

# Shouldn't, Wouldn't, Couldn't? Analyzing the Involvement of Oligarchs' Philanthropy Foundations in the Ukrainian Protests of 2013-14

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the agency of wealthy businessmen-politicians' philanthropy foundations during the Ukrainian Maidan protests of 2013-14 in which crowdfunding and grassroots mobilization constituted key distinctive features. As the role of these philanthropy foundations remains obscure, this article aims to bridge this gap in our knowledge of Ukrainian politics and society. The protesters strived to achieve social change and democratization similar to what was being purported by wealthy businessmen-politicians' foundations during the years leading up to the protests. However, since the protesters specified one particular aim as "de-oligarchization," the involvement of these organizations is puzzling. What did these foundations do at this critical point? To what extent can their actions or inactions be explained by the institutional and framework constraints of the foundations, the strategies of the wealthy businessmen-politicians behind the foundations, and the lack of the foundations' legitimacy in the eyes of the civic sector activists? The analysis covers different types of foundation and is based on semi-structured interviews involving the foundations' representatives, think-and-do tank analysts, and Maidan activists, over the years 2011 to 2017. The findings show that the organizational entities were largely directed by their respective founders. This indicates a dependence of the philanthropic organization on the political affiliation of the founder, rather than on the framed ambition of the foundation. Similar to the impact of philanthropic organizations in other institutional contexts, the impact of philanthropy foundations on the Maidan social movement proved marginal. Since oligarchs could not be invisible during the political turmoil, they tried to retain a position from which they could deny responsibility for specific actions. The logic of commitment compensation and the logic of flexibility advanced by Markus and Charnysh proved useful for analyzing the strategies of these businessmen-politicians.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, oligarchs, philanthropy, foundations, social movements.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he events that unfolded on Independence Square, Maidan Nezalezhnosti, in Kyiv in 2013-14 culminated with President Viktor Yanukovich fleeing to Russia. While the events began as peaceful protests against the government's decision to stall negotiations of an association agreement with the European Union (EU), they developed into a reaction against the

crackdown on protesters by government led forces on November 30, 2013. The initial phase of the protests is commonly labelled the “Euromaidan,” whereas the later phase is referred to as the “Maidan” or “The Revolution of Dignity” in an attempt to de-emphasize the focus on relations with the EU and instead stress the demand for law enforcement, justice, and political pluralism (Onuch and Sasse 568). Integral to the claim of the Maidan protesters was “de-oligarchization and ‘fighting the system,’” the “system” being corrupt structures in the public sector and the alliance of these structures with big business.<sup>1</sup>

Oligarchs are prominent business owners whose economic wealth affords them influence in politics (Guriev and Rachinsky 132); for example, oligarchs financially back campaigns and policy interests, and support parties and candidates across Ukraine’s political spectrum (Herron and Sjöberg 985). Oligarchs might also be elected officials or appointed office-holders who earned their positions through personal connections and who use their positions for personal enrichment. Some politicians begin with a genuine interest in politics, aiming to develop Ukraine rather than to enrich themselves; however, when they acquire influential positions, it might be very difficult for them not to become part of that system.

Since the late 1990s, private philanthropy foundations have been initiated by wealthy businessmen-politicians in Ukraine. During the 1990s, their most common philanthropic gifts were spontaneous and directed toward orphanages or the rebuilding of churches. Soon, these actors founded their own orphanages and developed long-term funding structures. In contemporary Ukraine, these activities have been institutionalized into philanthropic foundations or “giving organizations,” often with the names of the initiators ascribed in their titles (Kostiuchenko and Söderbaum). These organizations normally run projects in fields such as health care, social assistance, culture, infrastructure, education, and international activities. The institutionalization of “giving” by businessmen-politicians in Ukraine can, to some extent, compensate for state failure to benefit society, can legitimize wealthy businessmen-politicians, and can enable state actors to influence business (Söderbaum). Previous Ukrainian presidents from Leonid Kuchma to Petro Poroshenko have all had their own philanthropy foundations. In the case of Poroshenko, his foundation was founded in the

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<sup>1</sup> While Ukraine had a strong industrial and agricultural sector within the Soviet Union, the Maidan insurrection put an end to very cheap gas and caused a decrease in Ukrainian exports. A weak legal system and dysfunctional institutions paved the way for widespread corruption, including political corruption with tendencies to absorb public funds at the cost of social welfare. See, for example, Riabchuk, Kuzio, Wilson.

late 1990s, and when he was inaugurated president in 2014, his wife, Maryna Poroshenko, took over its chairmanship.

In this paper, I study the philanthropic organizations founded by the "prototype" oligarchs Viktor Pinchuk, Rinat Akhmetov, and Borys Kolesnikov, as well as the philanthropy organizations of the businessmen-politicians Arsenii Iatseniuk and Vitalii Klychko (run together with his brother Volodymyr). Interestingly, most of the philanthropic foundations examined here express values of social change and democratization—and in some cases Eurointegration. These values are similar to the values of those who protested against the government and against ex-President Ianukovych. But since the protesters also specified an aim of de-oligarchization, the involvement of oligarchs' philanthropic foundations in the Maidan protests becomes an interesting point.

There were two revolutions in the recent history of Ukraine: the Orange Revolution (2004), which was very much party driven, and the Revolution of Dignity 2013-14, in which the political parties initially were geographically separated from the civic protests. During the first days of the Revolution of Dignity, the political parties gathered on European Square, about 300 metres away from the Maidan, but then dispersed and merged with the civic sector protesters, which points to the strong independence of the civic activism. While the Orange Revolution was a top-down mobilization, the Revolution of Dignity was a crowdfunded grassroots mobilization. Melnykovska and Schwieckert argue that during the Orange Revolution the oligarchs supported the Iushchenko presidency due to the tendency of Ianukovych to accumulate power for his Donetsk clan and "suppress" the other clans (447-48). In the same article, it is argued that, in fact, oligarchs were the drivers of change toward democratic standards from a "bottom-up perspective" and that civil society was weak. The oligarch Pinchuk, on the other hand, openly supported Ianukovych's candidacy in the repeat run-off in December 2004. Pinchuk said this in an interview published four days after the Supreme Court of Ukraine had invalidated the second round of the presidential election. In his interview, Pinchuk flirted with the Orange camp while justifying his support of Ianukovych by saying "I am not a political prostitute" (Shvets). This behaviour, "placing their financial eggs in multiple baskets," is common among oligarchs (Hale, *Patronal Politics* 333).

