative of history for 30 years in their classroom by instructing their versions of history, which undermine Ukrainian nationalism, and yet, when asked about their own identity, they stated that they are a "proud Ukrainian". Using language of neutrality and objectivity revealed the teacher's cynicism towards Ukraine's attempts to revive nationalism. Despite displaying scepticism towards a nationalist trajectory of identity construction, the teacher's self-identification as a proud Ukrainian captures a motion in process: the diverse and contested construction of Ukrainian identity. This teacher's insights reveal that fluidity and divisiveness are a natural part of Ukrainian identity. Furthermore, teachers project their identity in the instruction of history in their classrooms and in doing so demonstrate the continuation of the contestation in the process of identity construction in Ukraine.

Mediators of History

Tracing shifts in history textbooks is useful in understanding how identity has been changed by state authority. However, this data does not provide insight into how these history narrative changes are filtered down and implemented in classrooms. Teachers' practices, sentiments, and insights provide an opportunity to make sense of how Ukraine's identity is constructed in practice. What happens on the ground, in the classroom, is much more revealing of the dynamic and fluid nature of Ukraine's identity construction process. History teachers transgress from official curriculum guidelines because their identity and experiences in the field guide their instruction of historical narratives in the classroom. The remaining section of this chapter aims to contribute towards understanding the process of identity construction in the history classroom. Interviews of a representative of the Ministry of Education and two history teachers from Kyiv schools reveal details about history lessons and teaching practices that fall outside of state sponsored guidelines. Teachers mediate official historical narrative to suit their own interpretations. While state sponsored history textbooks and curriculums depict the agency of presidents in constructing national narratives, teacher discretion in classrooms reveals how elite reforms are truly perceived and practiced.

The interviews have captured teachers voluntarily ignoring or adding additional content to the curriculum. The process of teacher mediation is revealed when both teachers expressed their common practice of lessening or extending the time given to a thematic section from the curriculum. Both teachers justified such manipulations by expressing their support or discontent for the thematic section. Teacher's insights capture the complexity of moulding Ukrainian society. Identity impacts multiple actors that engage in history production. While the textbooks and curriculums undergo changes in tempo with frequent government turnover, teachers who have

remained in their positions for long periods of time have exploited their agency by contradicting the official written word in order to suit their own sentiments. Furthermore, the execution of state orders to change textbooks is implemented drastically differently on the ground. For example, teachers hide history textbooks that are representative of their historical perspectives. The interviews revealed cunning practices in classrooms that demonstrate teacher's mediated agency in (re)constructing history lessons and by extension Ukrainian identity. These moments of fluidity and flexibility in the (re)construction of historical narratives cannot be captured in tracing textbooks alone. Teacher authority and discretion in classrooms debunks the rigidity of official narratives, revealing the contested and dynamic nature of Ukrainian identity that is in a continuous battle of constructing itself.

It has been established that the government makes frequent changes to the curriculum, but what happens to the old curriculums and textbooks that no longer fall in line with current government expectations? This is an important question to ask because while state agency has absolute authority on constructing official narratives, how these changes are implemented in reality can tell a different story about the process of identity construction. Both teachers shared teaching material disposal and maintenance practices that they have observed during their careers; this information was shared with hesitance and suspicion, which in itself revealed that Ukraine's education is in a state of disarray. Insights from teachers reveal that old instructing materials – curriculums and textbooks – are ordered to be instantly disposed by the Ministry of Education where Teacher 1 witnessed a truck pick up old books that were "thrown out like logs of wood". Teacher 1 also noted that their school does not retain copies of old materials, only in very rare instances where the narratives correlate with current guidelines. They further elaborated on the maintenance and record keeping of instructing materials by stating that only specialised schools (gymnasiums) kept a record of old material and if a "normal history teacher" wanted access to past materials, even for personal use, the library restricted access. What becomes apparent is that there is a discrepancy in the implementation of orders to dispose old materials where standard schools systematically follow through with state command while schools of higher status have the privilege to archive past materials. This differential treatment provides an insight into the unequal status of schools where specialised schools enjoy the ability to access past materials for a constructive, critical, and intertextual opportunity to learn about history.

The process of identity construction in Ukraine's education experience is dependent not only on the contents of history textbooks and the frequency of changes in the materials, but also on the availability of past materials that can impact the approach to understanding Ukrainian history. Furthermore, the insight about libraries confirms my observation when visiting two prolific state-

owned libraries in Kyiv: Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and Yaroslav Mudryi National Library of Ukraine. Access to past textbooks in libraries is not easily available for pedagogical staff and curious researchers. The record keepers of both libraries were surprised at the request of getting access to 2004, Yushchenko-era, materials which were claimed to be as unimportant, therefore not archived. While both libraries hold expansive archives of historical documents, texts, and books, old schooling materials were not prioritised. The history textbook is an object of controversy among multiple actors where even libraries – whose sole purpose is to archive – experience the effect of state orders.

It is also important to observe the physical treatment of history textbooks. Teacher 1 has alluded to situations where textbooks are brutally discarded as waste or respectfully archived by schools. While history textbooks are objects, their contents are a subject of imperative importance to the process of Ukraine's identity construction. Schools are confined by their respective academic standard that can explain the opposing handling of history books, but the manner in which teachers treat these materials is vital in demonstrating mediated agency in challenging supposedly ridged instructions from the Ministry of Education. Teacher 2 declared that all old instructing materials were thrown away and teaching staff were prohibited from using old materials. However, they hesitantly acknowledged that they keep old copies of history textbooks under lock and key in their office in order to "self-evaluate history…nothing more". The "nothing more" is something significant, a practice that depicts the mediation of teachers in disobeying state orders, but most importantly suggests that teachers treat history textbooks as extensions of their own identity, as sacred texts. Teacher 2 choice to specify that they kept old materials purely for self-evaluation of history is suggestive of hiding intent and a sense of paranoia that stems from acknowledging the act of transgression. This insight suggests that educators are mindful of rules and yet they pursue safekeeping and guarding of materials that fall in line with their sentiments and attitudes towards Ukraine's history.

Ukrainian history teachers are incentivised to guard textbooks that inhabit their sentiments because they deeply care about history and identity, and by extension, the trajectory of Ukraine's nation-building process. History textbooks embody Ukrainian identity where specific versions relate to some teachers more than to others. Teacher 1 revealed that they not only "secretly keep" old textbooks, but that they also brought extra-curricular materials to class to reinforce what they have justified as a "gap in the official narrative". Identity drives the choices of teachers to digress from the official curriculum and rules on renewing instructing materials. The teacher poses something much more remarkable than the positions of the President and Ministry of Education in a context of frequent state-sponsored history narrative changes: the privilege of time and perspective.

Ukraine's history teachers have persevered through fluctuating political changes and constant shifts in history textbook materials whereby observing the process of incohesive identity construction has given them the ability to solidify their identity and sharpen their skills at implementing their agency in the classroom.

Presidents change the course of official history, the Ministry of Education enforces these changes in teaching materials, and schools are obliged to follow through with expectations. Teachers, the bottom chain of educational hierarchy, are cunning in how they navigate rules and orders because the longevity of their careers has given them the ability to evaluate the system of change for themselves, leading them to transgress in ways that they justify as the "right way to learn history" (Teacher 1, 2020). Both teachers have expressed their critical observance of the changes that have happened in the curriculum in the span of ten years. Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 claim that the wording and rhetoric surrounding contentious historical events change depending on who is in power. Teacher 1 unpacked multiple examples of historical narratives that in their opinion have been distorted, beginning with the vilification of Ukraine's national movement, Kyivan Rus narrative, representation of revolutions, and the current relationship with Russia. Specifically, they note that the Ukrainian nationalist movement has often been expressed through mainstream rhetoric rather than an exclusively Ukrainian upheaval that associates with figures such as Stepan Bandera. This dilution of history happened during Yanukovych's administration where Teacher 1 justified the importance of "telling the truth, not propaganda". Teacher 1 expressed emotional excitement when justifying their taught version of history, a moment that suggests a noteworthy investment of some teachers in correcting the trajectory of the official historical narrative in a way that agreed with their perception. Furthermore, Teacher 1 noted that "history is never displayed clearly. Everything is puzzled because it is not taught in order. For example, before reaching Year 10, the [history] narratives are not nationalistic in their tone." These insights of dismantling official history are indicative of teachers being aware of not only the historical events, but the trajectory in which these events are being shaped, and for what outcomes. The teachers that were interviewed understand the process of identity construction through education which suggests that their mediation is done with intent to change the trajectory of the process. The insights from Teacher 1 capture the incohesive process of identity construction in Ukraine where teachers are implicated in the creation of nationalism.

Conclusion

If one would like to understand the state of Ukraine's identity formation process, one should look at the cover of a Ukrainian school history textbook and peak inside a Ukrainian history classroom. The visual narratives and conversations in Ukrainian history classrooms demonstrate the determination of the state and history teachers to be involved in shaping Ukrainian identity. While elites play a major role in forming official historical narratives, classrooms are spaces where these narratives are challenged with the guidance of teachers. This chapter has demonstrated that school history textbook covers are significant in revealing competing historical narratives that are present in Ukraine's identity (re)construction process. Revolutions have played a major role in shifting historical visual rhetoric where particularly, there have been attempts to consolidate Ukrainian ethnic nationalism following the Revolution of Dignity. However, while elites produce historical narratives reflective of their politics, Kyiv's teachers eagerly mediate historical narratives in their classrooms. Teacher mediation of two Kyiv based history teachers has demonstrated the presence of competing historical narratives and identities in classrooms. These findings help confirm the overarching argument of this dissertation by capturing the fluid nature of Ukrainian identity that is impacted by the historical legacies and revolutions.

Chapter 7: History of Religion

Introduction & Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information about Ukrainian Orthodox history and events that have shaped Ukraine's Orthodox independence struggles and Ukrainian Greek-Catholic persecution and liberation in the lead up to the events of the Revolution of Dignity. In order to understand the significance of the Revolution of Dignity events in mobilising religious actors to (re)construct Ukrainian identity – which will be argued in the next chapter – it is vital to consider key historical circumstances and external factors that have shaped Ukraine's lengthy struggle to gain Orthodox independence. Furthermore, it is important to explain and define Ukrainian terms and names which might not register as common knowledge and are directly relevant to understanding the arguments made in Chapter 8 Religion. Ukraine's history of Christian origins involves rapid development of the Ukrainian ancient state, known as Kyivan Rus, as well as battles for independence and survival from changes to the Byzantium Empire, engulfment into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the struggle against Russian imperialist, and later, Soviet policies. This chapter does not exhaustively cover the entire history of Ukrainian religion, but rather devotes attention to specific historical events that are of immediate relevance to tracing and investigating how the past has shaped the status and fate of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and Ukrainian Greek-Catholicism. The specific historical events that have been chosen for discussion relate to geopolitical shifts, Christian schisms, and policies that have had an impact on suppressing Ukrainian religious identity. Therefore, selective yet necessary historical foundation is provided here in support of the next chapter's focus, which argues that the Revolution of Dignity exposed historical grievances and mobilised religious actors to participate in the process of (re)constructing Ukrainian identity.

The chapter begins with the baptism of Kyivan Rus, Ukraine's ancestral state. Section two explains unique features and self-governance practices in Christian Orthodoxy, which are relevant in understanding Ukraine's distinctive struggle to gain independence from the Orthodox Mother Church, Constantinople. Thirdly, the chapter outlines monumental religious and geopolitical shifts that occurred in the region that directly impacted Kyivan Rus' sovereignty and Ukrainian Orthodox governance. By the end of section three, it will be understood that historical external factors are of immediate relevance to Ukraine's modern struggles to gain Orthodox independence. The fourth section focuses on a crucial Orthodox juridical shift from Constantinople to Moscow as well as Russian tsarist policies that have directly changed Ukrainian sovereign and religious identity since the seventeenth century. The endurance of Russian religious dominion over Ukraine

continued during the Soviet era. Section five explains Joseph Stalin's persecution of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) and splits in Ukrainian Orthodoxy. While section six outlines the schisms of Ukrainian Orthodoxy since 1991, section seven focuses on the endurance of Russian meddling in Ukrainian Orthodox determination for independence. A brief comparative analysis of the Saint Micahel's Golden-Domed Monastery and Pechersk Lavra's symbolism is discussed in section eight in order to help establish the religious scene and contestations within Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Lastly, this chapter ends with explaining the importance of the Revolution of Dignity's impact on Ukrainian Orthodoxy and Ukrainian Greek-Catholicism in the lead up to Chapter 8. The 2013-2014 protests in Kyiv were a catalyst for religious activism.

1. Ukraine's ancestral land: Kyivan Rus

Orthodoxy has shaped Ukraine's religious landscape and origins. Kyivan Rus was baptised in 988 by Volodymyr the Great who saw Orthodoxy from Constantinople (Byzantium) as a religious force that could shape and establish Kyivan Rus' nationhood (Lencyk 2001). Byzantine missionary activity in Kyivan Rus region is recorded as early as 867, largely associated with Saints Cyril and Methodius (Babie 2023, p. 225) who have also reshaped language in the region, known as Cyrillic. The churches that are relevant to the next chapter's analysis, Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOCKP), Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOCMP), and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) all historically stemmed and developed following the Christianisation of Kyivan Rus. The religious foundation of Kyivan Rus is important to acknowledge because its origins have been a source of Russian imperial and modern disputes about Ukrainian cultural and sovereign heritage that have directly impacted opportunities for Ukrainian religious liberation. The legitimacy of Ukraine's Kyivan Rus ancestry, closely tied to Orthodox independence, is a historical aspect that has been rewritten and disputed by Russian imperialist historians (Plokhy 2005, pp. 93-94), the Soviet Union, and Vladimir Putin's Russia (2021) in order to disparage Ukraine's origins and claims to sovereignty, a propagandistic discourse that has impacted the trajectory of Ukraine's struggle to reconstruct its identity following its independence from the Soviet Union. As argued in Chapter 8, a way of investigating Ukrainian Orthodoxy's determination for religious freedom from Russian Orthodox domination is by examining transformed sacred spaces during and following the Revolution of Dignity. But before investigating the significance of sacred spaces in Chapter 8, it is important to understand historical events that have made these sacred spaces important to observe.

