Mapping disputed territory

An orientation guide to the conflict in Ukraine

In order to obtain the degree Master of Arts

Submitted by

Karen Philippa Larsen

Supervised by

Prof. DDr. Wolfgang Dietrich

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To Søren
Thank you for helping being kind and patient and for always sharing your wisdom
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1 Introduction

The important first step of any academic work is active reflection over the question Why write? And perhaps especially on what topic to write. My intention in the following work is threefold. As a starting point I wish to engage in the debate about the conflict in Ukraine in the belief that my personal position in and experience of the conflict allow me to make a legitimate contribution. Secondly, I wish to use this work to plant the seeds of future peace work in Ukraine, my own and others’. Thirdly, while academic work is created directly by the researcher, it also affects the researcher in the process. In this work I would therefore like to take the opportunity to revive, work through and knead my own experiences in order to arrive at a clearer picture and perspective on the conflict.

1.1 Personal perspective

As I am typing these very first words of my thesis, I have just arrived home from my fourth trip to Ukraine with the Danish Defence within the last two years. The last trip was short, but very intense. We drove 3750 km in a minibus during the ten-day trip and visited some of the most forward positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) in what are some of the most active fighting positions currently.

For me this trip was the culmination of two years of work in and with Ukraine. I already knew before I left home in Copenhagen that this trip would complete the cycle of my practical work in Ukraine.

The cycle started four and a half years ago in February 2014,
when I thought to myself ‘*What the heck*’ and applied to the military linguist program in the Danish Defence. Thinking that I was too old, and knowing that every year the program has around five hundred applicants for around twenty places, I hoped rather than expected to be accepted. Two full days of tests and three months later I received a letter telling me I was to start the training program in Russian. Stopping and standing on my stairs, the first word I said was “F**k”!, knowing that this was going to change a lot of things in my life.

A month after I had applied and a few days after I had gone through the first day of testing, the whole world started to talk about Russia. On an island in Ukraine that few people in Western Europe had paid much attention to so far, uniformed men without insignias appeared and started taking control of government buildings and challenging the poorly equipped and underpaid AFU. The result was a referendum that ‘returned’ Crimea to the Russian Federation, and only a few days later, the parliament in Russia officially approved Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

When I started the program half a year after I applied, the war in eastern Ukraine was already well under way. We followed the news and, as we learned more and more Russian, we were able to follow the news coverage in both Russia and the rest of Europe. The military linguist-training program takes just under two years and includes basic military training, military tactics, and a lot of language and cultural training. On my graduation day I was given the message that I was to deploy to Ukraine half a year later deploying to the Canadian Task Force in Operation UNIFIER.

The following half year I spend partly in Russia and partly in pre-deployment training for the mission. We left Denmark in January 2017, three years after I had applied to the program and almost three years after Russia had annexed Crimea.
OP UNIFIER is a training mission in western Ukraine. Canadian soldiers are training Ukrainian soldiers in NATO standards small-team tactics. Our task during my first deployment was to translate for the Canadian instructors. I worked with the snipers, which meant many long days in the field. After returning to Denmark I immediately became responsible for the pre-deployment training of the following two rotations of Danish military linguists to Op UNIFIER. I also undertook a briefer trip with the Military Police to Lviv in western Ukraine, and ten months after I had left for my first deployment, I started the pre-deployment training for my second deployment. My second deployment was also to Op UNIFIER in western Ukraine, but this time as Chief Linguist to the Task Force. This meant that I was responsible for all the translators and linguists working in the Task Force, local Ukrainians, Danes and Canadians.

After four years following the conflict and a year and a half working in Ukraine with Ukrainian soldiers, I wanted to see the conflict for myself, the conflict I had heard so much about from Ukrainian soldiers, watched documentaries about, read books about and went to conferences to learn about. I thought about the paradox of wanting to step into a war-zone, something that most people want to get out of. I think it was a mixture of interest and curiosity that made me feel like that – that made me want to see if it was what I thought it was like. I was well prepared, but still the experience of being there made a big impression on me. After my first visit to the Line of Contact (LoC) I wrote this:

The visit to the battalion and company positions was unreal. Walking the seven minutes from the battalion position to the company position made a big impression on me. Everything was devastated by war – no matter where I looked, the consequences of war stood out so clearly. On one side of the small dirt road was a three-storey building with numerous entrances – previously housing around forty families, this building had been completely destroyed. All the windows were gone, in many places there were holes in the building from artillery

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1 In parallel with the small-team training was a training-of-trainers program. Ukrainian trainers have now taken over all the small-team training, and the Canadians are now mentoring more than teaching.
fire, the courtyard looked unpassable, cars were standing on one side of the building destroyed and abandoned. On the other side of the dirt road was what had previously been a school, a building in the exact same condition as the one opposite. The only difference was that in the courtyard of the school, someone had made a modest memorial site with flags and pictures. The Brigade commander told us that it was to honour the fallen in the ongoing battle. On one of the few walls of the old school still left standing, someone had written in graffiti ‘We are still here’. We arrived at the company base after a short walk along the dirt road. The position was in a building that had also clearly been damaged by artillery. I tried to look inside the building. There was a mattress on the floor, personal equipment belonging to the soldiers who were hanging around randomly, very simply decorated. “The enemy is 800 meters from this point”, they told us. "Look over there – in that building is the enemy, and have a look at that other building – there are his cameras."

We had heard in a briefing earlier that day that ten civilians were still living in the battalion’s area of responsibility. On the way back, while we were passing the old school, I asked the brigade commander why people stayed here, and he answered “But there can they go?” For the civilians in this area there is a choice between staying in their homes (mostly in the basements) and facing the artillery fire, or leaving their home and starting a life as an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) – maybe in camps, maybe in public housing, maybe nowhere permanent.

This visit made a huge impression on me. First of all, I cannot imagine how terrified the civilians who used to live here must have been when they left this place. The damage was so all-embracing, the feeling of hopelessness equally ever-present. But most of all, I could not help thinking about the soldiers who sit in that company base for between three and six months without a break. Less than a week ago we were in Kyiv. Kyiv is a ten-hour bus ride and around 800 km from the JFO² zone. In Kyiv people go out for drinks, people eat ice-cream on the street, people go to work in offices, go to school, go to restaurants, and people are not at war. On the way back to the hotel I– what a soldier in a company base think about people in Kyiv when he is being shelled by artillery fire night after night for months on end.

My notes, Donetsk OTG 31st AUG 2018

The ten-day trip included four such visits to the LoC, all of which made a strong impression on me. After a long week and many impressions, we drove for a full day to get back to Kyiv, where the rest of our program was to take place. In the bus, I was thinking about a toast I wanted to make later on at dinner that evening:

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²Joint Force Operation. The area where the armed conflict is ongoing.
Dear friends, I have spent a lot of time studying the conflict in eastern Ukraine, but despite that, the visits we have made to the frontline still made a great impression on me. Seeing the conditions that soldiers live in and the conditions of the civilian houses and infrastructure made the piece of my heart that I lost to Ukraine long ago very sad. This week I have translated numerous times for you Jens so that the first reason why we are here is to show support to Ukraine on a political level. I can only speak for myself, but I think my colleagues will agree with me when I say that the first reason I am here, has nothing to do with politics – the first reason why I am here, and why I have spent so much time on Ukraine the last couple of years, is to try to do my bit to protect civilians and give them a better and, more importantly, a safer life. Therefore, let’s raise our glasses for a safe future for everyone living in Ukraine.

My notes, Kyiv 05 SEP 2018

My somewhat naïve attempt to share what the trip had made me feel never happened because that evening we were having dinner with a colonel I had never met before. He was the chief of the escort team (the Ukrainian team we had worked with for the whole trip), and he represented another Ukraine, one I know exists but certainly do not like.

First of all, there were a lot of things about his personality that I did not like. He was loud, he drank too much vodka, he attracted a lot of attention to himself without having anything meaningful to say or do, he was rude to his Ukrainian subordinates, and then he mostly talked about how impressive he was. However, the single most disappointing thing about him, at least to me, was that he did not ask, not even once during dinner, about his colleagues in the east and showed no interest in what we had seen or how the soldiers out there were doing. Half way through dinner he started bragging about how much land he owned in Ukraine, at which point I really had to control myself not to react negatively towards him.