However, the agency of the wealthy businessmen-politicians and that of their philanthropic foundations during the Revolution of Dignity remains obscure, and this article aims to bridge this gap in our knowledge of Ukrainian politics and society. While Klychko (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform/UDAR) and Iatseniuk (All Ukrainian Union "Fatherland"/"Bat'kivshchyna"), together with Oleh Tiahnybok ("Svoboda"), were parliamentary representatives who acted as intermediaries between

the Maidan protesters and the Ukraine government, billionaires Akhmetov and Pinchuk were expected by some to act more than they did. Akhmetov was—and still is—financially backing the party then in power, the Party of Regions, and this created expectations that he might solve the crisis. As Pieniążek points out, protesters gathered next to Akhmetov's apartments in London and chanted "Akhmetov paid, Berkut<sup>2</sup> beat" next to the building of Akhmetov's conglomerate in Kyiv. On the contrary, oligarch Poroshenko, who appeared to be a great supporter of the Maidan protests, was later elected president.

A large segment of the Ukrainian population volunteered and financed the Maidan through "crowdfunding" ("Maidan-2013"; "Vid Maidanutaboru"; "Volonters'kyi rukh;" Pishchikova and Ogryzko 6). However, there exists a widespread belief that donations from wealthy individuals were of crucial importance. The founders of these giving organizations were not supposed to have gotten involved in the Maidan movement, since it would be clearly a political act for a wealthy individual who ran a philanthropic foundation to support the movement openly; not getting involved, however, was also seen as a political act during such a national crisis. On the other hand, since the philanthropy foundations were clearly political in terms of their founders' influence on domestic politics, they were *expected* to get involved. In addition to this complex situation, some of these philanthropic foundations would have faced legitimacy problems in relation to the grassroots movement, which was, as previously mentioned, concerned with de-oligarchization. Hence, there are arguments supporting the involvement and arguments supporting the non-involvement of these organizations; both arguments are related to problems of legitimacy.

What happens during a reformulation of elites' socio-economic positions? What happens to their legitimation strategies during political turmoil? While Szostek and Dyczok each contributed a thorough analysis of the role of oligarch-owned media, especially television, during the protests, this paper studies other legitimation strategies used by Ukrainian oligarchs. I investigate whether the giving organizations of five wealthy businessmen-politicians were involved in the protests, how they were involved, and why they chose or did not choose to become involved. Additionally, I consider how Maidan civic sector activists perceived the actions of these oligarchs and, based on the activists' perceptions, I examine the success of the oligarchs' legitimation efforts. The success of the oligarchs' actions is measured by the social legitimacy that these organizations presently hold among social movement activists, as described in interviews with the civic sector activists. The methods section describes the interview selection process and presents the interviews. The philanthropic foundations and

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<sup>2</sup> A special police force was deployed to counter the protesters.

their political framing before the Maidan are presented, and the action, framing, and legitimacy constraints of the foundations, and the strategies of the oligarchs, are analyzed.

#### POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS

What were the political framing constraints (a concept defined in more detail below) of the philanthropic foundations during the Maidan protests and the institutional barriers that such foundations might face in a situation of socio-political turmoil? Access to material resources significantly influences the degree that a movement is able to successfully mobilize and grow as a force for social change. However, previous research on philanthropic foundations in the American context suggests that while philanthropic foundations have assumed a greater role in society, their support of grassroots non-government organizations (NGOs) or social movements has remained minimal (Faber and McCarthy; Ostrander; Spires).

Philanthropic foundations support professional advocacy over grassroots organizing, and it is rare for such foundations to support social protests and demonstrations, although these movements are important nurturers of social change (Ostrander). Faber and McCarthy, referring to the American situation, argue that philanthropic foundations consciously exclude grassroots social movements and, despite the enormous economic power of philanthropy foundations, their giving strategies are “proving unable to solve America’s most pressing social and environmental problems” (6). Jensen finds that philanthropic foundations are more interested in promoting the role of private philanthropy in society than in promoting social change or the status quo of power structures.

Whether philanthropic foundations should engage at all in social justice movements has been a matter of debate since the latter decades of the twentieth century (Ostrander). The explanation for the political passivity of such foundations in the U.S. is often connected with their formal boundaries that are, by law, non-political. Ostrander refutes the claim that social justice movements are equal to lobbying. She substantiates her argument by referring to the legal historian John Edie, who maintains that private philanthropic foundations have overreacted to the restraints of private foundation law (Ostrander 39). The idea that a philanthropic foundation is too engaged in political matters is often merely one interpretation, and does not necessarily propose a real institutional constraint. In Ukraine, the law is presented in this way: “Charitable organizations are not allowed to provide charitable assistance to political parties or on behalf of political parties, as well as participate in election campaigns” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine). Support for a social movement should thus not be illegal, but because it is

difficult to delimit political action, a philanthropic foundation's room to manoeuvre may be underestimated.

A philanthropic foundation can, however, be constrained by the inflexibility of long-term program plans and staff competence. For example, if the foundation's resources are solicited from several donors, the mission of the foundation will be quite rigid, and it might not be possible to change course.

Thus, the political "framing" of the foundation's work and missions is of interest. Did the foundation rhetorically favour social change before the protests? Did this political "framing" affect the decision of the foundation members to get involved in the political movement? Based on the works of David A. Snow and others, framing can be understood as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam 6). There is a rich tradition of studies of frames and framing processes<sup>3</sup> in the fields of sociology (Schön and Rein; Benford and Snow), media studies (Entman), and political science (Erikson; Björnehed). Frames impose both limitations on and possibilities of actions. When the frame constructor is the self, it can be *self-serving* or lead to *self-entrapment* (Björnehed). The credibility or legitimacy of an actor is at stake.

How did representatives of the Maidan movement relate to the support from the private philanthropic foundations being studied here? The resource mobilization school sees external funding as a necessity to support and build social movements over time. Some argue that external funding is essential for the social movement to gain not only resources but also legitimacy (Ostrander 35). Movements become dependent on external funders, especially charitable organizations (Ostrander). How can these giving organizations' actions/non-involvement be explained by framing constraints, institutional barriers, or lack of legitimacy?