2. Distinctive Features of Orthodoxy

Taking a step back, Orthodox Christianity differs from Catholicism in that Orthodox Churches are all associated with national states. Furthermore, Orthodoxy is a conservative faith that emphasises strict tradition and teachings confined by hierarchical structures that maintain the Church's rigidity. Another important feature that distinguishes Orthodoxy from Catholicism is that Orthodox Churches are all associated with national states. The static tradition and behaviour of an Orthodox faith will be relevant to remember when examining the transformation of sacred spaces in Chapter 8. The 1054 Great Schism was the permanent separation in communion between the Eastern Church and Catholic Church on the basis of growing theological and hierarchical disagreements (Whalen 2007). Proceeding of the Holy Spirit, Eucharist practice, as well as the status and role of the Catholic Pope were the dominating reasons for the split in a context where the Byzantine Empire began to slowly experience its cultural and political decline. In Orthodoxy, the Church's existence and survival are dependent on the a priori recognition by the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople – and later by 13 sistering Churches – who grants the Church self-governance without the need of reporting to a higher authority. An Orthodox Church that wants to officially exist in the eyes of its Orthodox community draws on canonical reasons, and most importantly, provides evidence of the presence of a faithful homogenous society within a sovereign state. Once self-governance is granted by Constantinople, the Church becomes an autocephaly, a term which derives from ancient Greek *auto*, self, and *kephaly*, head, meaning autonomy (Ungvarsky 2024). Furthermore, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople officially issues the Church with a decree of autocephaly, which is termed Tomos. An autocephaly is ruled by bishops – who are also known as Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and Archbishops – who do not report to a higher authority because the Church gains its own jurisdiction. There is a total of 14 [4] Orthodox autocephalous Churches: Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Russia, Cypress, Greece, Poland, Albania, Czechia and Slovakia.

A vital benefit of autocephaly means visibility in the Orthodox community and the ability to network and correspond with the global Orthodox community through liturgical unity and communion. Autocephaly is a significant aspect of an Orthodox Church's livelihood because it impacts networking between sister autocephaly churches, a process that promotes relationships and recognition between sovereign states within the Orthodox community. For Ukrainian Orthodoxy, autocephaly was granted 1031 years after Kyivan Rus' baptism, in 2019. Elaborated

[4]The Ukrainian Orthodox Church received autocephaly in 2019, making a total of 15 Churches.

reasons for Ukrainian Orthodoxy not receiving autocephaly will be justified further in the sections below. What is of noteworthy attention is that the inability to govern oneself for such a lengthy period of time was a major problem for Ukrainian Orthodoxy because without autocephaly the Church was deemed non-existent, which is an explicit suppression of religious independence and national identity. Autocephaly forms a vital component of national identity because it recognises a sovereign nation with an ethnic population that is devoted to Orthodox canonical practices. As investigated in Chapter 8, the Revolution of Dignity was a climax point for Ukrainian Orthodoxy to voluntarily reconstruct itself as Ukrainian national identity, which is evident in the transformation of sacred space. Ukrainian Orthodox activism in the 2013-2014 protests meant explicit visibility of religious actors alongside civilian protesters, a movement which later led to the outcome of gaining Tomos from Constantinople in 2019.

The repercussions for Ukrainian Orthodoxy not gaining autocephaly and being subjugated to the jurisdiction of Moscow has meant that Ukrainian religious identity has been ecumenically assimilated and associated with Russian Orthodoxy, despite Ukraine gaining sovereignty in 1991. While Russia's jurisdiction over Ukrainian Orthodoxy endured until 2019, Ukrainian Orthodoxy did not cease to exist and the events of the Revolution of Dignity are a testament of religious determination to redefine national identity as explicitly Ukrainian. Absorbed by neighbouring empires, Ukrainian Orthodox identity endured and even made several attempts to gain autocephaly prior to 2019, which will be further explored in the sections below. The significance of understanding Ukraine's complex historical religious struggle is in the pay-off of tracing moments of coherence in Ukrainian religious identity by examining Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Greek-Catholic activism during the Revolution of Dignity in Chapter 8. The determination to reconstruct Ukrainian Orthodox national identity is witnessed during the events of the Revolution of Dignity. Ukraine's lengthy struggle to gain its historically and canonically owed autocephaly is a factor that can be explained by examining historical circumstances that have directly impacted Ukrainian Orthodoxy's ability to gain independence.

3. Kyivan Rus torn from the South, West, and East

Ukrainian Orthodoxy's extensive struggle for independence needs to be understood in the context of Kyivan Rus' experience of multiple invasions, geopolitical and religious shifts, Christian schisms and unions, and the rise of Russian Orthodox authority, Russian tsarist expansionism, and Russification policies. From 988 until the 17th century, Kyivan Rus' Orthodoxy, the Metropolitan of Kyiv, existed under Constantinople's jurisdiction during a time when the Byzantium experienced a shift from relative geopolitical stability to a collapse by the 15th century. There were attempts by the Ukrainian Orthodoxy to claim autocephaly, like in 1051, but Constantinople

declined the motion for independence (Solod'ko 2013). Some note that the Kyivan Rus principality enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in relation to Constantinople (Markus & Shulhyn 2004). Following the monumental split between Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism in 1054, Kyivan Rus became one of the most influential nations to consolidate and spread Orthodoxy in the region. Kyivan Rus thrived culturally, economically, and geopolitically under the rule of the Grand Princes of Kyiv until 1240.

From 1240-1440, Kyivan Rus territory was invaded by the Mongol Tatars (Madey 1993). Despite the invasion of the principality of Kyivan Rus, the new rulers of what was then named as Golden Horde, allowed the Metropolitan of Kyiv privileges, which resulted in the perseverance of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. In the late 13 century, the Metropolitan Cyril II of Kyiv was given the privilege to create an eparchy (a governing territory, in Orthodox terms) in Sarai, Golden Horde's capital (ibid). The city of Kyiv was in ruins following Mongol Tatar invasion which for about a century forced many Metropolitan of Kyiv to move and with their movement followed the development and influence of Orthodoxy on the territory of Moscow region. For example, in the early 14th century, Metropolitan Petro of Kyiv transferred his residence to Moscow while retaining the title of Metropolitan of Kyiv, Halych, and Kyivan Rus, and later laying the foundations for a new independent ecclesiastical development in the Moscow principality (ibid). It is essential to understand that the relocation of the Metropolitan of Kyiv meant practical survival of Ukrainian Orthodoxy but at the expense of residence in Moscow, a city that was slowly gaining tsardom and developing religiously.

15th century onwards saw many drastic changes in the eastern European region that continued to impact the sovereignty of Kyivan Rus and Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The Russian Empire and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth began to thrive and dominate the region of Kyivan Rus while Byzantium steadily declined following the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. In 1448 Moscow proclaimed itself as a Metropolitan of Moscow and Kyivan Rus (Bruning 2016, p. 80). Shortly after Moscow's self-consecration, 1453 marked the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire (Babie 2023 p. 212) and a shift in religious spheres of influence. Constantinople became Istanbul where Islam dominated a once thriving Orthodox city. As Byzantium slowly dissolved, Orthodoxy in Moscow thrived under a growing Russian Empire. In 1589, Constantinople – the name remains intact in Orthodoxy despite the city name change – give autocephaly to the Moscow Patriarchate (Meyendorff 1999, p. 99). These major geopolitical and religious changes in the region directly impacted Kyivan Rus' sovereignty and opportunity to claim autocephaly, especially in light of Moscow's threatening autocephaly.

Furthermore, the 15th century witnessed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth expansion, which

invaded western regions of Ukraine and introduced Catholicism. The Union of Brest in 1596 was a vital moment for Ukrainian Orthodoxy that saw the emergence of a Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The 1596 union was an agreement between the Orthodox Church in Ruthenia (west parts of modern Ukraine and parts of modern Belarus) under Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth occupation to accept the Catholic Pope's authority while maintaining Eastern Orthodox practices (Avvakumov 2016, pp. 25-27). The remnants of Kyivan Rus' Orthodoxy that were under Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth accepted the Pope's authority, creating the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which strived to avoid the newly established and repressive authority of the Patriarch of Moscow (Avvakumov 2016, pp. 25-27). While western parts of Ukraine were under Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth occupation, what remained of Kyivan Rus became Hetman State from 1648 to approximately 1782 (Okinshevych & Zhukovsky 1989). Wedged between the Polish-Lithuanian and Russia tsarist dominion, a period known as the Ruin, saw battles fought by Ukrainian Hetman Cossacks (warriors) on the Left Bank and the Right Bank of Kyiv's Dnipro River who attempted to re-establish and secure a sovereign Ukrainian state bound exclusively by Ukrainian Orthodoxy. However, Ukrainian newly formed Hetman State did not endure for long due to the advances of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and tsarist Russia.

4. Russian Tsarist Domination

The 1654 Pereiaslav Treaty monumentally changed the trajectory of Ukrainian sovereignty and religious identity. Ukraine's Zaporizhzhian Cossacks pledged allegiance to Russia's tsar Alexei I in exchange for protection against the expanding threat of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a deal that resulted in the occupation of the Hetman State. By 1667 the Polish-Lithuanians and Russians divided Ukraine along the Dnipro River, with Kyiv occupied by the Russian Empire (Snyder 2004, pp.117-119). Vladimir Putin's (2021) historical narratives have fabricated the 1654 Pereiaslav Treaty as agitation for Ukraine's inherited subservience to Russia, erasing the reality of forceful Russian invasion. I make reference to Putin's 2021 speech because Russian chauvinistic behaviour has endured in the form of jurisdiction over Ukrainian Orthodoxy, but also in the discourses of historical narratives that dilute the credibility of Ukrainian national identity and sovereignty. Ukrainian Orthodoxy was prevented from receiving autocephaly because of enduring imperialistic Russian interests. Coming back to the 17th century, as Ukraine's Hetman State lost its sovereignty to two empires, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople formally approved the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church over the Metropolitan of Kyiv in a "Letter of Issue" of 1686 (Meyendorff 1999, p. 101). Historical circumstances of threatening neighbouring empires have consistently impacted the ability of Ukrainian Orthodoxy to gain independence.

While Ukrainian Orthodoxy was subjugated to Russian jurisdiction, Ukrainian language, literature,

and scholarship were banned during the duration of the Russian Empire. Russification policies aimed to erase Ukrainian identity where even the referral to Ukraine as "Little Russia" by tsarist historians served to erase the origins and heritage of Ukrainian nationhood (Kohut 1986; Plokhy 2006). Moscow Patriarchate's jurisdiction over Ukrainian Orthodoxy meant ridged religious subordinance and in conjunction with Russification policies, Ukrainian identity was explicitly suppressed and erased in tsarist historical accounts. Reflecting back to Orthodox rules for acquiring autocephaly, Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) subjugation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Russian tsarist occupation of Hetman State and persecution of Ukrainian ethnicity obstructed Ukrainian Orthodox claims to sovereignty and exclusive homogeneity. Ukrainian past experience of religious and sovereign subjugation to Russian rule are of immediate importance to understanding the significance of Revolution of Dignity events. Russification policies and subjugation to ROC jurisdiction have had a lasting effect on Ukraine's ability to cohesively revive its religious independence, even following 1991 independence. Russian domination of Ukrainian religious identity endured for over three centuries. However, the Revolution of Dignity was a climax point for Ukrainian religious actors to resist historically enduring repression and (re)construct national identity. As investigated in Chapter 8, circumstances of the past are relevant in the present because past grievances are explicitly challenged on sacred grounds of Churches during the Revolution of Dignity.

4. Soviet Russification

As the Russian tsarist Empire fell, the 1917 October Revolution provided the Ukrainian society and Ukrainian Orthodoxy with a religious zeal for independence (Bociurkiw 1991, p. 229). From 1917 until 1921, a Ukrainian People's Republic was formed. In 1921 a Ukrainian Orthodox independence movement emerged forming the First All-Ukrainian Church Sobor that attempted to begin a motion to repudiate the 1686 annexation of the Metropolitan of Kyiv by the Russian Orthodox Church. This newly formed Sobor, council, was established by priests and deacons in Kyiv's Sophia Cathedral who created the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), a self-consecrated Church, never to be recognised by the Orthodox world. The "Autocephalous" in the UAOC title was a symbolic term, not a legal one. However, shortly after UAOC's self-proclamation, Ukraine was absorbed by the Soviet Union and the Russian Orthodox Church was given the status as the sole legal Church. Joseph Stalin's repression of ethnic minorities (non-Russians) and religion in 1930s saw the liquidation of the UAOC. In 1944, interwar Polish territories became part of the Soviet Union (Bremer 2016, p. 7), which resulted in the devastation of the UGCC. Therefore, the Soviet era proved to be another strife period for Ukrainian sovereignty and religious freedom where mere attempts at establishing a self-proclaimed Church were swiftly diminished by Soviet policies. ROC dominion over Ukrainian Orthodoxy continued

during the Soviet period, directly supressing opportunities for religious liberation.

Furthermore, the Ukrainian Greek Catholics were specifically targeted by Stalin's policy because their western, Catholic, mentality represented the foreign liberalism that threatened USSR's values and Stalin's authoritarianism. The UGCC were exiled and executed, and UGCC sacred spaces were annexed by the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church (Bremer 2016). A mouthpiece of Soviet international policy throughout the post-World War II period, the Moscow Patriarchate exercised tremendous pressure on the West, using every opportunity to block Greek Catholic representation on the international ecumenical scene (Avvakumov 2016, p. 22). Soviet propaganda portrayed Ukrainian Greek Catholic clergy and active laity not only as hardcore Ukrainian nationalist but also as collaborators with Nazi Germany and traitors of their true motherland – the Soviet Union (ibid). While the surviving Greek Catholic clergy hid in the catacombs in order to escape absolute Soviet persecution, the UAOC made several attempts to revive its status. During the Second World War, the UAOC was revived during German Nazi occupation, suppressed again at the end of the war, and revived again in 1989 as the Soviet Union began to disintegrate (Ware 1993, p. 160). The 1989 revival of the UAOC meant registration of the Church by the Soviet Union, not autocephaly. It is apparent that legitimate, autocephalic, liberation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy was hindered by an unstable geopolitical environment.

5. Independence and Divisions

As the Soviet Union began to break apart and societal pressures for independence grew, Greek Catholics and Ukrainian Orthodoxy experienced simultaneous changes but with different outcomes. In 1989 UGCC emerged from the catacombs and began forming a petition for legitimisation of its Church. In the same year, Mikhail Gorbachev paid a visit to Pope John Paul II in the Vatican who gave public recognition to the UGCC (Bremer 2016, p. 8). Shortly after the meeting between a Soviet leader and the Pope, Soviet authorities allowed the registration of the first Greek Catholic parishes (ibid). However, the question of space remained a problem for the UGCC because the buildings which it has possessed before its dissolution in 1946 had either been given to ROC or have been re-designed for non-religious, administrative, uses (ibid p. 9). The state played a significant role in deciding which building was given to which community, civil authorities or religious communities, resulting in the overwhelming favouritism of ROC rights. However, the UGCC consolidated its position in Ukraine following the independence in 1991 where monasteries began to be founded and the Church garnered major financial support from the Catholic Church in the West that enabled it to develop a strong administrative structure in a relatively short time (ibid p. 10). In 2002, the UGCC finally moved its headquarters to Kyiv (Napolitano 2014, p. 163) in an attempt to renew its historical claims to Kyivan Rus heritage. While Orthodoxy has remained

as the dominating faith of modern Ukraine, making up 61% of self-identified believers, 11% of Ukrainians identify themselves as Greek Catholic (Razumkov Center 2023). 11% is a significant portion of the Ukrianian population that demonstrates the perseverance of the UGCC despite experiences of historical blatant persecution. As will be investigated in Chapter 8, UGCC's historical struggle to reclaim its sacred spaces from ROC occupation will be of significant relevance to the Church's establishment of an ecumenical monastery in Kyiv in 2016. UGCC's historical experience of perseverance helps make sense of its activism following the Revolution of Dignity.