3 Jens was the inspection team chief. On all our visits, he started the meetings by stating that the first reason for Denmark carrying out this sort of inspection in Ukraine was to show political support for the country.
Ukraine is a highly corrupt country,\textsuperscript{4} and there is no doubt that, while the war is devastating for civilians and soldiers, someone somewhere is also making a lot of money out of it. This is probably the case with most conflicts in the world – someone is benefitting from the instability and the absence of the rule of law. The difference in Ukraine is that those who benefit are sometimes part of the country’s established (and on the surface non-criminal) political and business life.

This basically meant that, while telling myself that I was working for a better life for Ukrainian soldiers and civilians, I needed to keep in mind the probability that I was also working for the enrichment of the corrupt elite in Ukraine. My direct confrontation with this dilemma that evening in Kyiv was quite frustrating and painful, and it took several pillow-punches and a good cry after I returned to my hotel room before I was able to go to bed.

1.1.1 The link with peace

The winter I applied for the military linguist program I had just returned home from Costa Rica, where I had done an exchange semester at the University for Peace. Normally I was studying at the Innsbruck Peace Program.

On the website of the Innsbruck Peace Program one reads that it is “Maybe the best Peace Studies Program in the world, certainly the toughest” (Innsbruck Peace Program website, MA Program). I am in full agreement with this statement. As I sometimes tell people who ask about the peace program, “being in the army was tough, but attending the peace program was tougher”.

The peace program seeks to challenge students both academically and personally. The philosophy is that, if you are stepping in to a conflict zone as a peace

\textsuperscript{4} Transparency International ranked Ukraine 130th out of 180 in the world list of corrupt countries in 2017 (Transparency International 2019).
worker, you need to know yourself, know how you will react and what shadows you bring with you. Therefore, the program attempts to challenge its students in as many aspects as possible in a safe environment. For me personally this meant that I went through training with the Red Cross, the fire brigade and the Austrian Armed Forces, received training at the Native Spirit Wilderness School, and did courses in Five Rhythm dance, the theatre of the living and Aikido. I have done plenty of active listening and feedback sessions. And all of this is on top of the academic lessons, which account for more than half the program.

The academic framework of the program consists of transrational peace philosophy, a reference to a trilogy written by Wolfgang Dietrich, the founder of the Peace Program. I will describe the philosophy in depth later in this, but here I just introduce the Peace Program’s view on the future peace workers they are training:

Just as the training of therapists begin with self-therapy, peace workers oriented on the transrational approach first explore and work on their own egoic aspects and deal with the death of the I. From there they twist and surpass the limits of the persona and in this manner open themselves for communication and resonance with other human beings, with the Mitwelt, and in the widest sense, the universe. They become aware of their potential as actors within the elicitive method and train in its use. (Dietrich 2012, p. 265)

This way of involving your own person in your academic work was new to me when I came to the peace program, but its resonance for me was obvious, and while my friends complained about dull Master’s programmes with heavy, outdated theory, I was fully engaged and challenged at the peace program, with both my mind and my body.

1.1.2 War and Peace

The very first thing I noticed after applying to the military linguist program was that almost no one I knew from Peace Studies could believe that I was applying to join the army; moreover, after joining the army almost everybody there looked at me twice when I said that my background was in Peace and Conflict Transformation.
It came as a surprise to me to find that the practitioners of these two fields of knowledge appear to consider them incompatible: to me, they are two sides of the same coin. On the website of the Danish Defence one of the first things you will see is that “Danish Defence is working for peace and security”. At the peace program in Innsbruck I had already learned that good intentions about peace will get you nowhere if you meet locals with arms who do not share your intentions. Hence, I knew that weapons and armed peace-builders can be a necessary evil when you want to enter an ongoing armed conflict or do so just after violence has ended.

The old-fashioned tale about the warrior-soldier who loves violence and uses it as a solution to everything is nothing but that – an old-fashioned story. Soldiers have accepted the use of violence as a tool in conflict transformation, but most soldiers need quite a bit of training and maybe some manipulation in the form of an ill-painted picture of the enemy to use violence against other people, and even then, it can be a traumatizing experience for any human being.