#### STRATEGIES OF WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN-POLITICIANS

The transition from Soviet economy to market economy entailed radical changes in business ownership and welfare services. Similar to other former Soviet republics, Ukraine experienced a rise in exceptionally wealthy businessmen.<sup>4</sup> During Leonid Kuchma's presidency (1994-2004), privatization schemes allowed a rise in oligarchic regimes that centred on

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<sup>3</sup> The verb "framing" denotes an active processual phenomenon that implies agency (Benford and Snow 614).

<sup>4</sup> The economic elite accumulated capital from metallurgy, agriculture, chemicals, the food processing industry, oil extraction, retail, mass media, finance, etc.

interdependence between political and economic elites (Puglisi). The original redistribution of property is perceived to have been illegitimate by large segments of the public, putting property in danger of re-nationalization (Guriev and Rachinsky 140; Matuszak; Freeland).

The political scientist Timothy Frye argues that the propertied class tries to legitimate itself in the eyes of society through good works and the provision of public goods. Hence, the aim of some giving organizations might be not only to redistribute wealth but also to legitimize property rights that are seen by the population to be illegitimate.

Could legitimacy-building by wealthy businessmen-politicians in Ukraine contribute—intentionally or inadvertently—to social and political change? In studies on the role of elites in post-Soviet societies, scholars have discussed possibilities for real regime change. Hale chooses to talk about regime dynamics rather than regime change, since what has been observed in the post-Soviet space is elite rotation, not structural change (*Patronal Politics*). Patronal politics, based on a foundation of personal ties and connections, tend to survive all “revolutions” and shallow reforms. Winters claims, in a similar vein, that “one of the most fundamental divergences is that nearly all elite forms of minority influence have been significantly challenged through democratic struggle and change, whereas oligarchic power, because of its different nature, has not” (8).

Radnitz advances a theory of “subversive clientelism” that creates room for political change driven by privileged elites. Radnitz argues that “embedded autonomous elites, who act as brokers in this scenario, can activate latent vertical and horizontal network ties for protest if they are challenged by the regime” (10).<sup>5</sup> Further, he posits that civic organizations may indeed play an important role, but they still need the help of elites:

In many cases, the final blow has come from the loss of support of critical elite actors, such as businessmen, independent members of the legislature, and informal leaders in the society. These actors, which I identify as independent elites, are potential kingmakers. (Radnitz 17)

Oligarchs may have supported the Maidan because the pluralistic power structure was threatened by an intensified single-pyramid structure of Ianukovych and his “Family” (Hale, “Eurasian Politics”). However, an incentive for not acting openly in support of the Maidan would be the risk of ending up on the losing side, since the outcome was not clear.

Previous research by Gehlbach and others holds that when oligarchs experience a lack of credible commitment by the state, they become

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<sup>5</sup> Further to this, “[i]ndependent elites in turn may see regimes, which control the instruments of coercion, as a threat to their liberty and property, and seek strategies of self-protection” (Radnitz 17).

powerful by taking office themselves. This logic of commitment compensation suggests the superiority of direct rule over indirect strategies in lawless contexts. However, Markus and Charnysh (1635) investigate the strength of this theory in a competitive context where unpredictability is a normality. They find that the logic of flexibility is stronger where the oligarch is not held accountable but still holds informal power, via, for example, media ownership and party funding. Giving can be interpreted as one of such instruments of informal power.

What happens to these strategies in a situation of political turmoil? How did the oligarchs' foundations act, and can the logic of commitment compensation explain their actions better than the logic of flexibility?

## METHOD

To explore the involvement of philanthropy foundations in the Ukrainian protests of 2013-14, I use mainly original qualitative interviews, but also reports, PR documents, and news press. Semi-structured interviews (Seale) with representatives of five elite giving foundations were conducted in either Russian or English and in two rounds: before the outbreak of the protests throughout 2011 to 2013 and after the protests in May-June 2014. In the first round, the respondents discussed their organization's role in society by describing the organization's concrete everyday work, and the attitudes of organization members toward authorities and grassroots NGOs. When I returned in 2014, the interviews I conducted with the same representatives focused on their roles during the Maidan protests and the manner in which the developments in Ukraine had affected their work.

My choice of foundations was based on size (budget, staff) and accessibility. The five foundations studied are among the largest and well-known private giving organizations in contemporary Ukraine. Their representatives were willing to be interviewed and were accessible both before and after the Maidan protests. The interviewees were either directors of the foundations, or project managers, comprising a well-educated, higher-middle/middle class segment of the Ukraine population. Moreover, the five foundations studied represent three types of giving strategies (described in the next section) which allowed me to compare the impact of giving method on public attitude regarding the philanthropic organization. Giving contributes empirically to the role of philanthropy foundations in social change in Ukraine but can also suggest analytical generalizations that go beyond the specific settings for the cases (Small).

Since one aspect of this study deals with the tension between de-oligarchization and the giving practices of the wealthy elite members' organizations, I also studied public attitudes toward the giving



organizations. For this limited sub-study, it was not possible to fully comprehend the credibility of these foundations among the public. However, interviews with a sample of activists from social movement organizations that were formed during or shortly after the Maidan protests, reveal the attitudes of this important group in civil society.

In June 2016, I conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of seven organizations comprising media, political reform, right-wing views, human rights, and post-conflict peace building spheres, namely: Reanimation Package of Reforms, Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, International Public Relations Secretariat of Maidan, Hromads'ke TV, Right Sector, New Donbas, and Eastern Human Rights Group,<sup>6</sup> all of which had ties to the Maidan movement. The interviews investigated the funding structures and funding sources of the organizations, and the funding structures of the Maidan protests in general, the motives of different actors who participated in the Maidan, the support or lack of support for the Maidan of oligarchs, and the attitudes of participants toward elite giving organizations. The interviews provided a way to cross-reference the information afforded by the foundations regarding their actions or inactions with respect to the Maidan protests.