Coming back to the state of affairs of Orthodoxy, the Russian Orthodox Church decided to appease Ukrainian nationalist societal pressures by creating the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1989 (Babie 2023, p.229), an autonomous branch from ROC, recognised for its autonomous status (not autocephaly) by the Orthodox community. In the early 1990s there was a motion by the First All-Ukrainian Church Sobor to create a unified Church in order to gain autocephalous status. This motion was led by Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko), a controversial figure among all Orthodox actors in Ukraine and Russia (Denysenko 2013, p. 39; Wasyliw 2014, p.315). His enthusiasm for autocephaly presented a threat to ROC jurisdiction, which resulted in his suspension in 1992 and later, an anathema in 1997, which is the most extreme punishment in the Orthodox world that deems a Church or religious figure as cursed and excommunicated (Bremer 2016, p. 12; Griffin 2020, p. 15). Besides rattling Russian Orthodox dominance, Metropolitan Filaret wanted to become the Primate of the proposed united Church in Ukraine, but was criticised and not accepted by some clergy in the UAOC. Those bishops and clergy from the UOCMP and UOAC that sided with Metropolitan Filaret's leadership and vision merged together to form the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate in 1992, which was approved by the Ukrainian President, Leonid Kravchuk (Wasyliw 2014, pp. 315-316). However, in the ecumenical sphere, two Ukrainian Orthodox Churches – the UOCKP and UOAC – remained almost non-existent to western ecumenists because the Moscow Patriarchate extensively declared them uncanonical (Avvakumov 2016, p.22).

Despite the fractures of self-consecrated churches in Ukraine, what remained the same is ROC jurisdiction over Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Three centuries of subordination under ROC jurisdiction has hindered a unified Ukrainian front for liberation, a long period of time that has supressed coherent opportunities to revive a united Church, a Ukrainian Orthodox Church. As shared by John Sydor in an interview, the effect of Russification policies and endurance of Russian religious dominion over Ukrainian Orthodox self-determination (autocephaly) resulted in obfuscating the presence of an explicitly pro-Ukrainian Church in the eyes of civil society. While Sydor's opinion is subjected to bias due to his institutional ethos (UOCKP), the insight's logic proves to be appropriate. While the schisms were significant for Ukrainian clergy who were making attempts to

distance themselves from ROC, the churches, monasteries, and parishes appeared relatively indistinguishable to its believers as places of worship. KIIS conducted a nation-wide survey in 2008 that captured Ukrainian societal confusion and relative inability to understand the importance of a united national church. To the question of attitudes towards the creation of a unified Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 41% responded positively or most likely positively, and 34.5% responded that they "do not know what this is". The latter statistic is significant in capturing that the Ukrainian societal uncertainty about what a unified Orthodox church entails means uncertainty or unawareness of history and an inability to understand why a unified church is needed, which is closely linked to not distinguishing a Ukrainian church from a Russian one.

Ukrainian societal uncertainty about a united national church can be interpreted as a result of enduring repressive historical discourses and policies that have been discussed in the sections above. Furthermore, these societal uncertainties about a united national church and schisms in Ukrainian Orthodox have created an image of a nationally incoherent society, which is a problematic factor for a nation that wants to be considered for autocephaly. Furthermore, Ukraine's internal contestations about church divisions became a source of leverage for the ROC to maintain its dominance over Ukrainian Orthodoxy and for Constantinople to deny Ukraine autocephaly. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, the Revolution of Dignity was a vital event for Ukrainian Orthodoxy to visibly demonstrate their unity with civil society that has been captured in visual data. The events of 2013-2014 made visually apparent to the Ukrainian society, and Constantinople, the presence of a national Orthodox church that requires a united national church.

6. Modern Ukraine imprisoned by the past

Despite Ukraine gaining independence in 1991, the 1686 Moscow Patriarchate jurisdictional subordination of Metropolitan of Kyiv, Ukrainian Orthodoxy, remained intact and continued to restrain Ukrainian Orthodox ability to gain autocephaly. Ukrainian Orthodoxy was disconnected and isolated from the Orthodox community for over three centuries, which was detrimental to Ukrainian Orthodoxy's ability to be seen as a credible and cohesive institution by Constantinople. While Ukrainian Orthodoxy was subjugated to subordination, ROC solidified its communion and networking with sister autocephaly churches since 1589. Furthermore, even when Ukrainian Orthodoxy attempted to unify an exclusively Ukrainian Orthodox Church following 1991 independence, these motions were discredited by Moscow. From mighty ancient beginnings in Kyivan Rus, Ukrainian Orthodoxy was stripped of its independence and historical truths while under the jurisdictional subordination of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Ukraine's history of multiple invasions has shaped the trajectory, identities, and opportunities for

Ukrainian national identity. In 1991, Ukraine emerged as a sovereign state, but with diverse and conflicting identities that do not meet homogenous criteria that would qualify Ukrainian Orthodoxy for autocephaly. Furthermore, divisions amongst UAOC, UOCKP, and UOCMP constructed an incoherent religious identity. Ukraine's historical circumstances created a contested identity, owed to centuries of colonial repression, that became the reason for Constantinople's Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, to deny Ukraine a united church in 2008 during a visit to Kyiv to celebrate 1020th Baptism of Kyiv Rus. Bartholomew I (Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 2016) remarked in his speech that:

"The various political and ecclesiastical difficulties that are the outcome of the existing confusion are obvious and known from the long historic past, but it is also known to all that the care for the protection and restoration of the Church's unity is our common obligation that exceeds whatever political or ecclesiastical purposes, in accordance with the exhortation of the divine Founder of the Church: so that may all be one."

The political and ecclesiastical difficulties noted by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I are a sediment of Constantinople's actions in 1686 when it sold the Metropolitan of Kyiv to Moscow Patriarchate's jurisdiction. The Ukrainian President, Viktor Yushchenko's, initiative to welcome Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in 2008 did not lead to autocephaly because accumulative historical experiences, domestic Orthodox divisions, and Russian political meddling have resulted in misconceptions and trivialism about Ukrainian identity domestically and in the Orthodox community. Hurak and Kobuta (2021 p. 42) note that during Bartholomew I's visit to Kyiv in 2008, the plan of working closely with Ukrainian Orthodoxy on claiming autocephaly was hijacked by an unplanned meeting with Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow. Russian Orthodoxy meddling in Ukrainian religious self-determination have had an impact on claiming independence from Constantinople. However, as will be investigated in the next chapter, the Revolution of Dignity was a defining moment for Ukrainian Orthodoxy to show cohesion between nation and religion through religious guardianship of civilians on transformed sacred space. Ukrainian Orthodox activism in the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery was a significant moment that proved religious self-determination in reconstructing the process of Ukrainian national identity.

7. Russian meddling in Ukrainian self-determination

Taking a step back to the events of the Orange Revolution in 2004, the protests did not present an opportunity for Ukrainian Orthodoxy to mobilise because the revolution's momentum did not stand a chance against the cumulative historical repercussions of decisions made by ancient empires and foreign religious actors. Furthermore, in comparison to education and collective

memory, gaining religious coherence in the process of reconstructing national identity is more challenging. While the former dimensions of identity are largely manipulated by the state and mediated by civil society, religious freedom in the form of autocephaly is granted by an external religious actor, Constantinople. The fabric of Ukrainian Orthodox society needed to have been significantly transformed, understood, and seen by Constantinople in order to be recognised as a homogenous nation. The 2004 Orange Revolution resulted in defeating state-level corruption, but it did not reverse the effects of historical suppression that have produced a religiously divided society dominated by Russian political and religious meddling. The events of 2004 were irrelevant to Constantinople's decision to deny Ukraine autocephaly in 2008 because Ukrainian society was misunderstood as a conflicting state, incapable of homogeneity, and therefore forced to be subordinated by Russian Orthodox jurisdiction for another ten years.

In addition, Yushchenko's 2008 failed attempt to gain autocephaly followed a major shift in ROC governance that saw opportunity to gain more control over Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The death of Patriarch Alexei I and the election and enthronisation of Patriarch Kyrill (Gundayev) as head of the ROC resulted in an endorsement of Russkii Mir initiative in 2009 speeches (Denysenko 2017, p. 339). Russkii Mir is a narrative constructed by Russian Orthodoxy and Vladimir Putin that perceives Ukraine as an illegitimate state and rather a hereditary extension of Russian sovereignty and peoples. Furthermore, Patriarch Kirill was an experienced church politician with close ties to the political establishment and security service since the Soviet era (Kochan 2016, p. 115). Russia's political meddling in Ukrainian religious affairs needs to be understood in the light of Russian enduring repression of Ukrainian identity, not spontaneous decision making. Russian repression of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, and later violation of sovereignty – illegal annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014 – are symptoms of enduring Russian imperialist expansionism, not the guardianship of the "repressed" Russian minority (Matisek 2021). As will be shown in the next chapter, the Revolution of Dignity was a movement of Ukrainian Orthodox resistance against the endurance of Russian meddling in Ukrainian national determination, which can be directly traced in religious activism against a repressing, Yanukovych's pro-Russian state.

Russian imperialist ideology endured and can be traced from 2009 onward when Russia began to explicitly tie state and religious politics in sync with neo-imperialist ideology that exposed Russian intentions of controlling Ukrainian national determination, including Orthodoxy. For example, the UOCMP became political and ecclesiastical advocates of the neo-imperialistic doctrine of Russkii Mir, especially following the Orange Revolution, a movement that signalled Ukraine's potential ability to break from Russian political control (Kochan 2016, p.115). During Yanukovych's presidency, from 2010 until 2014, Ukrainian Orthodoxy was subject to Russian religious and political interferences that were welcomed and encouraged domestically by the state. Undermining

Ukrainian Orthodoxy and encouraging the presence of ROC on Ukrainian soil, Yanukovych granted a lease of a part of Pechersk Lavra territory to the Moscow backed UOCMP in July of 2013. Built in 1051, the Pechersk Lavra is a Kyivan Rus heritage site whose sacred space is of significant importance to the origins of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The enduring occupation of Ukrainian ancient sacred space by Russia's proxy Church, UOCMP, was a monumental shift in dominating and controlling Ukrainian Orthodox determination on Ukrainian soil. As will be explored in the section below, Pechersk Lavra's sacred space and its physical collective memory are indicative of identity formation that happens to align with the endurance of a Russian identity. Yanukovych coming to power also captured the endurance of post-Soviet identity and Russian interreference in Ukrainian politics and nation-building.

8. Clashing Orthodox Collective Memory

Before commencing to the next chapter's analysis of sacred spaces that demonstrate successful civil mobilisation, expression of Ukrainian national distinctiveness, and effective national resistance to violence, it is important to depict the contestations in Ukrainian Orthodoxy before and following the Revolution of Dignity. While the next chapter demonstrates the vital role of the UOCKP in the reconstruction of Ukrainian identity in 2013-2014, divisions in Orthodoxy remain imbedded in Ukraine's collective memory landscape. A way of understanding religious divisions is by looking at symbols. Notably, religion plays a major role in mobilising national myths when sovereignty is threatened (Grzymala-Busse 2015) where metaphors and symbols become central to the discursive or iconic representation of the nation (Brubaker 2012). Collective memory of the past and present are embodied in the objects, relics, and symbols that surround sacred spaces. Monuments, memorials, statues, and posters depict the identity clash of Ukrainian and Russian Orthodoxy, whose opposing narratives expose Russian historically dominating repression that lingers in Ukrainian modern society. The Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery and Pechersk Lavra territories are surrounded by monuments and visual symbols that demonstrate divided identity, memories of traumatic histories, and allegiances following the Revolution of Dignity that help lay out the religious scene in Ukraine.

Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery

The Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery is located on ancient historical ground whose closest monuments depict past and recent recollections of tragic events that play a role in solidifying the UOCKP's role in honouring and guarding the memory of loss and sacrifice. Russification policies and Russia's theft of Ukrainian history had a direct impact on modern Ukraine's incohesive journey of identity consolidation. Religious activism during the Revolution of Dignity addressed these historical contestations and injustices, which can also be directly observed through the collective memory that are represented by monumental and symbolic objects

on sacred grounds.

Figure 1: Holodomor Memorial at the entrance of the Monastery (Byesyedina 2020).

The Monastery's closest surrounding monuments depict past and ongoing Russian imperialistic determination to repress Ukrainian people and invade Ukrainian territory. In 1993 a memorial to the victims of Holodomor of 1932-1933 (Figure 1) was unveiled to mark the 60th anniversary of the internationally recognised genocide. The granite memorial features a carved out cross which depicts a contrasting silhouette of a mother whose hollow centre is in the shape of a child. The religious Madonna imagery (Mary and Jesus; mother and child) is commonly used in Holodomor memorials across Ukraine to depict sentiments of grief and loss. The memorial sits on a flower bed composed of soil that was brought from all the regions of Ukraine that experienced Stalin's genocide, constructing the vastness of tragic memory. Mirroring grievances of the past, the memorial stands against a poster in the background that is dedicated to the Heavenly Hundred protesters who were killed by Yanukovych's security forces during the Revolution of Dignity. The poster on the exterior entrance of the Monastery marks permanence of memory following the Revolution of Dignity that has been guarded by the UOCKP. The photographs of killed protesters draw the visitor's gaze to loss, sacrifice, and state-led brutality through a visual medium. The UOCKP's choice to install the poster at the entrance of the Monastery is significant in demonstrating continued guardianship of Ukrainian sacrifice for the nation where collective memory of sacrifice plays a crucial role in Ukraine's (re)construction of national identity.

The Holodomor Memorial and the Heavenly Hundred poster in the Monastery's space both construct Ukrainian collective memory of continued suffering in the face of Russian aggression. Holodomor was the most devastating policy inflicted by the USSR on Ukrainian society with estimations of seven million forcefully starved to death (Holodomor Museum, 2025). The poster marks the UOCKP's involvement in the Revolution of Dignity and exposes the expression of Ukrainian national distinctiveness in commemorating protesters who fought for national virtues against a violent, pro-Russian state. It is significant that the Holodomor memorial and the Heavenly Hundred poster are in close proximity to the Monastery – not the Pechersk Lavra – as this arrangement depicts the agency of the UOCKP in preserving and guarding Ukrainian collective memory that impacts Ukrainian construction of self. While the Heavenly Hundred Street's citizen-made memorial has experienced impermanence due to vandalism[2], the Monastery's sacred space acts as a veil of protection for the memory of those who died in the revolution. The Monastery's grounds guard the collective memory of national loss during Stalin's and Yanukovych's repression of Ukrainian identity and in doing so express national distinctiveness.