Confronted with the reactions from people around me, I naturally started reflecting on my own understanding of peace studies and the military as two sides of the same coin. I asked myself whether I might be wrong after all, and maybe the two fields were really never supposed to meet academically. Seeking answers, I went to the writings of my professor Wolfgang Dietrich, where, in a chapter on “The Transrational Turn in International Peace Work”, I found an answer that would at least give me some degree of comfort in that the training I received in the military is very close to what Dietrich (2013) describes here:

The requirements for basic training of twenty-first century forces working in peace operations thus goes beyond soldierly virtues, skills and abilities. It includes foreign language training, a basic understanding

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5 Danish: Forsvaret arbejder for fred og sikkerhed (my translation).
of socio-psychological processes of the operational situation, and above all, an awareness of how one’s own behaviour affects the local population, in whose name the mission is carried out (Dietrich 2013, p. 171)

I settled on my own idea and I continue to believe that if both the Armed Forces and Peace Studies genuinely believe that they are working for peace, then the first step is to break down (mental) barriers and start cooperating. However, that in itself is a very different conflict from the one I focus on in this thesis.

1.2 Research area and question

The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine is now in its fifth year. With massive casualties and daily artillery bombings it is as much a war as wars can be, only politics and conventions prevent Ukraine and the rest of the world from giving it that name. Its status as of the fall of 2018 is that the two fighting parties are well dug in in their respective defensive positions and that the front has not moved significantly for quite some time. Fighting nevertheless continues and losses occur on both sides, not to speak of the civilians who are trapped in the so-called grey zone, the no-man’s-land between the trench systems that makes the front.

Different international and regional institutions are starting to realize that if we are to avoid another frozen conflict in eastern Europe action (reaction) is needed. At the time of writing, the UN is engaged in ongoing discussions about the possibility of deploying peace-keeping forces to the area, and other options have been discussed, such as an expansion of the OSCE mandate. As peacekeepers enter the area, they will need a tool for finding and maintaining their orientation in their conflict work. I believe that conflict transformation and Elicitive Conflict Mapping can provide a framework for this.
Therefore, my goal in this thesis is to

- Create a relevant and informative orientation guide to the conflict in Ukraine for peace-workers engaging in the conflict.

In making an orientation guide to the conflict in Ukraine, while working my way through the map from the episodes to the epicenter, I wish to identify the main conflict themes found in the conflict, describe what the disturbances in the layers of conflict look like and finally find the epicenter where the energy of the conflict is created.

I also intend to use my own first-hand knowledge and experience from the conflict to draw a map that can guide and help understand the conflict and to give the map depth and personality. I am speaking from experience when I say that the conflict in Ukraine is confusing. From my perspective it can reasonably be described as everything from a pure civil war between separatist groups and Ukrainian nationalists to a pure proxy war between Russia and the USA, all depending on the perspective with which one looks at it.

Another layer of confusion is that the armed conflict is not a war in the Clausewitzian understanding of war because officially two states are not involved. How, then, should we describe it? In this work I will use theories of new wars and Socially Protracted Conflicts as perspectives from which to look at the conflict. Confusion is then again multiplied by the fact that truth has become a weapon and that much of the fighting is done away from the battlefield using hybrid warfare techniques. I will touch on how and why truth has become such a powerful weapon in the conflict.

As I am using a complex model of a complex conflict, this will make this thesis an exercise in avoiding reducing the complexity while at the same time making information accessible to and usable by others. As elicitve conflict mapping is a complex and
comprehensive model for practical conflict work, a subsidiary aim of this thesis is to assess the applicability of the model to a large-scale, complex political conflict.

1.2.1 The map

Knowing that a map is always an incomplete representation of reality, being a soldier and trained in navigation, I nevertheless believe that it is a useful tool for finding your way, avoiding getting lost or finding your way back on track.

I am also aware that people read maps differently and that the orientation map I produce will differ from any other conflict worker's or soldier's map, since we orientate ourselves in relation to the map and become part of the conflict as soon as we step into it. However, anyone stepping into this conflict, with all its complexities, its millennia of background history and its numerous actors deserves an orientation map to lean on, at least until their own has been created.