#### THE ORGANIZATIONS UNDER ANALYSIS

The wealthy businessmen-politicians and the foundations selected for this study are:

- Viktor Pinchuk: Viktor Pinchuk Foundation (VPF)
- Rinat Akhmetov: Development of Ukraine (DoU)/Rinat Akhmetov Humanitarian Aid Foundation
- Borys Kolesnikov: Borys Kolesnikov Foundation (BKF)
- Volodymyr Klychko: Klychko Brothers Foundation (KBF)
- Arsenii Iatseniuk: Open Ukraine Foundation (OUF)

The giving strategies of Akhmetov's Development of Ukraine (DoU) and the Viktor Pinchuk Foundation (VPF) were, before the outbreak of the Maidan protests, framed by slogans like transparency, effectiveness, and professionalism, thus looking somewhat similar from an outsider's perspective. They both presented philanthropic values, i.e., they aimed to target social ills at their roots and to bring "change," even though their concrete focuses had different emphases; DoU focused on reforming

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to interviews with these organizations, information about the funding of the Free University of Maidan was obtained.

national health care and the VPF focused on changing future generations through education and art. The VPF was founded in 2005 and in 2012 the yearly total philanthropic expenditures amounted to 13 million USD. DoU was founded in 2007 and its total philanthropic expenditures in 2012 totalled over 15 million USD. These organizations are “collaborative entrepreneurs,” i.e., they develop their own ideas and realize them, disregarding other actors in the field (Leat 320-21). Collaborative entrepreneurs have comprehensive program control with clear objectives, performance targets, evaluations, and so on. These kinds of foundations have substantial resources.

The foundations of then-opposition politicians/celebrities Iatseniuk and the Klychko brothers are “investors” (Leat 319-20) that invest in well-planned programs with distinct aims. However, as opposed to collaborative entrepreneurs, investors are limited when choosing projects by what the voluntary sector presents. Iatseniuk’s Open Ukraine Foundation and the Klychko Brothers Foundation are humbler in their political framing than the foundations of Akhmetov and Pinchuk; the former never created big expectations for what they would do for social or political change. Even though some of their projects were aimed at structural improvement or social change, they were smaller in scale than those of the business magnates. Iatseniuk’s Open Ukraine Foundation and the Klychko Brothers Foundation are characterized by smaller budgets than Akhmetov’s DOU and Pinchuk’ VPF; the exact budget of Iatseniuk’s Open Ukraine Foundation is not known to me, while the Klychko Brothers Foundation had an expenditure budget of 800,000 USD in 2012, and funded projects in culture, international relations, youth, and sports. Iatseniuk’s Open Ukraine Foundation presents itself as a think tank that wants to contribute to democracy development in Ukraine, among other things. The Klychko Brothers Foundation aims to create equal opportunities for all children and to promote a healthy lifestyle by installing sports grounds at schools around Ukraine.

The foundation strategies of the politician and business magnate Kolesnikov are a mix of investing and gift-giving. Gift-giving foundations lack clear priorities, and wait to see what people request before they donate. These foundations prefer to give smaller gifts to many rather than larger gifts to a few. Even though the gift is not always exactly what was asked for, the reasoning is that a gift is better than nothing. Unlike the other four foundations mentioned above, the Borys Kolesnikov Foundation never framed its work as a means to create social change. The foundation had expenditures of 1.2 million USD in 2012.

Philanthropic organizations are often established to improve the image of the founder. The Viktor Pinchuk Foundation, the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, and the Borys Kolesnikov Foundation belong to this group. All

three of the founders have an experienced profile in politics, although Pinchuk left the parliament in 2006 and Akhmetov did the same in 2012. At the time of writing, Kolesnikov is a co-chairman of the Opposition Bloc and a parliament deputy. Due to rent-seeking behaviour, these three founders were, together with some others, winners of the privatization scheme implemented during the late 1990s and the early 2000s, and consequently are among the wealthiest persons in Ukraine. As they are often perceived to be greedy and immoral, they have gained a bad reputation among the population and are in need of improving their image.

The Klychko brothers and Iatseniuk had no need to enhance their image, being boxers and a politician, respectively, without unexplained cash coffins. The work of their foundations is funded by the money that the founder(s) are able to attract through fundraising, not on the founders' personal wealth. The Klychko brothers' and Iatseniuk's foundations reflect the development of medium-sized businesses and the political civil society surrounding them. However, such a leader is essentially more of an organizer because of the external financial dependency of the organization, and this makes the organization officially neutral. Iatseniuk is not openly involved in running a business,<sup>7</sup> but he is clearly a politician, having been a high-profile party member of the Bloc Iuliia Tymoshenko in the past and having held the position of prime minister in Ukraine between June 2014 and April 2016. Only a small share in each of the Klychko Brothers Foundation and Iatseniuk's Open Ukraine Foundation originates from the founders' personal wealth, the foundation work is funded by donations from international partners. Iatseniuk's Open Ukraine Foundation, receives donations made by Pinchuk, among others. The Klychko Brothers Foundation receives donations from charity galas, and additional income is derived from auctions of celebrities' belongings and boxing prizes. In other words, while Pinchuk and Akhmetov use philanthropy for image, Iatseniuk and the Klychkos use image for philanthropy. However, even when there is no need for image improvement, all founders seek legitimacy. Those who gained from privatization need to legitimize their assets, and those who aim at political positions need legitimacy among the citizens in order to gain political capital among the electorate.

The following three sections study framing, legitimacy, and financial details of the funding structures of the Maidan. The first section describes the impact of the political framing of foundation activities before the Maidan protests on the foundations' actions during the Maidan protests: Did they frame themselves into something from which they could not diverge? The

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<sup>7</sup> However, in a Facebook post on January 12, 2018, Iatseniuk declared that he sold his shares in Espresso TV "because politicians should not be involved in media companies." It is unclear to me when he acquired the shares.

first section also deals with the agency of the foundations and their founders. The second section deals with the legitimacy of the foundations in the eyes of civil society, and the third section describes the foundations' financial or other support of the Maidan protests and the perspectives of the foundation founders and civil society activists regarding this support.

#### FRAMING OF THE FOUNDATIONS AND AGENCY OF THEIR FOUNDERS

All philanthropy foundations frame themselves as apolitical. The fact that politics and philanthropy must be separate is a position expressed by representatives of the Klychko Brothers Foundation, the DoU, and the VPF. However, the spheres of politics and philanthropy share physical space in many cases. For example, "some alumni [former employees] of VPF staff and VPF education programs started their political careers supposedly keeping their affinity to Pinchuk" (interview, director of the international program, Gorshenin Institute, previous employee at the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, 21 Sep. 2017). At the Kolesnikov Foundation, one staff member previously worked for the *Segodnia* newspaper, owned by the Party of Regions' ally Akhmetov, and the foundation co-operates closely with *Segodnia* (interview, BKF, 16 Oct. 2013). The director of the Rinat Akhmetov Humanitarian Center (a branch of the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation), Rimma Fil, appointed in 2017, previously worked for Akhmetov's business conglomerate, System Capital Management.