Figure 2: The Monastery's remembrance wall (Byesyedina 2020).

[2] This will be further explored in the following chapter.

Figure 3: Close up of the Monastery's remembrance wall (Byesyedina 2020).

The Monastery's role as guardian over Ukrainian society and nation is further depicted in memorials that contribute to preserving the memory of Ukrainian sacrifice in defending Ukrainian identity and sovereignty. Figure 2 displays a remembrance wall to the Ukrainian soldiers that have died in the Donbas war from 2014-2017. As shown on the photo, the banner on the top reads "Military servicemen and law enforcement officers who died for the unity of Ukraine" and the photos depict the deaths of Ukrainian soldiers in 2014 alone. The remembrance wall functions as a space of shared grief between the Church, military, and Ukrainian society. Furthermore, the wall makes a visual connection between the past and the present by using imagery to depict Ukrainian warriors of Kyivan Rus era and modern Armed Forces of Ukraine (Figure 3). Heroism and sacrifice are elements that have a reoccurring theme in UOCKP's collective memory as they portray Ukraine's continuing struggle against Russian encroachment.

Pechersk Lavra

Figure 4: Memorial to Afghanistan outside of Pechersk Lavra (Byesyedina 2020)

The UOCKP Monastery's symbols of collective memory stand in contrast to Pechersk Lavra's relative void. The absence of exclusively Ukrainian collective memory portrays the ongoing attempt of the Moscow-Patriarchate Church to maintain a status quo on Ukrainian sacred soil. The absence of Ukrainian nationalist collective memory and UOCMP Church's predominantly idle activism in the Revolution of Dignity is a covert indicator of Russia's interference in the sprout of pro-Ukrainian mobilisation during the Revolution of Dignity. Established in 1051, The Pechersk Lavra is a UNESCO credited relic of Kyivan Rus, a monastic cave complex that features a labyrinth of underground passages and memorial sites where monks lived, prayed, and died. This holy site contains ancient scriptures, iconographies, graves, and artisanal artifacts of Kyivan Rus era; artefacts that are closely tied to mapping Ukraine's origins. The monastery complex belonged to the Ukrainian branch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, however, in 1688 it was annexed by the Russian Orthodox Church, which has been used for the dissemination of Russian imperial and Soviet propaganda (The Kyiv Independent 2023).

On the basis of a free lease agreement in 1988, the newly formed Moscow Patriarchate occupied the Lower Lavra space and continued to conduct worship after Ukraine gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. During Viktor Yanukovych's presidency, the Kremlin-linked patriarchate signed an indefinite lease agreement in 2013 (ibid), marking almost five centuries of Russian Orthodoxy occupying a Ukrainian Orthodox holy site. Officially state owned but

supervised in name only, Ukraine's sacred Lavra has been explicitly used as a point of Kremlin propaganda dissemination through a religious proxy. The 2023 state-led audit reveals that the Moscow Patriarchate Church on Lavra's territory, safeguarded pro-Russian politicians, Russian propaganda materials, and records show that Russian passports were issued to top hierarchs are all indicative traces of Russian presence and interference (Pohorilov 2023). Looking to the absence of pro-Ukrainian symbolism on Lavra's territory signals Russia's interference in Ukraine's religious scene long before Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014.

The Lavra complex stands in a sacred void except for the remaining remanent of a Soviet-era war symbol visible prior to entry. Absence of symbolic change following 2013-2014 signals quiet appeasement of a pro-Russian identity and an opportunity for Russian Orthodoxy's status quo to survive in a state that has finally began to break free from Russia's interference in state affairs. Figure 4 shows the memorial to war in Afghanistan (1979-1978) that was built in 1994 and depicts the remanence of Soviet collective memory that closely ties war to heroism and loss to comradery. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a conflict that depicted Cold War tensions, and later, the glorification of war in post-Soviet spaces despite significant casualties. The memorial features three Soviet soldiers whose features and stances portray emotions of sorrow and fraternal pride, while the poem in Russian on the pedestal uses rhetoric of comradery and sacrifice in order to glorify Soviet memory that was factually a failed foreign policy. This memorial is a lingering reminder of USSR's propagandist legacy of reconstructing state policy failures into victories in order to uphold an undefeated image of authority. Lavra's sacred space is an inherently Ukrainian, Kyivan Rus, relic that functions as a safeguarded institution for modern day Russian colonialism. UOCMP Church's historical ties with Russia have made their Orthodoxy organic to Ukraine's religious landscape, which has resulted in the visible maintenance of Soviet and Russian identity and rejection of Ukrainian national distinctiveness.

Furthermore, the memorial represents the endurance of Soviet identity on Ukrainian sacred space. The location of the Afghanistan memorial is not coincidental given that the UOCMP is directly connected to ROC whose interests of subordinating and repressing Ukrainian Orthodoxy have been evident throughout history. The memorial features a poem in Russian language demonstrating that like memory, language is was and is continued to be used to subordinate Ukrainian identity. While language practice is not a clear-cut marker of political affinity, Russian language in Ukrainian sacred spaces is an infringement on Ukraine's pathway of independence from Russian interference in identity construction. For example, UOCMP practices liturgy in Russian language that encourages subjugation of Ukrainian language on Ukrainian sacred ground. The continuation of Russian interference in Ukraine self-determination is present through the UOCMP that occupies Ukrainian Orthodox sacred heritage, maintains regressive Soviet collective

memory, and encourages the dominance of Russian language. Therefore, while the UOCKP embraces physical transformation and its role in safeguarding Ukrainian trauma, the UOCMP's abstention from explicit Ukrainian symbolism, along with its failure to condemn Yanukovych's violence during the Revolution of Dignity, and later Russia's occupation of Crimea and war in Donbas, indicate passive religious agency that has discretely secured its anti-Ukrainian identity on Ukrainian sacred soil.

9. The Revolution of Dignity

The Revolution of Dignity was a breaking point for Ukrainian civil society to mobilise collective action against Yanukovych's repressive pro-Russian state, a movement which represented a cohesive moment in the process of identity (re)construction, and by extension, created clarity about what it meant to be exclusively Ukrainian, not Russian, in religious terms. The Revolution of Dignity demonstrates the endurance of Ukrainian self-determination to reconstruct Ukrainian national identity in ways that challenge the historical and modern Russian repressions of Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

As will be shown in the next chapter, the 2013-2014 events presented the Ukrainian Orthodoxy, the UOCKP, with an opportunity to mobilise and revive their presence in the process of (re)constructing Ukrainian identity, and furthermore gain autocephaly as a result of their activism in the protests. Escalation of state-led violence was the key factor that motivated the UOCKP's spontaneous involvement in the protests. I argue that Ukraine's nationhood was at stake because Yanukovych's presidency undermined Ukrainian national determination through policies that impacted Ukrainian language, Ukrainian national history, explicitly aligned Ukraine with Russia, and utilised violence to silence civil protests in 2013-2014. Yanukovych's pro-Russian politics and violence were a threat to Ukrainian national identity, a condition that stimulated UOCKP's spontaneous activism in the protests. Chapter 8 argues that the transformation of the sacred grounds of Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery was a distinctly significant moment for Orthodox agency in guarding Ukrainian national determination against a repressive state. Furthermore, the state-led mass shootings of protesters during the Revolution of Dignity mobilised the UGCC to re-establish and consolidate sacred sacrificial space, which created and solidified national memory of loss.

Chapter 8: Religion

Introduction & Overview

In order to avoid the intellectual violence of ignoring religious complexity, this chapter proposes to look at the observable, the empirics, to make sense of Ukraine's endemic struggle to find cohesion in the process of identity formation. The study of nation-building and identity construction processes is inherently complex and should not be approached with a defeatist mindset but should rather embrace the "mess". The study of Ukraine's identity construction process is worthy of patience and close inspection because these efforts are rewarded with unique insights into transformative sacred spaces. Sacred spaces, churches, are transformative during revolutions and their sanctity and security play a role in empowering activism and contributing towards a revival of ethnic nationalism. Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity has reawakened centuries old church contestations about history, origins, trauma, and identity demonstrating that holy places can transform into nation building battlegrounds at times of heightened state violence and social unrest. Ukraine's case presents a unique opportunity to study the roles of three churches making claims for identity construction during and following the 2013-2014 revolution. Ukrainian religious actors, particularly the UOCKP and UGCC, represent efforts of self-preservation and resilience against historical and modern repressions. This remaining empirical chapter argues that the Revolution of Dignity was an opportunity for the religious aspect of Ukrainian identity to (re)construct itself in a cohesive manner, demonstrated through the activism of religious actors in the transformation, creation, and maintenance of sacred spaces. The transformed sacred spaces examined demonstrate the activism of religious guardianship of Ukrainian civilians and sacrifice and continued resilience to Russian subjugation. This chapter's findings support the central thesis by focusing on the lens of religion in the investigation of moments on sacred ground – Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery and Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael and the Ukrainian New Martyrs – that mobilised identity (re)construction.

Before commencing with data analysis, this chapter presents the conceptual framework of sacred spaces that will be used as a guide for the logic of the arguments made in Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 focuses on investigating the activities and transformations on the grounds of the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery during the Revolution of Dignity. Part 1 contains five subsections which consecutively investigate the transformation of the Monastery in order to trace and demonstrate the activism of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOCKP) in the process of reviving Ukrainian national identity. Part 1 begins with an assessment of UOCKP's voluntary participation in the Revolution of Dignity which is signalled in the opening of the

Monastery gates to the fleeing students. Opening of the Monastery gates marked the spontaneous moment when the UOCKP first became involved in the protests, which signified the beginning of religious guardianship of collective activism that was committed to defend national identity from a violent, pro-Russian state. The visual data shows the UOCKP defending national identity through the spontaneous welcoming of protesters on its sacred and conservative space. Secondly, the transformation of the Monastery's ground is investigated in order to demonstrate the significance of a religiously conservative institution lessening its moral code for the safety of collective action. Under the provision of the UOCKP, the transformed Monastery grounds provided protesters with the ability to coordinate and cooperate. Visual data shows examples of collective actions, such as collection of donations and first-aid training, as proof of religious guardianship of civil society and national identity. As shown through the example of the Monastery's transformation, religious guardianship of civil society exposes moments of cohesion in the process of identity construction. When considering Ukrainian Orthodoxy's struggle to make meaningful attempts at liberation from Russia's sphere of influence (as mentioned in Chapter 7), explicit activism of the UOCKP in the Revolution of Dignity is interpreted as a vital step towards reviving Ukrainian national identity.

The third subsection of Part 1 investigates the interior transformation of the Monastery in order to reveal cooperation between religious actors and civil society, which is traced in moments of change (section of Monastery transformed into a surgical theatre) and moments of when sanctity is left untouched (icons are not disturbed). The transformations inside of the Monastery are important because they depict moments where Ukrainian Orthodoxy has taken explicit initiative to support civilians against a pro-Russian violent state, which indicates determination in reviving Ukrainian national identity. Ringing of the Monastery bells is investigated in the fourth subsection in order to elaborate on the examination of UOCKP's guardianship of collective action. I argue that sound – the sounds of the bells ringing – enabled coordination of protesters, a moment that demonstrated religious activism in the guardianship of collective action, and by extension, protection of Ukrainian national identity. UOCKP's creative guardianship of civil society assisted in proving Ukrainian society – and later, Constantinople – the existence of a Church that protects national identity. Part 1 ends with examining the Monastery's literal and symbolic guardianship of the dead following January 22, 2014, state killing of protesters. Sacred space of the Monastery is transformed into a mortuary for the dead protesters and a place of sacrificial remembrance. The UOCKP's active role in protecting the bodies and memories of the dead is a significant demonstration of agency in the process of defending and reviving Ukrainian national identity from a violent, pro-Russian state. The Revolution of Dignity was a trigger for the UOCKP to meaningfully demonstrate its canonical and national service to the people of Ukraine who were

facing persecution by the state.

Part 2 brings attention to the activism of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) in establishing the Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael & the Ukrainian New Martyrs. The significance of the Church's establishment is examined in the first subsection which flags the brutality of the Bloody Thursday, which saw the state slaughter of protesters in February 20, 2014. The site of the killings lacked commemorative permanence, which revealed societal internal contestations about the role of the protesters in the Revolution of Dignity. I investigate this Church's presence as a significant attempt by the UGCC to guard sacrificial memory, which is an important aspect in the process of identity (re)construction. Furthermore, UGCC's historic resilience to persecution is revived in the creation of sacred space that enabled and promotes religious cooperation thanks to the ecumenical status of the Church. Therefore, Part 2 demonstrates the mobilisation of religious actors in preserving sacrificial memory, which is a vital aspect of identity construction.

Conceptual Framework

Academics who have entered the dialogue about Ukraine's religion have made great efforts to grapple with turbulent history and complex roles of state and Church actors. While recent scholarly body of work has led to an admirable and monumental contribution to the study and demystification of Ukrainian religious history complexity (Krawchuk & Bremer 2016; Babie, 2023), a portion of the dialogue still falls short of accepting the complexity of Ukraine's religious experience as endemic (Binns 2002; Ratajeski 2015; Kaneff 2018). Scholarly rhetoric implying that Ukraine's experiences are too complex to comprehend is part of the problem, as such an approach mystifies and undermines Ukraine's unique experiences. The messiness that is caused by such work perpetuates propagandistic and imperialistic Russian narratives that have made imposing efforts to rewrite and distort Ukrainian historical realities (Karamzin 1766-1826; Soloviev 1820-1879; Bulgakov 1883) and thus results in inadvertently perpetuating misconceptions about Ukraine's past and present experiences.

This dissertation's broader goal is to examine and analyse the pre-history before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 in order to make sense of Ukraine's contested identity construction processes that involve enduring efforts of resilience and determination for reviving ethnic nationalism. This chapter contributes towards a better understanding of incoherence in Ukraine's identity construction, a process that has been stalled and interrupted, directly and indirectly, by Russian involvement. Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, relied on century-old tropes whose effects have been visible throughout Ukraine's attempts to reconstruct its identity. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Russification policies during Russia's tsarist

and Soviet periods have had an enduring impact on Ukraine's identity construction even following its break away from the USSR, which can be traced through the religious element in this chapter. It will become apparent that Ukraine's incoherent process of forming identity following the 1991 independence finally finds momentum during and following the Revolution of Dignity, where its religious aspects display a strikingly apparent reawakening of the process of nation-building and defiance in the face of encroaching Russian aggression.

Thus, this chapter's empirical contribution will attempt to capture Ukraine's complex yet resilient efforts to construct a cohesive nation, a process that has been historically impaired due to Russian direct and indirect intrusions. Observing and unpacking the unique significance of transformative sacred space during and following the Revolution of Dignity captures moments when Ukraine begins to re-define itself with vigour in religious aspects. Furthermore, the data collected demonstrates the innate defiance of Ukrainian ethnicity that continues to present a threat to Russian imperial expansionism. Insights from an interview with a priest from the St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery, John Sydor, in 2020 and photographs from the Revolution of Dignity – taken by me and collected from Sydor's archives – are rich empirical data that visually begin to clarify Ukraine's religious efforts of self-determination.

