

## UKRAINE: COPY AND PASTE, SAME OLD STORY AND REALITY DENIAL

*By Claude MONIQUET,  
CEO of ESISC*

The Ukrainian Revolution (with a capital “R”) ousted the dictator. The infamous Yanukovich has fallen. The obnoxious Putin yield before young, brave and freedom-loving people ready for any sacrifice and supported (from afar, let's be honest) by the EU and the United States. This is a major victory for democracy and self determination that we just witnessed in Kiev.

Speeches that are blooming these days in the media and in the mouth of politicians, remind you of something? Really? Of course: it is a pretty spectacular “copy and paste” of the speeches at the beginning of the “Arab Spring” a little more than three years ago. We were few at the time to remain skeptical to this unanimity and to emphasize that maybe no better tomorrows would come. Our remarks were greeted by a contemptuous silence.

This may sound pessimistic, but the "Kiev Revolution" and the way journalists, ministers and other human-rights lobbyists express their wishful thinking is worrying me a lot.

Militiamen of “Pravyi Sektor”, “UNA –UNSO”, “Svoboda”, “Tryzub” and “White Hammer” groups who played for weeks a key role in the violent actions against the police in Maidan are democrats? I doubt it. If you scratch a bit under their uniforms, their evocative flags and their slogans advocating for the “purification” of Ukraine, you will find anti-Semitic ultranationalist admirers of Stepan Bandera<sup>1</sup>. Is it a coincidence that a synagogue was burnt on the evening of Sunday, February 23, in Zaporozhye, east of Kiev? There is no good party in Ukraine without attacking a Jew. An old tradition somehow.

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<sup>1</sup> Stepan Bandera (1909-1959) is a particularly controversial nationalist leader. Some of his supporters have carried out armed actions against both the Nazis and against the Red Army, others have embraced the German cause to fight the Russians. Bandera established the Ukrainian Legion that was integrated within Nazi forces. His supporters between 1941 and 1945 were implicated in numerous pogroms against Jews and in massacres of Polish. Bandera is now considered a hero in Ukraine.

The scenes where riot police officers are forced to kneel and to do the sign of the cross begging for forgiveness, are they sweet and promising? Everyone could decide for himself.

More importantly, those who are now counting their chickens before they are hatched dreaming of a European Ukraine should remember an intangible rule of geopolitics: a country can not choose its neighbors and can not change them.

When the emotion will fall down, when dreams will vanish and when Kiev would not receive 15, 20 or 30 billion of Euros essential to avoid bankruptcy, reality will reappear. And reality, whether you like it or not, is that Russia will always be the great eastern neighbor of Ukraine, and that there will be always 20 percent of Russians on 45 million inhabitants of the country and that Crimea (which is a 60% or 70% "Russian") still host the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, a major military power crucial for Moscow. Bloodless and tired Ukraine will always heat with Russian gas.

This is unfortunate. We can curse destiny, one can deny the facts. But still they remain imposing a simple conclusion: Russia will never accept that Ukraine recedes and leads an independent policy. Some autonomy, yes, but within certain limits: that is how Moscow considers the future of Kiev. It is not imperialism; it is simply the defense of Russian interests by Russian leaders. No matter if we like them or not, they are in power for this purpose: to defend the interests of their country.

To think otherwise would be naïve and in foreign affairs naivety leads to deadlock. Or disaster.

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