The foundations of Akhmetov, Pinchuk, and Iatseniuk would presumably have lost public trust if their founders had ignored the Maidan protests. Pinchuk and Iatseniuk had, via their foundations, worked for Eurointegration, and Akhmetov worked for a diffuse "systemic change." All three seemed to support democratization initiatives and framed their activities in terms of transparency and professionalism. Kolesnikov, and to some extent the Klychko brothers, did not frame their activities in terms of systemic change or democratization. Although the Klychko brothers' foundation has an ambition to empower youth, these foundations are not "framed" politically.

According to an employee at the VPF, the foundation supported the Maidan movement with medical equipment, but not much more (interview, 27 May 2014). In a press interview, Pinchuk said the foundation was "about to fly 70 demonstrators wounded in Kiev's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) for treatment in Germany" (Bender). The VPF employee emphasized the foundation's previous investment in the future generation and the moral support of the foundation's team of employees (interview, 27 May 2014). However, it was not clear to the respondent whether "the whole team" of employees was present during the Maidan

protests. The VPF employee suggested that previous VPF projects had helped to stimulate Maidan's initiation, referring to the popularity of the mind-change-aiming Pinchuk Art Center and to the knowledge that many VPF scholarship holders were active protesters. The VPF was organizing "inspiring lectures" and has established a "mind-opening museum of contemporary art" (interview, 27 May 2014). The gallery exhibits critical art by young Ukrainian artists, side by side with international superstars such as Damien Hirst and Ai Weiwei. The VPF foundation interviewee claimed that the VPF aims at "changing people's minds" and creates space for "future change," through the next generation (interview, VPF employee, 14 Oct. 2013). After the Maidan protests, the VPF respondent claimed that, by investing in these projects, the VPF influenced the Ukrainians to protest against the government. Pinchuk himself was infused with optimism. In an article published in *Financial Times* (and referenced in *Segodnia* a couple of weeks after the outbreak of the protests), Pinchuk put the focus on civil society and freedom of speech:

The most important thing is that Ukrainian society has shown its strength. It's not that the people supported a specific political contract, but that free citizens have their opinion and are expressing it vocally. Nothing is stronger. This gives me great optimism regarding the future of our country. ("Pinchuk zaiavil")<sup>8</sup>

Pinchuk also acknowledged that he would do whatever he could to contribute to a peaceful solution ("Pinchuk zaiavil"), and announced a silent minute at the Davos lunch in January 2014,<sup>9</sup> praying for peace and compromise: "I don't want to drag here politics, but I would like to announce this quiet minute" ("400 uchastnikov").

Apart from providing medical assistance, the VPF did not openly support the Maidan movement. Hence, while Pinchuk made a statement of support for the values of freedom of speech and civic activism, he did not take a stand for or against the Maidan movement's goals, evading, in this way, any accountability. The VPF could be expected to be flexible as it was funded by an individual. Considering the previous political framing and the flexible structure of the foundation, the VPF could have been more active regarding the Maidan protests, and, as a result, it diverged slightly from its previous framing, which was "change"-focused.

The Rinat Akhmetov DoU did not take action for or against the Maidan movement. However, the DoU foundation representative expressed a negative attitude toward the Maidan protests, equating them with the

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<sup>8</sup> All translations from Russian in this study are mine.

<sup>9</sup> Pinchuk sponsors a lunch or breakfast at the World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland) each year to promote Ukraine's economic potential internationally.

French fascist movement (France's far-right National Front's popularity) (interview, 28 May 2014). The DoU representative also claimed that the office was divided; some of the employees attended the Maidan protests while others did not support the movement (interview, 28 May 2014). Akhmetov himself was very quiet throughout the three months of Maidan protests. In the middle of December, he called for peace, meaning the protesters should go home, and he called for earlier presidential elections, in support of the incumbent regime. However, the compromise to hold elections in December 2014 was not enough for the Maidan protesters. Right after the ousting of Yanukovich, the DoU decided to give monetary compensation to the families of those who had lost someone in the Maidan clashes, both on the side of the Berkut internal security forces, and on the protesters' side. This was decided upon after an open letter by Anna Gulevska Chernysh, the director of the umbrella organization Philanthropy Forum in Ukraine. Gulevska Chernysh claimed she had asked Akhmetov to step in earlier, in December, but the request was ignored at the time (interview, Gulevska Chernysh, 27 May 2014).

Akhmetov was reported to move from Donetsk to Kyiv at the end of May 2014, a point in time when he was no longer in control of what happened in Donetsk due to the increased involvement of Russian troops. As his foundation did not support the protests, it diverged from its previous framing, which had a clear "change" agenda. Here, the interests of Akhmetov are obviously directing his giving organization. Akhmetov's foundation was reframed into a humanitarian assistance organization in the war-torn areas within and around the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, delivering food packages to families on a regular basis. Development of Ukraine was renamed the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation to reflect this renewed focus.

The Borys Kolesnikov Foundation (BKF) was not originally framed as a democracy promoter and could thus not be expected to act in the Maidan protests. The respondent from the Kolesnikov Foundation said that the BKF should not be associated with any political movement, and she said it was important to separate corporate social responsibility from private philanthropy: "They have their budget, we have ours, we do not blend" (interview, 23 May 2014). The BKF respondent also maintained that she was not familiar with the founder's political views. The BKF respondent stated:

The idea is that we are a social organization, out of politics, we never were associated with the Party of Regions, because Kolesnikov is not just the head of the Party of Regions, he is a very successful businessman, and all the money for charity is from his business. He does it [giving] from his heart and we don't want to be mixed [with politics]. (Interview, BKF, 23 May 2014)

The BKF respondent expressed various concerns regarding the Maidan movement. For example, she drew parallels to the Orange Revolution, implying that this was just another elite turnover: "And then the same story again" (interview, 23 May 2014). According to the BKF respondent, charity should be neutral:

In 2005 when Iushchenko won, it was the same. Fortunately, it was without blood, but it was the same, people started to support one part [...] and what happens in a few years, some people who support Iushchenko they change their position because he was not as good as they believed. Charity, I think, should be wiser. (Interview, BKF, 23 May 2014)

However, the BKF respondent claimed that the foundation had some thoughts of contributing to crowd funding but hesitated since it was too risky, either because the team working at the foundation had never heard of such a thing before or because Borys Kolesnikov did not know the outcome of the protests, with Kolesnikov being a party ally of Ianukovych. The Maidan uprising, after all, had three parliamentary representatives that acted as intermediaries between the movement and the government: Iatseniuk, Klychko, and Tiahnybok, all took part in the then-opposition to Ianukovych and the Party of Regions. During the months of the Maidan protests, the BKF kept working on projects that were not concerned with the protests.