Sacred Spaces

Sacred sites can be interpreted as physical evidence of the perennial existence of the religious community and the nation (van der Veer 1992, p. 87). Given that space is fundamental in any exercise of power (Foucault 1982), power can be asserted and resisted in the production of sacred space that is claimed, owned, and operated by people advancing specific interests (Chidester & Linenthal 1995, p. 15). Sometimes, violent conflict can completely invert the nature of religious sanctuaries. In 1994, Catholic Churches in Rwanda became locations of massacres (UNESCO, 2025). Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have began targeting church services during Trump Administration (The Guardian, 2025). Other transformations of sacred space are consonant with religious ethics. There have been situations where sacred space was transformed into relief centres during times of natural disaster (Sheikhi et al, 2021) and in Australia, it is a convenient and common practice of transforming church halls into polling stations during federal election. These historical instances suggest a common process of transformation impressed on the Church by external forces. Ukraine's case is unique in that it demonstrates the voluntary transformation of sacred space that enabled collective activism under the guardianship of religious actors. When taking into consideration the immanent rigid characteristics of Orthodoxy's institution, the transformation of St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery demonstrates an exceptionally rare phenomenon that can be explained by the urgency of survival. The night of November 30, 2013, marked the moment when the Monastery spontaneously opened up its gates

to desperate student protesters that were fleeing from the violent Berkut security forces. The opening of Monastery gates saw UOCKP activism for the first time, and marked a moment of transformation of sacred space. Ukraine's case exemplifies how conservative sacred space is voluntarily redefined and transformed in a way where meaning of space is changed for the protection and survival of collective action. Yanukovych's beating and later killing of protesters mobilised the agency of UOCKP to guard protesters on its sacred territory. This chapter will use the term "guardians of the nation" to refer to the UOCKP's activism during the Revolution of Dignity because their actions and welcoming of protesters on their sacred space demonstrated protection of protesters and the future of Ukraine's national identity.

Suk-Young Chwe's (2001) study of ritual helps make sense of the significance of sacred space transformation in Ukraine. Rituals produce and coordinate common knowledge that enables collective activism. St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery spontaneously and voluntarily transformed into a place of safety, coordination, and survival for protesters. Rituals of cooperation, commemoration of death, and bell ringing were observed on the transformed territory of the Monastery. These observable rituals help expose the UOCKP's agency in guarding protesters and Ukrainian national identity. Gathering of protesters and volunteers, collection and coordination of donations, and medical training were observable rituals on the territory of the Monastery that demonstrated cooperation and coordination of collective activism. The Monastery's Nave and Narthex were transformed into a place of rest, recovery, and a surgical theatre, while the grounds of the Monastery witnessed the commemoration of the dead and safekeeping of the killed protesters. These transformations and rituals depict symbolic and literal attempts of the protesters and the UOCKP at survival against Yanukovych's repressing and violent state. Sound was also a significant ritual that aided the UOCKP in guarding protesters at distance during violent clashes between protesters and Berkut security forces. The ritual of bell-ringing from December 10-11, 2013, saw the historical breaking of 600-year-old silence. Sydor rang the bells of the Monastery's towers for five hours in reaction to the violence against protesters on Maidan Square by Berkut security forces. In this chapter I want to demonstrate the importance and utility of sound as a tool of coordinating and guarding of collective action during violent phases of revolts. The transformative quality of the Monastery and UOCKP's guardianship are representative of Ukrainian Orthodoxy's desperate attempt to break free from Russian historical and current repression. The transformation of the Monastery and the agency of the UOCKP in guarding collective activism demonstrate Ukraine's moment of national revival.

While some sacred spaces are subject to voluntary transformation other sacred sites are vulnerable to defamation. Sacred space that is guarded by a physical religious structure preserves memories of tragedy for the nation. While the Monastery voluntarily transformed its sacred space, the

UGCC's erection of an ecumenical church in 2016 depicted the creation and protection of sacred and sacrificial space and memory. The location of the newly built ecumenical church is significant as it was founded on the site of the mass massacre of protesters by the state in February 2014. Furthermore, the street where the ecumenical church is located experienced vandalism of temporary monuments that pay tribute to the deaths of protesters. The presence of the ecumenical church provided a permanence to sacrificial memory. UGCC's role in establishing the church portrays how religious actors are able to consolidate and protect sacrificial space and memory, which is significant in the construction of collective memory. In addition, the characteristic of the church as ecumenical by definition serves as a space of intended religious neutrality and unity. The ecumenical status means that the sacred space welcomes all Christian denominations. This is a remarkable creation of sacred space by the UGCC which is a testament of the Church's ongoing resilience and mission to reclaim space from which it has been historically banished. UGCC's incentive to establish sacred space can be better understood in light of historical persecution. The UGCC's establishment of the ecumenical church exposes that sacred space is vulnerable but under the guardianship of religious actors, the memory of persecution is consolidated through a physical structure, adorned by religious symbolism.

Data Analysis

Part 1 Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery

November 30, 2013: The Monastery Gates Open

Figure 1: November 30, 2013, protesters gather inside of the Monastery (Byesyedina 2013).

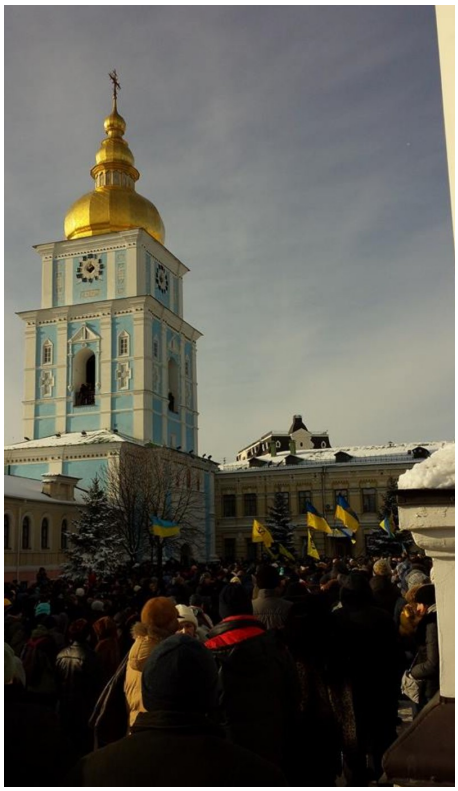


Figure 2: November 30, 2013, protesters gather outside of the Monastery (Byesyedina 2013).

The night of November 30, 2013, marked the moment the UOCKP began participating in the Revolution of Dignity by opening its Monastery's gates to student protesters who were fleeing from Berkut. This date is a pivotal moment for UOCKP, the people of Ukraine, and for the revolution. Before November 30, university students were peacefully protesting Yanukovych's rejection of EU alliance, hence the "Euromaidan" term was coined by the movement. The unprovoked violent beating of students by Berkut shifted the meaning of the revolution's goals from demanding European alignment to fighting against a pro-Russian government and state-led violence. Following the night of state beating of students, the Euromaidan protest transformed into the Revolution of Dignity, which saw masses of protesters gathering at Maidan Nezalezhnosti and inside and outside of the Monastery's grounds (Figures 1 & 2). Figure 1 shows masses of people that gathered on the grounds of the Monastery on the morning of November 30, which demonstrates the urgent reaction of collective action to state violence. As I captured in Figure 2 in 2013, protesters remained mobilised outside of the Monastery's territory throughout the night where from that moment onwards, the revolution endured for the next three months. Violence was a tipping point for the people of Ukraine and the UOCKP.

"It was around 5:00 AM when [the students] began to knock on the Monastery's gates. When the clergy welcomed the victims on the grounds of the Monastery, from that moment, the Church entered an active phase of the Revolution of Dignity. We did not expect for this to happen…no one planned it. From the 30th of November onwards, on the territory [of the Monastery] there were always people. The Monastery had food, medicine, free internet…it was a battlefield hospital." (Sydor 2020).

John Sydor's first-hand insights confirm that the UOCKP began its participation in the revolution on the night of November 30. The opening of Monastery gates sheltered injured students for the night, but in the long run of the next three months, the Monastery underwent a radical transformation in order to guard collective activism and Ukrainian national identity from a violent, pro-Russian state. The UOCKP's impromptu decision to open up the Monastery gates to battered and frightened students was an improvised decision that signalled the UOCKP's authentic allegiance to the protesters, not the state. It is vital to reflect on the coincidence and spontaneity of the events on November 30 in order to understand the tremendous significance of the alliance between the protesters and the UOCKP that changed the trajectory of Ukrainian nation-building. While the students' desperate choice to knock on the gates of the Monastery was largely based on its coincidental location and proximity to Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the decision of the Monastery to open up its gates to the battered students was impulsive. The UOCKP's spur of the moment decision impacted the survival of collective activism and reawakened the guardianship of Ukrainian Orthodoxy over the Ukrainian nation. Furthermore, as it will become clearer in the sections below,

the UOCKP did not back away from its protection of protesters despite the increased threat of violence and state repression. The Monastery's voluntary adaptability to the urgent needs of collective activism represents a moment of clarity in Ukraine's contested process of nation-building. The observable changes on the Monastery's sacred space directly depict the attempts of the protesters and Ukrainian Orthodoxy to revive Ukrainian national identity by challenging the repressive, pro-Russian, behaviour of the state.

The Church's commitment to guarding the protesters during the most violent phases of the revolution signified its longed opportunity to challenge historical and current injustices towards Ukrainian people, and by extension, Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The violent tides in the revolution presented the UOCKP an ideal opportunity to mobilise in support of the civil revolt and revive its exclusive Ukrainian Orthodox authority in the eyes of the nation, and later, the Orthodox community. While the immediate reaction of the UOCKP to open its gate was impulsive and improvised, Sydor's (2020) explains that the fusion of religion and people during the revolution was "natural" because "it was [the Church's] responsibility to give the people what they needed". Sydor's connection between religion and society can be directly observed in the voluntary transformation of the Monastery's grounds and its interior. It will become apparent that the changes on sacred grounds are adapted to the urgent needs of the protesters, however, the Monastery's sanctity is left undisturbed. The Monastery loosened its strict code of conduct by welcoming protesters and permitting the drastic changes to its sacred space while in return the protesters respected the sanctity of the Monastery's walls and holy icons by leaving them untouched and unspoiled. Moments of UOCKP's guardianship of collective action is directly observed through photographs that were captured on the transformed territory of the Monastery.

The organic interaction between the Church and the protesters forged a bond between UOCKP and the protesters that grew more visibly during violent stages of the revolution, which will be further elaborated in the chapter. "In my opinion, in 2004, the Church was involved, but people did not have a clear understanding that Ukraine has a Ukrainian church and a Russian church. It was all very blurry. But during the Revolution of Dignity, people understood the difference. People understood the difference between two churches [KP and MP] and that is a good thing." (Sydor 2020). The UOCKP's guardianship of protesters during the longevity of the revolution was a testament of religious allegiance with the people of Ukraine who witnessed an exclusive Ukrainian Orthodox Church demarcated from the dominating Russian Orthodox identity. November 30, 2013 significantly changed the status of Ukrainian Orthodoxy in the eyes of the nation when the UOCKP took on the obligation of protecting collective activism on its sacred grounds. UOCKP's guardianship of collective activism that can be observed through the transformation of the Monastery depicts a crucial moment of Ukrainian Orthodoxy finally gaining momentum in the

revival of self-determination that has been repressed by ROC for over three centuries.

Transformation of the Monastery Grounds

Figure 3: Barricaded eastern gate entry of the Monastery (Sydor 2014).

Figure 4: Protesters barricaded Hrushevsky Street (Byesyedina 2013).

The Monastery began its transformation following the beating of students on November 30 where the parameters of the sacred grounds were barricaded for protection. As seen on Figure 3, benches that were once used by congregation and tourists on the grounds of the Monastery were used to barricade the eastern gates for the longevity of the Revolution of Dignity. Orthodox gates and archways are used for the procession of religious rituals. Blocking the gates in desperation visually demonstrates the UOCKP's loosening of its conservative moral code of behaviour in order to guard the protesters from state violence. Furthermore, the barricades were a significant feature of the Revolution of Dignity. As depicted in Figure 4, the barricades that were used by the protesters on Maidan Nezalezhnosti were made out of tires and bags of sand that were placed in strategic trench-like structures where Berkut accumulated its forces on Hrushevsky Street and Instytutska Street. Similarly, the Monastery used its readily available objects to secure the gates from the threat of Berkut intrusion. The presence of barricades on sacred territory demonstrated the presence of the revolution of the Monastery's territory that was welcomed by the UOCKP. Blocking of the Monastery gates delineated the protesters from the hostile and violent state. The exclusivity of this physical division demonstrated the UOCKP's agency in guarding the protesters against Yanukovych's violent state, and by extension, the protection of Ukrainian national identity.

The transformation of the Monastery's sacred space demonstrates the rare flexibility of Orthodox tradition. The sacred space switched from a rigid religious institution into a haven for protesters while retaining elements of sanctity. When the Monastery opened its gates to the protesters the UOCKP gave unspoken permission to protesters to adapt the sacred space of the Monastery to the needs of the collective. These moments are captured through photographs. The sacred space was shared by the Monastery's clergy, civilian protesters, medics and nurses, as well as newly formed civic volunteer groups and organisations. While the gates of the Monastery were barricaded with benches, the grounds that were once a courtyard changed into a point of collection of essential clothing, medical equipment, blankets, food and water, and a space for networking and first-aid training. The changes to the sacred courtyard demonstrate moments of cooperation, unity, and sharing of knowledge, which aided in enabling collective activism.

Figure 5: Monastery's courtyard, volunteers collecting and organising warm clothing and covers (Sydor 2014).

Figure 6: Monastery's courtyard, drop off point of essential aid by volunteers (Sydor 2014).

Figure 7: Monastery's courtyard, volunteers gathering and organising medical supplies (Sydor 2014).

Figure 8: Bandages and hydrogen peroxide sorted and organised in bags (Sydor 2014).

Protesters and volunteers coordinated, collaborated, and networked on the premises of the Monastery's courtyard. Figures 5 to 8 capture moments where volunteers and protesters donated, collected, and organised necessary clothing and medicine for the injured on the grounds of the Monastery. The sheer volume of aid that was donated and gathered on the grounds demonstrated the mutual recognition of shared interests of protesters and the UOCKP which was to protect the aims of the revolution. The protesters and volunteers collected, organised, and coordinated urgently needed medical supplies during turbulent periods of the revolution. The etiquette of collective action on the sacred grounds of the Monastery demonstrated skilful coordination that was enabled thanks to the guardianship of the UOCKP. Figure 5 shows protesters and volunteers dropping off donations of warm clothing and blankets that are then sifted and categorised into piles (Figure 6). Categorising (Figure 7), bagging, and labelling of medical supplies (Figure 8) demonstrates skilful coordination of labour and the enthusiasm of volunteers who donated items of urgent need in spite of logistical difficulties of entering and leaving the Maidan Nezalezhnosti parameters. The city was enclosed by Berkut which made the movement and delivery of essential aid challenging. Sorting (Figure 7) and bagging (Figure 8) of medical supplies as well as stockpiling blankets and warm clothing (Figure 5 & 6) that were brought in by civilians in spite of logistical difficulties are all instances of skilful and diligent coordination that was possible under the guardianship of the UOCKP. These photographs directly depict how protesters and volunteers impromptu made order out of chaos by meticulously organising supplies in ways that made practical sense, transforming the sacred grounds into a first-aid relief space.