1.2.2 Layout of the thesis

You have almost read your way through Chapter one, which contains the introduction and discusses my own positioning in the field, my motivations for writing this thesis and my research question. The next chapter introduces my methodological thoughts and inspirations for the thesis, as well as the more concrete theories I will use as a method to answer my research question. Chapter three presents the current state of the relevant literature for this thesis. Chapter four will then go through the most important parts of Ukrainian history, starting from Kievan Rus, working its way up to and through the stressful and wild 1990s, and ending with the Orange Revolution of 2004. In Chapter five I provide a chronological presentation of the conflict to lay basis for an analysis of the key issues in the conflict, ending with a presentation of the main such issue. In Chapter six the journey towards the epicenter begins, and the theory of levels and layers will be presented. Chapter seven consists of an introduction to the relevant actors in the conflict
at the grassroots level, as well as an excursion into the disturbances and motivation in the conflict layers at this level. Chapter eight does the same at the middle range level. Chapter nine offers an analysis of the material presented thus far making use of the notions of conflict transformation and ECM. Chapter ten deals with the top leadership, presents a conflict episode relevant to that level and analyses the conflict. In Chapter 11 the findings are discussed and related to a power perspective. Chapter 12 is the conclusion to the thesis, where an outlook and ideas for future studies are also presented.

1.2.3 Transliteration

A short comment on the transliteration throughout the thesis. Ukrainian names and place names are transliterated from Ukrainian, hence, Luhansk not Lugansk and Kyiv not Kiev. Places and names are written without primes, therefore Lviv and not L’viv, since that is more familiar for the English reader. For Ukrainian and Russian names that commonly appear in English, I have used the conventional transliteration (Moscow, Yeltsin). Quotations from English-language references has not been altered.
2 Methodology

In answering some of the basic methodological questions in connection with this thesis, my reference will be transrational peace philosophy as introduced by Wolfgang Dietrich in the *Many Peaces* trilogy⁶ and elsewhere.

Transrational peace builds on the idea that peace is not one but plural, thus introducing what Christopher Mitchell called a “salutary shock” to the idea that at least peace practitioners knew what they were looking for (Mitchell’s foreword in Dietrich 2012, p. vii). Dietrich describes transrational peace as a dynamic equilibrium and a combination of the four peaces in the peace family: energetic, moral, modern and postmodern peaces. Each member of the family calls on a specific thematic understanding of peace: hence the energetic calls for peace out of harmony, the moral calls for peace out of justice, the modern calls for peace out of security, and the postmodern calls for peace out of truth (Dietrich 2014, p. 48).

Transrational peace philosophy builds on postmodern *doubt*, that is, doubt regarding the modern world’s understanding of *One World, One Planet* and consequently, for peace studies, *One Peace*, as well as the doubt that the modern peace can ever fulfil its promise (Koppensteiner and Echavarría 2006, p. 169 and 2018, p. 3).

The aim of the doubt, as I see it, is to *set peace free*. In academic terms, this means examining peace from as many different perspectives as possible in a continuous discovery of meanings and understandings in order to “free peace from any pre-given meaning” (Koppensteiner and Echavarría 2006, p. 168). Likewise, in practical terms – and this is my guess as to why Dietrich founded the Innsbruck Peace Program – it means

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exploring, tasting, sensing, hearing and feeling peace, to a point where the modern idea of 
*one peace* seems unconvincing.

Dietrich explains that “I adapted transrationality as a key term for my effort to 
recognize the rational, while simultaneously incorporating the human aspect into the 
question of peaces and conflicts in all its aspects beyond that” (Dietrich 2018 p. 326). The 
human aspect, meaning that we as humans are rational beings, but are also so much more, 
empathic, feeling, spiritual beings. An academic discipline that deals with peace and 
conflict will see much more clearly if we recognise this.

Transrational peace philosophy integrates pre-modern understandings of the 
world. The knowledge and world views of pre-modern civilisations, such as Buddhism, 
Hinduism and Dao, are *twisted*, that is, integrated, differentiated and reinterpreted to 
become embedded, finally, in a rational consciousness (Dietrich 2011, p. 13). This allows 
us to see people as connected and peaces as relational. Conflicts happen in relations, 
which are both interpersonal and intrapersonal. And if conflicts are relational, then it 
follows that peaces are too, making relations between human beings and between 
humans and nature the topic of peace studies.