The BKF interviewee emphasized that she personally supported projects in Western Ukraine, in Ternopil, for example, and even though the founder shared the Maidan values, it was too political for the BKF to join the movement:

He [Kolesnikov] has a very clear vision that Ukraine should be united. And frankly I don't know exactly his position, but he says that the crap happened here and now the crap happens in Eastern Ukraine. Nobody wants the death of people and it doesn't matter what position they have. (Interview, BKF, 23 May 2014)

The BKF "did not play any politics" by supporting either side of the Maidan uprising and expressed uncertainty about the organizations of the new movement (interview, BKF, 23 May 2014). Kolesnikov himself was very quiet throughout the protests to control his image and evade any responsibility.

The Open Ukraine Foundation (OUF), headed by Iatseniuk, openly supported the Maidan protests, strengthening the argument that these foundations are the outstretched arms of their founders. The Maidan uprising "did not affect them" (interview with representative 1, OUFG, 26 May 2014), but during the Maidan protests they froze their work because they were personally present among the demonstrators and assisted where they were able: "And for sure it was impossible to make any other events in

Ukraine during this period” (interview with representative 1, OUF, 26 May 2014). During the Maidan protests, the OUF functioned as an information channel for international connections, “assisting some Western journalists to get in contact with people on Maidan” (interview with representative 1, OUF, 26 May 2014). The OUF did not support the Maidan financially, according to the OUF representative, because the OUF has no programs and no room for such funds. “But,” the representative continued, “we did collect some money and we made some sandwiches and pro-EU banners, several thousand, and distributed them to people there” (interview with representative 1, OUF, 26 May 2014).

The Klychko Brothers Foundation representative said that, officially, they could not support the Maidan, but that the employees of the foundation were going there every day. She added that “of course, Vitalii and Volodymyr [the two Klychko brothers] were always there, standing on barricades, pushing these troops away” (interview, 29 May 2014). She also said that Volodymyr recently bought numerous shields for the army, and that she herself was helping to organize some humanitarian assistance from Germany.

The conclusion to be drawn here is that the foundations’ agencies during the Maidan protests seemed to be more directed by the founders’ political positions than the previous framings of the foundations. Akhmetov faced a framing entrapment and solved it by reframing with another audience in mind, from the national intellectual elite back to the citizens of the regions he had originally started in: Donetsk and its surroundings. The others that were calling for social change in their previous mission statements, now also supported the movement, although mostly on a personal level. The Borys Kolesnikov Foundation, however, did not change its course and stayed “neutral,” supporting neither side, and Kolesnikov himself was silent.



**Table 1. Elite giving during the Maidan 2013-2014: Summary**

Founder & foundation	Professional profile of founder	Frame	Political statement of founder, taking clear side	Maidan support by foundation as organization	Maidan support by foundation employees, privately
Rinat Akhmetov, DoU	Business magnate with the "Party of Regions" affiliation	"System change"	-	No	"Some of staff appeared on the Maidan"
Borys Kolesnikov, BKF	Business magnate with the "Party of Regions" affiliation	-	-	No	No
Viktor Pinchuk, VPF	Business magnate	"Future generation social change"	- (but expressed support for "civil society")	Yes—morally, and with some medical assistance	"I think the whole office appeared on the Maidan, at least sometimes"
Arsenii Iatseniuk, OUF	Political person/ Celebrity	"Democracy"	Pro Maidan	Yes—morally and as intermediaries for international support. Sandwiches and banners.	"Practically the whole office appeared on the Maidan"
Vitalii Klychko, KBF	Political person/ Celebrity	"Empowerment"	Pro Maidan	Yes—morally and as intermediaries for international support.	"Practically the whole office appeared on the Maidan"

## LACK OF LEGITIMACY AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS

Whether the giving organization is expected to be political or "absolutely apolitical" is a contested subject. It appears political because a magnate with political power heads it; yet, it also seems apolitical because it is a charity foundation. In justifying reasons that the giving organizations did not

partake in the protests, representatives of both the giving organizations and the social movement organizations stressed the apolitical character of the giving organizations in general. On the other hand, the social movement representatives did recognize the underlying political nature of the foundations in question, pointing to their public relations (PR) nature, and, contrary to the resource mobilization theory, to the dependency that financial support from these organizations would entail. For the vast majority of the surveyed civic sector activists, it appeared important to keep their independence and integrity intact. In the eyes of the surveyed social movement organizations, these giving organizations—the foundations—are PR institutions established to enhance the image of the oligarchs, and the civic actors' goal is to function independently of oligarchic structures. The Reanimation Package of Reforms activist asserted, "How can a foundation named after a politician not be political?" (interview, 6 June 2016). Further, he argued that these organizations are a means to polish the image of the founder, implicitly making them less genuine in their causes. While Akhmetov, Pinchuk, and Kolesnikov were oligarchs in the eyes of the respondent, "Iatseniuk and Klychko are somewhere in between" (interview, Reanimation Package of Reforms, 6 June 2016).

Hence, these philanthropy foundations are seen as apolitical in their actions toward society, since they do not have a major impact on how society is organized, and political because they function to legitimize the political actions of their founders. A representative of the Eastern Human Rights Group (EHRG) said that the group would not co-operate with philanthropic organizations because "they are political foundations; so, we wouldn't accept money from them" (interview, 7 June 2016). The EHRG representative described how he fought against the Feldman businesses in Kharkiv as a union representative. "These organizations have no genuine wish to help," he said, but are part of the game of dirty politics (interview, Eastern Human Rights Group, 7 June 2016). The same argument was forwarded by the Right Sector representative, who declared: "The only thing for sure is that we are not financed by any oligarchs or large businesses" (interview, 8 June 2016).

According to a respondent from one of the NGOs, it "may have been the case" that the VPF approached them, but the respondent could not assure this was so; in any case, the respondent said the NGO would never have accepted money from that kind of establishment (interview, Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, 5 June 2016). No other NGO claimed to have been approached by any of the elite giving organizations. Most NGO representatives reacted strongly to the question, implying a clear stand in their attitudes against these philanthropy organizations. In some instances, the NGO respondent was surprised by the mere thought of accepting money from a philanthropy organization; after the respondent had mentioned Mark Zuckerberg or Bill Gates as possible funders for their projects, I asked about the wealthy

Ukrainians: "It didn't even occur to me that we could ask these organizations for money" (interview, New Donbas, 7 June 2016).