Figure 9: Khreshchatyk Street (Byesyedina 2013).

The orderly etiquette of the protesters who the dropped off, collected, organised, and stored donations demonstrated the successful process of collective action and respect for the sanctity of space. While the public space of Maidan Nezalezhnosti was transformed into a battlefield zone given its proximity to the Berkut opposition blockade, the protesters maintained a similar ritual of order by cleaning and clearing the snowy pathways in areas occupied by protester tents (Figure 9). The respectful ethic of shared space that is depicted in Figure 9 was also observed on the premises of the Monastery. However, while on the territory of Maidan protesters improvised structures of defence from Berkut, the Monastery provided the protesters with a secure permanent structure that enabled successful team work. Furthermore, the grounds of the Monastery were transformed and occupied by a network of volunteers and medical volunteers who curated meetings and first-aid training courses. The transformation of the Monastery demonstrates a moment where Orthodoxy loosened its conservative moral code by welcoming change and extending its sacred grounds to the use of the protesters.

Figure 10: Monastery's courtyard, first-aid training by paramedic volunteers (Sydor 2014).

Figure 11: Monastery's courtyard, meeting point for volunteers, medics, and protesters (Sydor, 2014).

The Monastery's sacred space enabled the protesters to share, establish, and circulate crucial medical knowledge that was vital for the endurance and survival of collective activism. Medical volunteers conducted training sessions on the premises of the Monastery's grounds, which demonstrates the ingenuity and diligence of collective activism. Figure 10 shows an improvised medical training course led by medical professions (most likely paramedics) for other volunteers on how to administer a first aid response, like CPR and the usage of a torquate to stop bleeding. The ritual of sharing first-aid knowledge and learning of survival skills were moments the depicted the severity of state-led violence and the desperation of the protesters to survive. The sacred space of the Monastery transformed into a communion of skilled volunteers and protesters whose knowledge sharing greatly impacted the survival of fellow protesters during the most violent phases of the revolution. The UOCKP's voluntary choice to adapt its Monastery grounds to the urgent needs of the protesters meant that there was an explicit acknowledgement of what was at stake: the survival of Ukrainian identity from the repressive and violent Yanukovych's state.

In addition, the sacred space was used by medical staff and volunteers to network and council under the safety of UOCKP's guardianship. Figure 11 shows medical volunteers in white sharing food and drink with other volunteers. This moment captures ordinary conversation and the ritual of churchyard communion. Similar to the practice of receiving bread and wine during Eucharist, the protesters shared intimate dialogue over a meal that helped forge relationships and solidified the collective body of protesters. These simple rituals are not ordinary during a time of chaos. Conversations establish common ground and exchange of common knowledge that results in the formation of a collective. Figure 11 depicts a moment of cohesion and self-determination of Ukrainian society to withstand Yanukovych's violent state.

Interior of the Monastery

As the protesters battled for their survival against Yanukovych's repressive state, the UOCKP renewed its historic fight for independence in alliance with protesters. Ukraine's incoherent process of forming identity following the 1991 independence finally found momentum during and following the Revolution of Dignity, where its religious aspects display a strikingly apparent process of nation-building. The Church's role as guardian of the nation is explicitly demonstrated in the transformation of the Narthex (entrance space), and the Nave (central space) of the Monastery. As coined by Sydor, the Monastery embodied its battlefield hospital title when the interior space was transformed into a functioning hospital for injured protesters. Sydor further recalled that:

"Parts of the Monastery became a hospital…where surgeries took place. Roads were all blocked on the perimeter of Maidan by Berkut, which meant that there was no type of logistic that could help getting a person with a bullet or a part of a bullet in their flesh to a hospital. The people were on the brink of death."

In comparison to the missionary Christianity experienced in western European churches, an Orthodox Church is essentially an institution with conservatively rigid morals and uncompromising behavioural codes that does not break away from tradition easily. For example, despite of being sick, sitting is forbidden in the duration of service and fasting follows a set of strict rules that must be followed by the faithful during the entire year. It is astounding to observe the transformation of an inherently conservative institution by protesters who turned the sacred space into a surgical theatre and a place of rest and recovery for the injured. The changes that were made to the Monastery depict a rare occasion of an Orthodox institution willingly compromising stringent tradition for the good of collective action and survival of national identity. The drastic physical transformation of the Monastery captures the rarity of an Orthodox Church voluntarily sharing sacred space and permitting changes to its holy temple. State-led violence necessitated the transformation of the Monastery where the UOCKP's embrace of change demonstrates a moment

of religious guardianship over collective activism and national identity. Building on the point established earlier, an unspoken bond of trust was further reinforced when the protesters were welcomed on Monastery's internal territory. The etiquette of trust and respect was reciprocated by the protesters through the maintenance of alter pieces and icons. The changes that occurred inside of the Monastery depict the willing transformation of an inherently conservative institution by protesters who left sacred elements untouched and undisturbed.

Figure 12: Narthex transformed into a surgical theatre (Sydor 2014).

Figure 13: Narthex transformed into a surgical theatre (Sydor 2014).

The Monastery's Narthex is the entrance space that welcomes devotees for preparation before service where prayer and lighting of candles before icons are offerings that precede joining the congregation. One corner of the Narthex was transformed into a surgical theatre (Figure 12 & 13) where tables and boxes improvised as hospital beds and medical preparation stations. It is clearly visible in Figure 12 that the kiosk stall with a shelf of many icons was undisturbed despite the space that was occupied for urgent surgical necessity. On an ordinary day the kiosk stall offered an opportunity for the visitors to purchase candles, icons, and other religious sacraments for religious ritual. Left undisturbed, the kiosk stall's untouched state represents the respect of protesters towards sacred and conservative space. This moment of mindful transformation depicts how protesters reciprocated respect for sacred space during chaotic periods of the revolution. The behaviour demonstrates flourishment of collective action when holy space is harmoniously shared despite the chaos of unfolding events. When taking into account the inherent function of the Narthex, the changes that happen to the space are a symbolic recreation of the offering ritual that would happen on a normal day by the faithful. Instead of making offerings to spiritual and imagined bodies, the surgical theatre physically embodied this ritual through operation on injured bodies. The protesters repurposed the Narthex for survival while keeping sacramental offering intact. Death was present in the repurposed space of the Monastery where instead of prayer and candle lighting "surgeries were happening underneath icons…in one corner, there was a surgery,

and in another someone lying dead" (Sydor 2020). The Monastery remarkably transformed into a battlefield hospital that sustained its sanctity while providing space for collective action.

Figure 14: Left wing of the Narthex adapted to the storage of medical supplies (Sydor 2014).

Figure 15: Left wing of the Narthex adapted to the storage of medical supplies (Sydor 2014).

More examples visually depict changes to sacred space in Figures 14 and 15 where medics and volunteers repurposed the remaining wing of the Narthex into a storage facility for medical supplies. The transformation of the left wing of the Narthex demonstrates problem solving and task coordination skills that were garnered by volunteers thanks to the UOCKP's guardianship. The volume of medical supplies also depicts the grandness of the revolution's collective movement that urgently gathered aid in order to treat injured protesters. When considering that Berkut blocked the periphery of the city centre, making access to a hospital and a pharmacy extremely challenging, the Monastery imitated the desperately needed hospital wing. The Monastery became the only secure and trustworthy structure for the protesters to assemble and store medical supplies that were needed for the immediate treatment of wounded protesters.

The changes that happened in the Narthex directly demonstrate the phenomenon of sacred transformation as well as the guardianship of the UOCKP whose goal was to protect the livelihood of the protesters, the aims of the revolution, and the future of the nation. Sydor recalls that "after all of this, people understood that we have a Ukrainian church." The urgency for symbiotic survival is witnessed in the Monastery's transformation, where death of people and the Ukrainian nation were synonymously at stake. On the macro level, the changes and activity that happened on the grounds of the Monastery are a clear depiction of Ukraine gaining momentum in the process of constructing identity with coherence. Ukraine's case depicts a moment when the state fails to meet the population's vision of identity and uses violence to suppress self-determination, the Church volunteers to fulfil the role of guarding and enabling collective action. The UOCKP's decision to open its gates to the protesters initiated a shift in the protester's perception of religious loyalty to the Ukrainian nation. The Monastery's guardianship was a noticeable testament to the presence of a uniquely Ukrainian sanctuary, not a Russian one. The activism that unfolded in the Monastery during the revolution has helped make sense of Ukraine's complex and at times incoherent identity construction by visibly and physically demarcating itself from a pro-Russian state when collaborating with the protesters.

Figure 16: Left of Iconostasis adapted to the storage of covers, mats, and pillows (Sydor 2014).

Furthermore, the left corner of the central part of the Monastery, the Nave, transformed from a sacred space of worship into a space of storing essential covers, mats, and pillows that were needed during the brutal duration of the revolution. The Revolution of Dignity occurred during the winter months where the streets of Kyiv witnessed extreme sub-zero temperatures reaching minus 20'C. While the majority of protesters that occupied Maidan Nezalezhnosti sought shelter in their propped-up tents, injured protesters were transported to the Monastery that provided immediate shelter and warmth. The Monastery adapted to the urgent needs of the protesters. The transformation of the Nave will be further analysed below.

December 10-11, 2013: Ringing of Monastery Bells

Figure 17: Instytutska Street, state security forces, Berkut, amass next to Holodomor cross (Byesyedina 2013).

From December 10 to 11, Berkut attempted to violently clear the parameters of Maidan Nezalezhnosti in order to eradicate the momentum of the revolution that presented a direct threat to Yanukovych's presidency and alignment with Russia. Topographically, Maidan Nezalezhnosti is located in Kyiv's city centre on a clear and levelled ground with streets in the north and south running up a hill. In the south side of Maidan, the top of Hrushevsky Street and Instytutska Street were blocked by amassed Berkut forces (Figure 17). Both streets provided advantage entry points to the gathering of protesters in the square below. Both streets were elevated advantage points and their separation by a lengthy block of buildings blinded the protesters from a spontaneous collective assault by Berkut. As seen in Figure 17, the picture was taken from the protester's perspective that depicts the elevated position of Berkut on the hill of Instytutska Street. In addition, Yanukovych's government blocked communication towers that allowed mobile reception in the city centre of Kyiv, infringing the coordination and communication of a large body of protesters in sub zero weather. St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery is located in the north of the city centre, on the opposite side of Berkut's offensive. It takes 15-minutes walking distance to reach the Monastery from Maidan. With this context in mind, the Monastery broke a 600-year-old silence when it used its bell tower to alert protesters about the state-led ambush. The bell tower was rung by John Sydor for five hours. The ringing of Monastery bells and the endurance of sound that reached Maidan captures the tremendous initiative and innovative guardianship of the UOCKP over the protesters during the escalation of violence.

"I got a phone call and I'm told to ring the bells. The news of the Monastery's bells ringing spread quickly and people began to understand in their hearts that someone is in danger. 600 years ago, the bell tower was rung during a fire, a war. The bells ringing, all of a sudden, was an awakening for Ukraine of the presence of danger. Within one to two hours, the Monastery was full of people." (Sydor 2020).

Sydor's role as the bell ringer and his experience during the clashes between state security forces and protestors is significant in capturing the UOCKP's voluntary and active involvement in the Revolution of Dignity. Historically, the Monastery's bells have remained silent since the Mongol-Tatar invasion in 1240 (Frosevich et al. 2016) where their usage during a violent period of the revolution demonstrates that despite high stakes, the UOCKP was committed to the guardianship of protesters. The UOCKP understood the mapping of the movement and the risks where it behaved as a watch tower, coordinating protesters towards safety. Berkut's attacks on December 10 and 11 began involving ferocious weapons, such as water cannons and rubber bullets. The Monastery's instant decision to alarm protesters of Berkut's attacks for the longevity of approximately five hours signifies the intensity of violence. Sydor explains that in the last six hundred years the bell tower has only been run for a few minutes at a time on holy occasions, such as Christmas. The straining physical labour that was involved in bell ringing for a long period of time testifies the commitment and responsibility that the UOCKP bared for their nation. The Monastery used every means at their resource to guard the protesters, whether its internally shielding them on their sacred territory, or alarming of danger from a distance using sacred sound. The impact of the bell ringing was not constrained by the relatively distant location of protesters that were battered Berkut simply because sound travels and alerts in an instant.

While it has been established that opening of the Monastery gates on November 30 was a spontaneous decision by the UOCKP, the bell ringing was a conscious order by the Church following the desperate pleas of protesters. Sydor explained that his mobile number was displayed as the primary contact on the Monastery's official website. "People started ringing my mobile, asking to ring the bells so that there was communication about Maidan being cleared." (Sydor 2020). This moment of communication between the protesters and a representative of the Monastery reinforced the authentic trust of protesters towards their religious institution that has proven to be a reliable ally during life-threatening moments in the revolution. The bond that was forged between the protesters and the UOCKP was vital in renewing the visibility and presence of a Ukrainian Orthodox Church whose actions clearly demarcated it from ROC identity. The decision of the Monastery to grant the requests of desperate protesters demonstrates the purposeful and conscious agency of the UOCKP in guarding collective activism. Sydor revealed that he "asked for a blessing from the priest on duty of the Monastery, because anything that is

done by the Monastery needs to be approved by blessing. You cannot have independent agency. I told the priest that people are asking for help and I received a blessing." While the protocol of acquiring a blessing for an action by the clergy depicts a conservative code of morals, the decision to violate the ritual of bell ringing depicted a moment of UOCKP loosening its rigid behaviour for the survival of protesters.

Sacred sound was used as a tool for coordination, collective action, and protection. The Monastery transformed into a watchful guardian that voluntarily shifted its rigid Orthodox protocols by providing protesters shelter on its sacred grounds and enabled communication and coordination through sound. The bell ringing from December 10 to 11 is a rare moment that captures how sacred sound can penetrate violent space, invisible but yet impactful in coordinating protesters to safe ground. Eventually, Berkut's raid was unsuccessful in retreating the revolution and while many fled to the Monastery, the Maidan barricades were left secured by the remaining protesters. Those protesters that remained to defend their positions were immersed in violent physical battle that was serenaded by the Monastery's bell ringing. While it was immoral and sacrilegious for the UOCKP to be physically involved in the clashes, sound was a powerful instrument that conducted coordination, communication, protection, and moral support for the protesters. The UOCKP demarcated itself through sacred space transformation and sacred sound against state violence that represented current and historical attempts at repressing Ukrainian identity. The UOCKP's ongoing activism in the Revolution of Dignity set a precedent to receiving autocephaly in 2019 because in moments like this, Ukrainian Orthodoxy renewed its authority and historical guardianship of the nation that it once lost to multiple empires.