Elsewhere Dietrich explains that, given a world of networks and interrelations 
where values can only ever be communicated intersubjectively, it follows that it is 
impossible to arrive at absolute truths and objective valuations (Dietrich 2012, p. 266). 
This means that thinking peaces cannot happen in an ultimate form with one common 
understanding or truth, but only as “a dynamic, relational network of interaction and 
communication” (Vattimo 1984 in Dietrich 2011, p. 13).

The guiding principles in this thesis, informed by Transrational peace philosophy, 
sees conflicts as a natural and normal part of life. Conflicts cannot and should not be 
avoided, but rather understood as a healthy part of any development and any relationship.
The way we deal with the conflict is essential, and herein lies the key to transformation. Transrational peace philosophy moves beyond dualities and fixed truths. *Right and wrong, good and bad, friend and enemy* (etc.) are all dualities that simplify the world to some extent, where peace work cannot happen because transformation becomes impossible. Overcoming dualities allows us to see the world in a clearer and more nuanced fashion.

The doer-less victim as a character in Transrational peace philosophy, building on Nietzsche’s famous dictum, *no doer behind the deed*. If we understand that in any conflict the doer, perpetrator or enemy is a construction legitimizing an enemy against whom a war must be fought, the concept of the doer-less victim helps the peace worker (or in this case me, the researcher), as an inner attitude, to not seek perpetrators and victims, but rather to understand conflicts as relational and dynamic (Dietrich 2018, p. 317-320).

2.1 Epistemology, or the researcher as a resource

Transrationality does not choose between or add a hierarchical valuation to rationality and spirituality, nor does the epistemology that follows transrationality force a distinction between the mind and the body. Instead it understands that we are informed about the world as much by our being, with its senses, emotions and spirituality, as we are by our rational analysis of the world.

Transrational epistemology proposes multiple forms of knowledge and knowing, as this permits a synoptic and systemic view. Furthermore, transrationality welcomes the researcher as a resource. Koppensteiner suggests that “Including the researcher into the research implies embracing the fact that she might undergo transformation herself” (2018, p. 67) and further, that “The personal and human qualities of the researcher, her whole being, become resources for the resource process” (Koppensteiner 2018, p. 68).
I have conducted research for this thesis for the last four years, while working in Ukraine. I have been present (sometimes very present) with my whole being: my senses, feelings and thinking have been involved in the topic, allowing me to recognise the transformation that research causes in the researcher. My attempt in this last phase, the writing of this thesis, is to be as present as possible and also to use myself and my experiences in this part of the process.

2.2 Method

I remember reading John Paul Lederach’s book *The Moral Imagination* some years ago when I was still attending classes at the peace program. A certain passage about time stuck in my mind. In the Western world (and in the English language) we often speak of time as a line, being positioned along it with the past behind us and the future in front of us. Often one would have an image of a person standing and looking into the future, with the past behind. Lederach reflects on an experience at a workshop when a participant explained how she found the picture of time different. She explained that in her view the past is understood to be in front of us and the future behind, so that the person would be standing looking into the past – the known – but walking backwards into the unknown, the future (Lederach 2005, p. 136).

I imagine that the process of writing a thesis can be visualised in the same way. I am walking backwards into the process of reading, feeling, creating, destroying, understanding and writing, as well as organising and decorating the past I am looking at, and doing so in a meaningful way so that I myself and others can understand.

2.2.1 Conflict transformation

As much a methodology as a method is the understanding of conflict transformation. As I will elaborate later in the State of the Art part of this thesis, conflict transformation positions itself as an alternative to the well-known term conflict resolution. Conflict
transformation as Lederach explains it is a way of not just looking at conflicts, but also of seeing what is behind current events.

Lederach describes transformation as a map that allows us to see different things in different places and how they are connected. He suggests that there are three lenses for looking at a conflict. First, we see the immediate situation. Secondly, we probe beyond present problems to see the deeper patterns of relationship. Thirdly we see the conceptual framework, which allows us to connect the immediate situation to these patterns of relationship (Lederach 2014, p. 13).

Like transrational peace philosophy, conflict transformation sees conflicts as something natural and as continuously present in human relationships. Relationships and communities are not static, but dynamic and changing. Conflict transformation works with this energy and the potential for change in a conflict, using it not to solve the situation or keep it static, but to create desired changes in the underlying patterns of relationships, the epicentre.