In an interview in 2011, a civil society activist held the view that Akhmetov's foundation functioned as public relations for his business and "since he is polluting the harbour in Crimea, his philanthropic work does not go well with his personal values" (interview, Cyclists Association of Kyiv, 27 October 2011). Another activist said the following about Poroshenko after he became president in post-Maidan Ukraine:

We hoped he, as an experienced manager who created his own business, can use this for developing the country, to change the country. But as things turned out, the thought of a businessman is stronger and more important for him than to change the country. They cannot refocus their minds. We fought against oligarchs and now we have an oligarch as president—it's a tragedy. (Interview, New Donbas, 7 June 2016)

Some of the respondents were positive about the initiatives of, for example, Iatseniuk, with his Kyiv Security Forum held every spring, which attracted many international politicians and influential thinkers. Other respondents, however, indicated they would never attend this security forum for political reasons, not wanting to contribute to any image improvement projects (interview, Reanimation Package of Reforms, 6 June 2016). The same respondent believed that the wealthy elites have succeeded somewhat in improving their images in the eyes of the international community, at least, with the Security Forum and the international relations conferences to which top politicians from the West were invited. For example, the Ialta conference and the Davos lunch/breakfast (supported by VPF), mentioned earlier, aimed to promote Ukraine and its economic potential among international leaders. However, as individuals, grant receivers within the intellectual elite hold a pragmatic view regarding the opportunities that these gifts entail (interview, student, Viktor Pinchuk Foundation scholarship holder, 21 Nov. 2013).<sup>10</sup>

#### WHO SUPPORTED MAIDAN, FINANCIALLY AND OTHERWISE?

To what extent did the wealthy elite support the Maidan protests? Maidan was funded by a large share of the Ukrainian population through crowdfunding. However, there is a widespread belief that donations from wealthy individuals were indispensable. Wealthy individuals helped with medical treatment costs and oligarchs supported by not intervening. In line with the theory of competing pyramid systems advanced by Hale ("Eurasian

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<sup>10</sup> Other examples include poets and film-makers whom I spoke with.

Polities”) and Radnitz, Ianukovych had upset the balance in the system, and the others had had to intervene, or at least support by not intervening when there was a chance. The oligarchs did not support the Maidan protests openly, and certainly not via their giving organizations. The representative of the BKF said the idea to support the movement had struck their minds but the uncertainty held them back: “We had the idea to send money to the crowdfunding organizers, but we still didn’t understand the next step of crowdfunding [...] We don’t have this information, so we decided to be out of this process” (interview, BKF, 23 May 2014).

The sources were anonymous and the representative at the Klychko Brothers Foundation recognized that the wealthy elite must have donated to the Maidan crowdfunding initiatives:

[...] Of course, there were some companies that donated, and people, oligarchs. So, we don’t know the sources from where this money came, but the total sum is so great, and it shows us that people are ready to make and to change this country. (Interview, KBF, 29 May 2014)

The official sources mentioned in the interviews that were quick to support the Maidan movement’s new organizations were the Renaissance Foundation (initiated by Bohdan Hawrylyshyn and formerly funded by George Soros), the European Endowment for Democracy, and the U.S. Embassy. Later, the same initiatives were also supported by, among others, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the European Union Commission, USAID, the Polish Solidarity Fund, the Dutch government, the Canadian diaspora, and Norwegian and German funds, as mentioned by the respondents.

Generally, the three months of protests on Maidan Nezalezhnosti were a voluntary joint effort of many groups in the society that wanted change. All respondents stressed crowdfunding as the primary resource of the Maidan protests. One respondent, however, elaborated on the structure of the party politics involved. The regional presence on Maidan—for example, there were camps named “Zhytomyr” or “Chernihiv”—was a result of collaborations between “small oligarchs” in the regions supplying resources, and “political party skeletons” supplying security in a “tit for tat” manner (interview, activist, International PR Secretariat of the Maidan, 4 June 2016). This is how the Maidan infrastructure immediately grew, according to the International PR Secretariat of the Maidan. The activist interviewed was a key player in the Maidan protest movement and therefore an informative source.

Crowdfunding is hard to investigate further. Who the contributors were will never be revealed. There is a common understanding that “small and middle-sized businesses” were contributing, but the respondents would not

be surprised if oligarchs' money was part of it.<sup>11</sup> According to the activist from the International PR Secretariat of the Maidan,

The money they [oligarchs] provided was via back channels, via trusted individuals who could come by with envelopes [...] and each and every day there were boxes, all around. Boxes were filled up to the brim, a few times a day, by different bystanders; from all over Ukraine people would come and just put their money. (Interview, 4 June 2016)

However, financial support from one of the oligarchs' numerous wallets was not the only means of backing; they also supported by not intervening, or by broadcasting the protests on their TV channels. Media scholars who have analyzed the coverage of the protests claim that most of the oligarch-owned media outlets supported the Maidan by largely broadcasting it from the protesters' perspective (Szostek 9). However, while Dyczok claims that some TV stations became somewhat censored after the brutal crackdown of the regime on peaceful protesters on November 30, 2013, Szostek emphasizes the divergence of TV stations after the New Year holidays (11). The TV channels under the ownership of Pinchuk, Poroshenko, and Ihor Kolomois'kyi broadcasted neutrally, while the TV stations of Akhmetov and Dmytro Firtash ignored the protests during crucial phases (Szostek; Leshchenko 53-54). Nevertheless, there is a widespread view that most of oligarch-owned media showed general support for the Maidan. As one civic sector activist put it: the media support was extremely important in gathering people from all over Ukraine to join the movement in Kyiv or to launch regional divisions (interview, International PR Secretariat of the Maidan, 4 June 2016).

There were examples of oligarchs supporting the Maidan in other ways; for example, the protesters were occupying buildings controlled by Akhmetov, where neither power nor water was shut off or disconnected. "They wanted to see where the revolution was going, and approaching the end of the revolution they started to make deals with the new leaders" (interview, International PR Secretariat of the Maidan, 4 June 2016). As the Ukrainian "pie" of industries is so diverse, one cannot pick it all up and control it completely: "And basically that didn't allow authorities to win because whenever a person got too greedy to power, all the others could gather against him and push him aside" (interview, International PR Secretariat of the Maidan, 4 June 2016). The combination of Ianukovych's greediness, popular anger, a dumb decision by the government, and the complete arrogance of the president were the reasons behind the Maidan

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<sup>11</sup> Interviews with activists from the Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, 5 June 2016; International PR Secretariat of Maidan, 4 June 2016.

protests, according to the representative of the International PR Secretariat of the Maidan.