January 22, 2014: the State's first kill

Figure 18: Hrushevsky Street, Dynamo Kyiv entrance following protester clashes with Berkut (Byesyedina 2014).

Figure 19: Hrushevsky Street, Dynamo Kyiv entrance following protester clashes with Berkut (Byesyedina 2014).

Figure 20: Shell from rubber bullet ammunition that was used by Berkut against protesters (Byesyedina 2014).

Figure 21: Frozen barricades following Berkut water cannoning of protesters (Byesyedina 2014).

In the lead up to Berkut killing the first protester, Yanukovych's state escalated violent attempts to disperse protesters from Maidan in December and in January introduced a new set of laws that restricted protesting. On January 16, Verkhovna Rada (parliament) implemented a new set of draconian laws that strictly restricted freedom of speech, banned the use of tents, helmets, and the use of the Ukrainian flag. Most importantly, the law deemed "extreme activity" of civilians and churches as illegal. The adopted package of draconian laws was an attempt to deter and threaten protesters and religious institutions that were involved in the revolution. From January 19-22, violent clashes between Berkut and protesters took place on Hrushevsky Street. As seen in Figures 18 and 19, the clashes happened next to the Dynamo Stadium entrance where Berkut stormed

from the hill of the archway on the right-hand side. As seen by the barricades on the right of Figure 19, protesters gathered at the base of the stadium entrance and engaged in deadly clashes with security forces. Furthermore, Berkut utilised deadly weapons to disperse protesters which included stun grenades, rubber bullets, water cannons, and Molotov cocktails. Figure 20 captures the size of a rubber bullet shell that was used to inflict as much damage as possible. The aftermath of the clashes left a visible trace on the stadium arch that was stained with black smoke and the ground was covered in soot (Figures 18 & 19). The weather during these clashes reached sub-zero temperatures. Figure 21 depicts the brutality of the climate as well as the cruelty of Berkut's storming tactics. Water cannons that were used to batter protesters left frozen traces on the barricaded sand bags. On January 22, Serhiy Nihoyan, an Armenian-Ukrainian protester, was shot dead by Berkut, which marked the first instance of the state killing protesters. Furthermore, approximately 1400 protesters were reported injured by medic volunteers. Violent clashes continued into February and saw the total death of 107 protesters.

Figure 22: Dead protesters lined up in the courtyard of the Monastery (Sydor 2014).

Figure 23: Dead protesters lined up in the courtyard of the Monastery (Sydor 2014).

Figure 24: Dead protesters are document and examined by medic volunteers (Sydor 2014).

When taking into account the draconian laws and cruel tactics of Berkut's attacks that resulted in the death and injury of protesters in January, the Monastery's transformation demonstrates the significant endurance of the UOCKP's guardianship of protesters and Ukrainian identity. The Monastery adapted to the spike of violence and the urgent needs of the protesters by setting up a

temporary mortuary for the protesters that were killed by Berkut. As the violent clashes continued and more protesters were killed, the Monastery's grounds were vital for safekeeping of dead bodies. The graphic transformation of the Monastery's courtyard into a mortuary is depicted in Figures 22 to 24 where a dozen or so dead protesters are seen laid out on the ground, covered by blankets. Laying and guarding of the dead bodies on the grounds of the Monastery is significant in portraying the role of the Church in honouring and protecting the memory of sacrifice during the Revolution of Dignity. Figures 23 and 24 show medical volunteers documenting and examining the dead, a process that normally takes place in a medical facility is conducted on sacred ground. Transforming an Orthodox sacred space into a mortuary is a moment that captures the epitome of UOCKP loosening its strict code of conduct. Death is commemorated symbolically on the grounds of the Monastery through rituals of prayer and communion, but during the Revolution of Dignity the sacred space embraced the ritual of death in its physical form. UOCKP's welcoming of the living and the dead on its sacred space is a direct testament of commitment to the guardianship of collective activism, but most importantly, the protection of Ukrainian identity.

Figure 25: Narthex, injured protester administered transfusion (Sydor 2014).

Figure 26: Nave, injured protesters resting (Sydor 2014).

Figure 27: Iconostasis, injured protesters resting (Sydor 2014).

Figure 28: Nave, injured protesters resting (Sydor 2014).

As Yanukovych's state continued to kill protesters on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the UOCKP played a vital role in safeguarding the lives of the nation. The Monastery's Narthex and Nave that were transformed into surgical theatres and places of rest were important in reviving protesters that were injured and on the brink of death. Figures 25-28 show how protesters settled, rested, recovered, and some died on the floor of the Nave, a sacred space that is traditionally restricted to standing service. Figure 25 captures a moment an injured protester is being administered a treatment on the improvised hospital bed. The transformation of the Monastery's Narthex into a surgical theatre was vital for the survival of the severely injured protesters. Shifting attention to Figures 26 to 28 the scenery of resting injured protesters and propped up metal shields and helmets that were used for protection from Berkut look striking against the grand ornate aesthetic of the golden Iconostasis wall. Worship in an Orthodox Church is a sensuous experience where extensively ornate icons cover the walls and the ceiling of sacred space in a substantial attempt to visually connect the faithful with heavenly images from the scripture. Seeking protection and refuge, the protesters were welcomed into the inherently precious and conservative space. The scene captured in Figures 25 to 28 is a rare moment of Orthodoxy breaking away from rigid rules of behaviour in order to meet the desperate demands of the protesters. The severity of state led violence necessitated the UOCKP to undermine its protocol for the benefit of the nation's survival. At first glance, the Iconostasis' intended heavenly scenery is interrupted by the "impoliteness" of protesters laying on the floor. At closer look, the protesters lay neatly side by

side leaving the altar's Iconostasis untouched and undisturbed. This moment depicts the unity and mutual respect of shared space by protesters and the UOCKP. It is a testament to the dignified morals of the protesters that they respect the sanctity of the Monastery's space despite being on the brink of exhaustion or death. Most importantly, it is in these crucial moments of near death that Ukraine's society truly saw the UOCKP as an exclusively Ukrainian Orthodox identity that proved its voluntary obedience to the nation through persistent guardianship during the Revolution of Dignity.

Figure 29: Nave, handwritten signs "people will injuries" and "contusions" (Sydor 2014).

Furthermore, the Monastery's adapted sacred space enabled protesters to coordinate, react, and problem solve during the heightened periods of state-led violence. Figure 29 depicts two handwritten A4 paper signs that were hung up on the ornate wall of the Monastery, directing protesters to either a space for "people with injuries" (top sign) or those with "contusions" (bottom sign). The photo captures a moment of coordination, communication, and order that was established by the protesters under the guardianship of the UOCKP. The transformation of the Monastery's sacred space into a battlefield hospital enabled collective activism and survival of the protesters. The signs on the wall depict the severity of state's coercive tactics to diminish the

revolution. Collective activism and the survival of protesters endured because the UOCKP welcomed the Revolution of Dignity onto its territory. The Monastery voluntarily repurposed its sanctuary into a space that met the desperate demands of the protesters, challenging assumptions about the rigidity of Orthodoxy and religious loyalty to the nation during turbulent times. The alliance between the Church and the protesters established organically due to common-ground interest of conserving Ukraine's identity in the face of state repression. A close analysis of the Monastery's transformation is a useful attempt to help make sense of Ukraine's complex process of identity creation. The moments that depict the transformation of sacred space capture the formation of identity.

Figure 30: Courtyard, memorial for the Heavenly Hundred under the ciborium/fountain (Sydor 2014).

The UOCKP embraced its guardianship of the living, the dead, and the sacrificial on its territory, a commitment which transformed the physical space of the grounds and the sacred memory of the nation. Protesters created a shrine to the Heavenly Hundred underneath the Ciborium of St Nicholas arch (Figure 30) by gathering objects of sentimental meaning around the fountain. Similar to the way Christianity consecrates spaces and objects, protesters were able to consecrate a moment of traumatic loss on sacred grounds. The memorial was created using various objects – tires, helmets, shields, flags, and clothing – that were used by the protesters during the revolution. Helmets, savaged metal parts, and tires that were improvised into objects of defence along with clothing, flags, and photographs of the deceased were symbolic items that formed the shrine. These objects were a testament of sacrifice and martyrdom. The space that was once reserved to pay religious tribute to St Nicholas was transformed into a memorial that commemorated the death of 107 protesters and the grievances of the nation. The memorial depicts the transformative phenomenon of sacred space while retaining features of sanctity. The sacred aspect of memorialising the Heavenly Hundred is depicted in the untouched cross. The white marbled Orthodox cross that emerges from the memorial is repurposed to consecrate the deaths of protesters. The cross is repurposed from blessing the water of the fountain to re-enacting the burial of the dead. "Nebesna Sotnia" (written in black on the bottom of the memorial) translates from Ukrainian to "Heavenly Hundred", which represents the number of protesters killed by the state. The term "Heavenly" implies that those who were killed are now in heaven because their deeds during the revolution were righteously good, which in Christianity is a condition for salvation. Similar to a venerable title given by the pope, the protesters gave a title to the deceased in recognition of their heroism and sacrifice. The identity of the Heavenly Hundred was memorialised and constructed in a sacrificial manner, through appeals to martyrdom. The memorialisation of the Heavenly Hundred on the Monastery grounds depicts the process of collective memory formation that impacts the national identity.

February 20, 2014: Bloody Thursday

Figure 31: Bottom of Instytutska Street, Hotel Ukraine (Byesyedina 2014).

Figure 32: Top of Instytutska Street, behind Hotel Ukraine, massacre site (Byesyedina 2014).

Figure 33: Bottom of Instytutska Street, people bringing flowers to the massacre site (Byesyedina 2014)

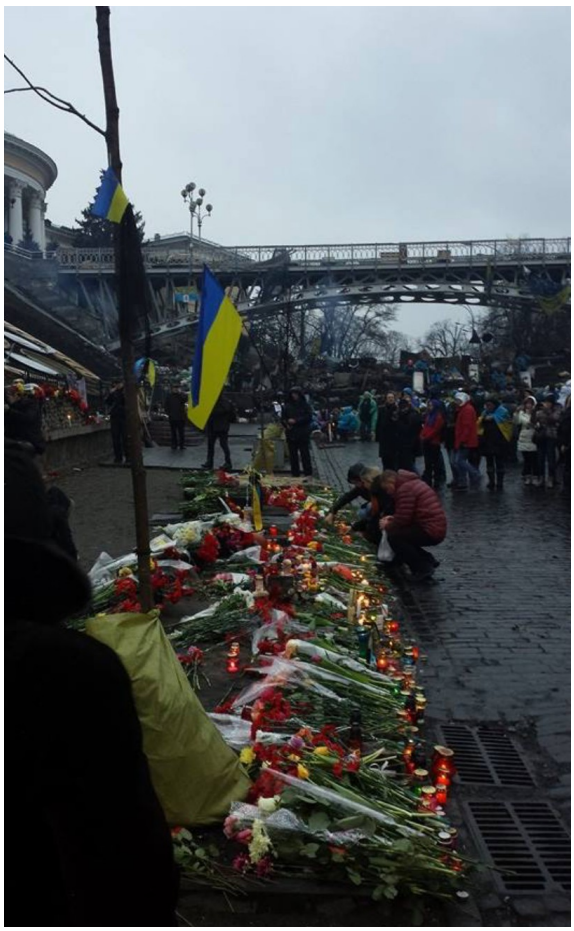


Figure 34: Temporary memorials set up along Heroyiv Nebesnoyi Sotni Alley (Byesyedina 2020).

On February 20, 2014, Yanukovych ordered state security snipers to mount the roof of Hotel Ukraine and shoot protesters on the descent of Instytutska Street (Figure 31), marking the day as Bloody Thursday. As seen on Figure 31, the hotel's position on the hill of the street provided a vantage point for the snipers to massacre protesters that gathered along the street and at the bottom of the barricade. As snipers shot protesters from above, Berkut stormed the street on ground, clashing with vulnerable protesters. Figure 32 shows the aftermath of the massacre site that took place behind Hotel Ukraine. The total of 107 protesters were killed by Yanukovych's repressive regime during the Revolution of Dignity. Yanukovych fled from Kyiv to Moscow following February 20, which marked the bitter-sweet victory of the revolution. While Yanukovych was ousted, the sacrificial memory of protesters became a subject of contestation for Ukrainian society. Ukrainian volunteers and families of the dead devoted attention to commemorating the memory of the 107 protesters that were killed by Yanukovych's security forces. Figure 33 depicts a vigil in memory of the dead where people brought flowers to the site of the massacre. Families of the dead displayed photographs of the massacred protesters along Heroyiv Nebesnoyi Sotni Alley (previously known as Instytutska Street) in an attempt to commemorate national loss to state repression (Figure 34). The photographs seen on Figure 34 are propped up against bricks, exposed to the environment's elements. Figure 34 was taken in 2020 which depicts the temporal and vulnerable status of the commemoration. Petro Poroshenko's presidency renamed the bottom of Instytutska Street to Heroyiv Nebesnoyi Sotni Alley in order to commemorate the death of the 107 protesters, however the state failed to erect a permanent memorial. The photographs that served as temporary placeholders for the memorial experienced random vandalism. While the temporary placeholders were contested by the enduring presence of pro-Russian vandals, the establishment of an ecumenical Church in 2016 by UGCC depicted a moment of permanent guardianship over the memory of national sacrifice.

Part 2 Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael and the Ukrainian New Martyrs

Figure 35: Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael and the Ukrainian New Martyrs (Byesyedina 2020).

So far it has been established that the UOCKP played a significant role in guarding collective activism and national identity during the longevity of the revolution. However, religious guardianship of the nation continued long after the Revolution of Dignity. The UGCC's agency in establishing the Ecumenical Church of Archangel Michael and the Ukrainian New Martyrs in 2016 on the territory that witnessed the state massacre of protesters was significant in solidifying the martyrdom of protesters, and by extension, the collective memory of the nation. Religious guardianship of national sacrificial memory plays a major role in constructing national identity. While the Alley's temporary photographs of the dead experienced vandalism and the state did not erect a permanent memorial, the UGCC's establishment of the ecumenical Church created a sacred space that devoted itself to permanently commemorating the sacrifices of protesters. Built as a permanent extension of the "prayer tent", the ecumenical Church permanently revived rituals that were practiced by the protesters during the revolution. The establishment of the ecumenical Church depicts a moment of UGCC's agency in creating sacred space and guarding the sacrificial memory of the protesters. Lastly, the ecumenical status of the Church demonstrates a moment where Christians of all denominations are welcomed to practice communion in unity. The creation of sacred space on sacrificial territory captures a significant moment of UGCC reclaiming justice and dignity for the repressive Soviet past.

