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# Euromaidan: why the oligarchs supported nationalism

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## Résumé

This research aims to undermine the two main narratives on the Ukrainian conflict: the pro-Russian and the pro-government of Ukraine because they are two sides of the same coin: the nationalist one since both narratives focused on culture and ethnic groups. This research analyses the Ukrainian nationalist narrative as a tool in the oligarchs' hands in order to justify their manipulation of power. With the fall of the USSR, its main economic sector split in half: oil and gas extracted in Russia needed to reach the EU through Ukrainian pipelines and some of them are in the two main industrial cities: Dnipro and Donetsk, home of the biggest oligarchic groups of Ukraine, Privat and SCM. By early '00s, Russian oligarchs began to invade Ukraine with their capital and their businesses to buy Ukrainian refineries. Some Ukrainian oligarchs felt threatened and co-opted the nationalist parties into the Orange coalition, which won the 2004 presidential election. Yushchenko, the new orange, pro-EU and Dnipro-backed president, supported their nationalist narrative by founding the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance with the purpose of implementing the three nationalist cornerstones: the glorification of the ww2 Ukrainian nationalist soldiers (OUN); Holodomor-Holocaust equivalence; Kievan Rus as Ukrainian proto-nation. During Yanukovich government, nationalist forces suffered a setback, since his Donetsk faction preferred to maintain neutrality between Russia and the EU since it used to trade with both, while Dnipro faction was composed mainly by bank and agri-food industries. Therefore, Yanukovich refused to sign both the Eurasian Customs Union and the Ukraine–EU Association Agreement. The refusal of the latter led to the overthrow of the Yanukovich government in the Euromaidan protests. At first, very few people took to the streets. When the police brutally repressed them, protests exploded. They asked for the respect of civil rights and fair democracy because Yanukovich represented the Donetsk oligarchic bloc led by Akhmetov, who became rich as the head of the Tatar criminal gang in the late '80s by killing its competitors, extorsions and property crimes. In the beginning, Euromaidan was pacific, but the leftist parties choose not to join the protests. Since there are no empty spaces in politics, the nationalists filled them and eventually hegemonised the protests. Nationalist party Svoboda gained three ministers, and nationalist narrative began to proliferate again, along as violence against workers' organisations and ethnic minorities.

Nationalism has one other purpose: unite people with conflicting needs. The minimum legal salary is 89, but it is about only 19% of an estimated minimum living wage, and yet 33% of the workers earn less than the minimum legal salary. It is therefore clear that the only things in common between the workers and their masters are language and alleged ethnic group and the masters take advantage of them to prevent social revolts.

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**Mots-Clés:** Ukraine, nationalism, oligarchs, neoliberalism