The low levels of trust by business organizations toward grassroots NGOs that previous surveys had suggested, has somewhat shifted along with the achievements of the Maidan movement. Most of the elite giving organizations, whose focus was on diplomacy and youth exchanges, now turned their eyes toward the Ukrainian civic movement. However, the civic sector activists' voices presented in this survey were not entirely positive, to put it mildly, toward co-operation with these philanthropy foundations.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study of the involvement of oligarchs' philanthropy foundations in the Ukrainian protests of 2013-14 revealed several interesting findings. I will first discuss the findings related directly to the strategies of the wealthy businessmen-politicians, then the findings related to the philanthropy foundations, and last the findings related to the legitimacy of these foundations in the eyes of the Maidan activists.

Markus and Charnysh find that a successful strategy for oligarchs in Ukraine is to be influential through indirect channels. While the oligarchs in the situation of the Maidan protests could not be invisible, something they might have wished for, they tried to stay in a position where they could deny the responsibility of specific actions. In seeking legitimacy, invisibility can be as important as visibility.

Akhmetov suffered criticism during the protests, because he was a close ally to ousted ex-president Yanukovich. Akhmetov's affiliation to the Party of Regions and the Yanukovich regime made his case closer to the logic of commitment compensation and farther from the logic of flexibility. He is a good example of someone who seeks protection from below by creating a social support base (see Radnitz). Instead of searching for an easy exit to escape abroad, he tied himself down by embedding himself more deeply in society. After the protests, Akhmetov changed his giving strategy to focus on his important home region, Donbas. Akhmetov renamed the Development of Ukraine Foundation to the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, with the Rinat Akhmetov Humanitarian Center (RAHC) as a branch of it. While international aid convoys have almost no access to the needy people in the occupied areas in Donetsk and Luhansk, Akhmetov's foundation did have access, at least until April 2017, when a railroad blockade conflict led to the so-called "DNR's" (Donetsk People's Republic's) nationalization of Akhmetov's assets in the separatist-controlled area. As of 29 January 2018, almost 12 million food packages had been distributed by the RAHC. By being present in this war-torn area, he became acknowledged as a respectable

actor in the eyes of the helped, but also in the eyes of Ukrainian citizens in general. As a result, it did not matter that the official mission of such philanthropy foundations were framed with slogans like "system change" or "social change."

Kolesnikov's foundation was not previously framed in any political direction, and, therefore, it got away with doing nothing. Pinchuk could easily assist the movement some more when it became clear that they would win. Because Pinchuk also put resources in students and youth, he could argue that these were in the front lines of the Maidan movement. His position was more flexible due to a more indirect party support. The Klychko Brothers Foundation encountered barriers in its funding structure but supported the movement by assisting with international connections. Iatseniuk was tied to a political party, which made his foundation's actions look predictable. Here, however, similar to that of the Klychko Brothers Foundation, the funding structure appeared to be a barrier.

As seen in the Akhmetov case, previous framing is not as important as the ability to reframe in a dynamic context. Thus, image control and the reformulation of framing are crucial for maintaining legitimacy during political turmoil. However, the previous framing of the philanthropy foundations did, to some extent, inform the actions undertaken by the organizations during the Maidan protests. For one thing, the previous framing had drawn a certain type of employee, with certain values, to the organizations. In this way, it was clear that the previous framing affected the extent that employees on a private level supported the Maidan insurgency and were "present in the crowd" (interview, VPF representative, 27 May 2014).

Nevertheless, the actions of the philanthropy foundations as organizational entities were largely directed by the founders. This indicates the dependence of the giving organization on the founder, rendering it hard to see these foundations as a force for social change. These findings suggest that, like foundations in other institutional contexts (for example, American foundations, as discussed by Ostrander; Faber and McCarthy), their impact is marginal. Since they are not constrained by institutional barriers, they could potentially have an impact. However, as those examples are rare, the role of elite private philanthropy should not be overstated.

Next, the philanthropy foundations have a strong tendency to frame themselves as apolitical; presumably, this is an attempt to distance them from a political image, as suggested in the answers provided by the respondents from the social movement organizations. This is also indicated by the degree of their involvement in the Maidan protests, being more closely connected to the personal values of the employees rather than to the official overarching ideas of the foundations.

Moreover, the studied giving organizations are not yet legitimate in the eyes of the actors in the Maidan social movement. While the image of the grassroots movement improved in the eyes of the elite giving organizations during the Maidan, the actors in the social movement expressed a general resistance to such organizations. It is important to note that the political leaders of the Maidan, Iatseniuk and Klychko (and Tiahnybok), were distinct from the Maidan activists, and the two different “Maidans” had their own councils. This, perhaps, illustrates elite turnover or regime dynamics versus regime change. Thus, the mere support of the Maidan protests was not equivalent to the support of the civic sector. The lack of acceptance of philanthropy foundations among the grassroots of Kyiv society restricts the foundations’ potential capacity to act. However, this study suggests that there are examples when initiatives of the wealthy elites are viewed positively by some actors in civil society, and this provides an opening for these foundations to legitimize their assets either by simply doing good work or by supporting contemporary art, education, and cultural projects. This could underpin a de-oligarchization, and those wealthy individuals who manage to support this perspective will most likely be taken out of the negative definition of an oligarch.

Whether post-Maidan Ukraine will end up with nothing more than “regime dynamics” in a continuous patronal system is not yet clear (Hale, *Patronal Politics*). Indicators of elite circulation are present, but there is also a developing civil society that could lead to a structural change starting at a grassroots level. As David Lane proposes, the renewal and the roles of individual agency, and of ideology and action, must not be ignored. Oligarchs are by definition survivors, and that was shown during the Revolution of Dignity (Casier). To end up on the winning side during the Maidan protests, it was crucial that the oligarchs played their cards right and hedged their bets (Konończuk). Those who were less on the winning side were required to take measures post-Maidan to position themselves in the new Ukraine. So far, they have managed to stay intact by changing the focus of their giving strategies and by keeping control of important mass media channels.

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