Establishing the ecumenical Church revived the ritual of prayer that was practiced during the revolution and therefore gave permanence to the memory of the Revolution of Dignity and the sacrifices of protesters. As depicted in Figure 35, the small wooden Church and its surrounding memorial reliefs occupy a space that experienced state sanctioned killings of protesters. The 107 memorial reliefs are positioned at the entrance of the Church which welcomes visitors to the opportunity to pray and commemorate the deaths of the Heavenly Hundred. During the Revolution of Dignity, UGCC clergy gathered on Maidan Nezalezhnosti to share prayer with the protesters (Zasanska 2025). The space invited the repetition of the ritual of prayer and in doing so commemorates the life and sacrifice of the protesters. Reclaiming of space and creating a permanent sacred structure is significant in consolidating the history and collective memory of the events of Bloody Thursday. Sacred structures are vital in guarding contested histories and traumatic memories. History and archives are vulnerable to the repression and erasure by elites, an experience Ukraine is inherently familiar with. The ecumenical Church is a physical structure that provides the history of the Revolution of Dignity tangibility and security. Physical guardianship of horrific and traumatic events provides societies with an opportunity to cohesively construct collective memory and national identity. The establishment of the ecumenical Church is a moment that depicts Ukrainian society gaining momentum in re-establishing Ukrainian nationalism.

Furthermore, the spatial transformation is unique given that the ecumenical Church stands in a location that has not been previously shared by religious places of worship. While places of worship are frequently built in the residential neighbourhoods of Kyiv, it is an uncommon practice to establish a Church in the centre of the city. The ecumenical Church is not an ordinary place of worship but rather a sacred space that has built for the purpose of guarding the sacrificial memory of the Revolution of Dignity. When observing the space along the Alley in an ascending order, some changes since 2014 are worthy of attention. As previously mentioned, the temporary place-holder memorials to the 107 protesters run along the sidewalk of the Alley and towards the hill stands an underdeveloped National Memorial Complex of Heroes and Heavenly Hundred – Museum of the Revolution of Dignity. Unlike the permanent presence of the ecumenical Church, unfinished sites of commemorating memory and history occupy the space. While the state has failed to secure funds for historical infrastructure, it is important to remark on the significance of a minority religious institution successfully guarding and consolidating sacrificial space and memory.

The undisturbed presence of the Greek Catholic Church demonstrates the uncompromising and liminal quality of the religion whose history of persecution, dissidence, and resistance has shaped its triumph in reviving and guarding the sacrificial memory following the Revolution of Dignity. Connected to Kyivan Rus origins and Catholic roots, the Ukrainian Greek Catholics have been

historically marginalised ecclesiastically as they do not fit the static and established denominational identities of pure-blooded Catholic and Orthodox communities. Most importantly, the UGCC experienced liquidation and annihilation during Stalin's USSR, which saw clergy killed and places of worship annexed by the ROC. While UGCC revived the ownership of its inherent sacred space that was once invaded by ROC from 1946-1989, the establishment of the ecumenical Church in 2016 was an extension of anti-establishment behaviour that paved the way for protecting memories of suffrage. The UGCC's historical suffrage has shaped and motivated its agency in establishing an ecumenical Church that reclaimed the sacred space of sacrificial memory of the Revolution of Dignity.

The UGCC's resilient identity was formed by historical adversity and has largely shaped its motivations for avenging sacred space for the suffered and the dead. Creating an ecumenical place of worship ignited an opportunity for cooperation and unity amongst Christian denominations. The Revolution of Dignity was an opportunity for the UGCC to guide the trajectory of Ukraine's democratic path. This was apparent in the first days of the Euromaidan movement that involved the youth of the Ukrainian Catholic University challenging Yanukovych's decline to align Ukraine with European partnership. Most importantly, UGCC's theology of dignity is directly seen in the expression of "Revolution of Dignity", which was coined by the Head of the UGCC, Svyatoslav Shevchuk, in his 2013 letter that condemned Yanukovych's oppressing political regime. The UGCC's involvement in guarding collective activism and its sacrifice for liberal values is directly embodied in the physical and sacred presence of the ecumenical Church. The ecumenical quality of the Church depicts the existence of unifying sacred space that rejects discrimination and religious conflict that has been part of the Ukraine's process of incoherent identity construction. Despite its minority status, the UGCC Church has exceptionally transformed the understanding of collective unity and Christian cohesion in the establishment of a small wooden Church presence demonstrates the significance of sacred space in containing and protecting sacrificial memory.

The UGCC's minority status only amplifies the magnitude of impact the Church has had on the revival and protection of sacrificial memory. As was established in the Collective Memory Chapter, the Heavenly Hundred have become a dominating factor in the construction of Ukraine's national identity following Russia's invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014. The wooden Church is a testament of UGCC activism and acknowledgement in the society's need for sacred space which serves as a permanent ground for the commemoration of sacrificial life that welcomes all religious denominations. Lastly, the UGCC's agency in the Revolution of Dignity portrays a potential model for the behaviour of religious communities during times of unrest, where prioritising the relationship with society's needs over state ambitions is vital for the survival of Ukrainian identity.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church sees language, religion, and people as overlapping elements that are closely tied to the Church's autocephaly. Sydor noted that it is considered sacrilege for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to be a patriarchate not in its own right. The Revolution of Dignity has given the Ukrainian Orthodoxy an opportunity to renew its chances of seeking self-governing status from Constantinople. The revolution was a testament of Ukrainian society's dominant demand for independence from Russia on all fronts of its identity where the UOCKP's active role in the protests meant that they were able to make a case for autocephaly in ways that was never possible until 2019. The autocephaly brought about the end of Ukraine's dependency on Russian Orthodox Church. Opening of Monastery gates, bell ringing, and guardianship of protesters had an accumulative impact on the urgency of establishing a Ukrainian Orthodox Church especially in the light of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and incitement of war in Donbas.

While the Ukrainian society understands the contested status of its identity that has been compromised by internal and external Russian interferences, the religious aspect came into spotlight of clarity following the Revolution of Dignity thanks to the activism of the Church. Sydor's repetitive references to the "reawakening" of society's consciousness when explaining attitudes indicates that the convoluted status of Ukrainian Orthodoxy blurred people's differentiation between a pro-Ukrainian Church and a pro-Russian Church. The term "reawakening" suggests that the status of Ukrainian religion was stagnant in the eyes of society where the events of 2013-2014 impacted civil perceptions of the equal importance of an independent religious identity and independent state. Tomos was a legal and historical turning point that brough much needed cohesion to Ukraine's construction of national identity. Without an independent Church, "[Ukraine] becomes malleable in the hands of others to shape us how they see fit" (Sydor). December 15, 2018 is an important date for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that sought unity. Three churches came together: Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate, Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephaly Church, and Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate.

Bartholomew I of Constantinople, in granting Ukraine autocephaly, addressed the following: "Therefore, since the pious and God-protected land of Ukraine has been strengthened and exalted by the highest providence and has received its full political independence, its state and church leaders have been fervently asking for its church self-government for thirty years now, side by side with the people and in unison with their ancient requests, once addressed to the most holy Apostolic See of Constantinople."(Golos 2019). While the Revolution of Dignity has led Yanukovych, a Russian proxy, fleeing the country in 2014, and the election of a pro-Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, has resulted in the political pursuit of securing Tomos, the Monastery's actions in 2013-2014 have played a vital role in demonstrating to Orthodox authority

the unity of Church and its people. In protecting collective activism, the Monastery has (re)constructed Ukrainian identity in symbolic and legal terms.

The transformation of sacred sites is significant in understanding the role of religious actors in protecting identity and memories of sacrifice during times of revolt and escalated violence. The activism of UOCKP and UGCC in the wake of the Revolution of Dignity captures Ukrainian identity gaining coherence in its process of consolidating national identity. Investigating the transformation, creation, and maintenance of sacred space is important during revolutions as it reveals ancient and modern battles for national identity in ways that cannot be captured otherwise. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that while Tomos was a cataclysmic event for Ukrainian Orthodoxy's independence, intra-Orthodox disputes over parishes persist in today's Ukraine, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Shevel 2025).

Chapter 9: Discussion & Conclusion

Overview of objectives and key findings

This thesis' goal was to demonstrate that identity is fluid and that revolutions are vital in mobilising the messy process of identity (re)construction. Having embraced the chaos of the process, my thesis has demonstrated Ukraine's attempts at refining its national identity following the Revolution of Dignity. Elites, civil society, artists, teachers, and religious actors mobilise to converse about the path of Ukrainian nation-building. While in-depth investigation of collective memory and education has revealed the presence of diverse identities contesting and solidifying history, the study of religion has shown the importance of transformed sacred spaces in consolidating national identity. Furthermore, this thesis has shown that to understand Ukraine's current self-determination to survive Russian blatant aggression one needs to come back to the events of the Revolution of Dignity. The treatment of monuments, paint on the walls, covers of school history textbooks, discussions in history classrooms, and sacred spaces are objects and moments that capture Ukraine's process of reshaping national identity which involves contestation about the past. This dissertation has invited the reader to consider the importance of inspecting visual data because it reveals complex histories that continue to charge discussions about Ukraine's nation-building path.

Reflecting on the research process, contributions, and future research

When reflecting on the circumstances that have impacted my candidature, my 2018 self would not have believed that I would be submitting this dissertation in a warzone. Having completed my work while confronting many challenges, I wholeheartedly believe that I would not have it any other way. Confronting Russian terror first-hand has given me the opportunity to refine my thesis focus in a way that bridges Ukraine's determination during revolt to Ukraine's current resilience against Russian aggression. Being on the ground and witnessing Russian atrocities in Kyiv has disciplined me to treat the data that I have gathered with utmost importance because it has captured phenomena that would not have become apparent otherwise. Using thick description has given me the opportunity to closely analyse gathered data in a way that takes into account Ukraine's complex history. In-depth analysis has been a vital tool in uncovering moments where Ukraine's identity (re)construction gains coherence, and reveals fluidity and diversity. Overall, reaching the end of my candidature I have learnt the importance of refining my approach to data analysis in order to produce work that contributes to knowledge about identity.

Specifically, refining collected data on street-names, monuments, and symbols has contributed to shifting attention to monuments that have been left untouched. Statue maintenance has revealed the importance of paying attention to the seemingly mundane which hides the complex process of refining memories and historical legacies in plain sight. For example, the fate of Kyiv's Vatutin statue has put into perspective how sacred spaces, burial grounds, lead to the prolonged endurance of repressive legacy. While this thesis investigated a limited scope of statues in order to closely capture Kyiv's and Odesa's collective memory practices, future research should consider intently investigating the maintenance of Russian imperial and Soviet monuments across all regions. Furthermore, while my thesis has devoted attention to Ukraine's case study, findings on statue treatment and statue maintenance encourage a broader range of researchers to consider different ways of tracing identity. Lastly, approaching the study of Kyiv and Odesa through individual and collective insights (artist, politician, city) has helped capture the dimensionality of identity and the complex role of history in shaping actions. Odesa's maintenance of Pushkin opens up the inquiry about Russian imperial symbols abroad during war. It will be important for future researchers to consider tracing Russian mobilisation of soft power in countries like Eritrea and Tanzania (Glazkova 2024) who have become a cradle for Russian propaganda and militia activism.

My approach to researching education has largely been shaped by re-reading interview transcripts from fieldwork. Initially, I expected to focus solely on tracing history discourses in school history textbooks, but the insights from two teachers redirected my attention to mediation by teachers. The striking details revealed by the teachers about the frequent turnover of teaching material and having the urgency to hide old material are unusual practices that caused me to embrace the investigation of educators. Things that happen in a history classroom are revealing of what happens in the nation's process of identity (re)construction. For the longevity of a lesson, the teacher exercises the ability to deviate official curricula in order to transmit personal convictions. While the small sample leads to limited generalisability, the insights reconfirm results from previous studies of teacher authority (Pultzer & Berkman 2010; Wills 2005). What makes the insights from education particularly exciting is the implications of placing them in the overarching context of Ukraine's incoherent process of consolidating national identity. Ukrainians deeply care about their identity, no matter whether they are active civilians protesting on the streets of Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or a seemingly apolitical history teacher. The mediation of teachers illuminates the chaotic scene of Ukrainian education, but it also demonstrates that the mediation of history is very much part of the process in reaching coherence about Ukrainian nation identity. In the context of Russia's full-scale war, future researchers should continue studying the agency of teachers, comparing insights from different regions, and sampling the approaches of pedagogy outside of Ukraine. As a consequence of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, approximately five

million Ukrainians have fled their Ukrainian homes. Studying the education and identity of Ukrainians abroad will be vital in understanding the overarching shifts in diaspora and national identity.

What particularly stands out in my research is the uncommon behaviour of Orthodoxy. In addressing attention to the transformation of religiously sacred space this dissertation has revealed the vital role of the St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery in guarding collective activism and by extension Ukrainian ethnic identity. Studying John Sydor's photographs in depth has given me the opportunity to trace moments of civic activism alongside the Monastery's transformation. Furthermore, revisiting my interview with Sydor has been vital as it has led me to consider the importance of sound as a source of communication and mobilisation of collective activism. From what I have read so far in my young academic journey, the majority of research on identity deals with nations, humans, and physical objects, leaving the invisible, sound, neglected. With exception of recent work by Clark (2025) and Kulish (2025), sound has been understudied. Sound continues to shape the lives and identities of Ukrainians today where air raids, ammunition, drones, and missiles have replaced the sound of the commercial airplane. Light is another source which has drastically reshaped the daily rituals of Ukrainians during lengthy blackouts. My findings on sound contribute towards broadening the IR discipline's approach to what constitutes data as integral data. Furthermore, in light of Tomos, it will be important for academics to trace the activism and movement of clergy who have retained pro-Russian ideological beliefs in order to understand how religious proxies continue to challenge the authenticity of Ukrainian identity.

Ukraine today has shown a continuous striving for national survival against Russian blatant aggression where its resilience can be traced back to ancient history and even more recently, the Revolution of Dignity. The events of 2013-2014 have illuminated a point of clarity in Ukraine's complex pathway of identity (re)construction. The masses of protesters that flooded the streets of Kyiv have reshaped the course of Ukrainian nation-building, mobilising artists, elites, and churches to take part in identity consolidation. The process has not been seamless and contention persists about what Ukraine was and what it should be. But these conflicts need to be studied because they reveal a glimpse of what really happens in the chaotic process of shaping and reshaping a nation's identity. In Ukraine's case, determination for survival can be captured in the transformation of statues, through the graffiti on the wall, in classrooms, and on the sacred ground of a bell tower. The society that took protest to the streets in 2013-2014 are the same people who are currently in the trenches defending Ukrainian sovereignty from Russian invasion.

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