Conflict transformation is like looking through a window where the window itself is an episode in the conflict; but looking through the window allows us to see through the current conflict and look at the web of relational patterns, at a history of lived episodes that have turned into epicentres. As Lederach explains: “If the episode releases conflict energy in the relationship, the epicenter is where the energy is produced” (Lederach 2014, p. 28).

The balancing act is that conflict transformation does not seek quick solutions to current problems, the whole point being to look beyond immediate problems, but also, and at the same time, to develop a change-oriented process that is responsive to the most immediate problems (Lederach 2014, p. 43). That is, it creates processes that, while
reacting to the episode, keep a clear view fixed on the epicentre and adapts the processes accordingly.

In relation to this, Lederach stresses the importance of the phrase *and at the same time*. He sees the capacity to pose dilemmas in conflict as an important part of conflict transformation. How can we shift our thinking to frame questions of conflicts as ‘both/and’, instead of seeing conflicts as rigid either/or contradictions? This implies that we live with dilemmas in conflicts and that we see complexity as a friend who gives us possibilities, instead of a foe that *messes things up*.

Complexity is closely linked to the changes that happen in conflicts. When conflicts are complex, ambiguity and uncertainty will arise, so we often try to simplify things. However, the complexity of a situation also provides us with untold possibilities for constructive change, where on the other hand, simplifying conflict also simplifies solutions (Lederach 2014, p. 45-46). Simple solutions tend not to transform the epicentre of the conflict, but focus only on solving the current episode.

A last point regarding conflict transformation is the importance of listening for identity in conflicts. Issues of identity are often at the root of conflicts and therefore the key to understanding the epicentre (Lederach 2014, p. 48). As identity is dynamic and relational, identity changes, including in conflicts. Conflict work may therefore sometimes be identity work, and in conflicts the conflicting parties may need to work with their own group identities, without being required to do inter-identity exchanges with the other group. Lastly, it is important to keep in mind how the parties understand the link with power and identity (Lederach 2014, p. 51).

The four guiding points of conflict transformation that I find especially important for this work are summed up here:

- Look through the window to see the epicentre
- Pose dilemmas by saying ‘and at the same time’
- Allow complexity
- Listen for identity (and its reference to power)

2.2.2 Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM)

The model of Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM) presented by Dietrich also works within the frames of (elicitive) conflict transformation. The word *Elicitive* is coined by Lederach as a way of working with conflicts that is distinct from *prescriptive* methods of conflict resolution. Elicitive conflict work, following the concept of conflict transformation presented above, tries to seek out the deeper layers under the surface of the happenings and “to understand how the conflict parties’ voices echo aspects that reach much deeper layers of being” (Echavarría and Koppensteiner 2018, p. 7).

Dietrich’s model of ECM takes its point of departure in Lederach’s pyramid of conflict of 1997 and Wilber’s quadrant model of peace interpretations. To this foundation Dietrich adds themes, levels and layers organized, following the Tantric principle of correspondence, on both sides of the persona – the visible outside and the invisible inside. For Dietrich the persona is “merely a flexible and active contact boundary between the inner and outer layers, both of which contribute to constituting the persona” (Dietrich 2013, p. 203).

The first of Dietrich’s additions to the model is the themes. The themes follow the understandings of peace introduced by Dietrich in the first volume of the *Many Peaces* trilogy: harmony following energetic peace, justice following moral peace, security following modern peace, and truth following postmodern peace. Adding themes to all three layers of Lederach’s pyramid produces a twelve-step model of analysis, where the four themes are all explored on the levels from the grassroots up to the top leadership.
With inspiration from yoga psychology, Dietrich adds four intrapersonal layers to the model; the sexual, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual layers, and once more with reference to the tantric principle of correspondence, *as within so without*, each intrapersonal layer has a corresponding layer outside the persona: the family, communal, societal and polictary layers.

The final layout of the model presents itself as a complex graphic, its readability not being enhanced by the fact that in the nature of things illustrations in a book are two-dimensional, while the idea of the ECM is that it is in fact a three-dimensional model. Commenting on the complexity of the model, Dietrich himself notes that “I have yet to encounter a conflict that is not complex in practical work” (Dietrich 2017, p. 332). As we have just learned through conflict transformation, complexity is a friend because it gives us opportunities and hidden possibilities.
Dietrich is very clear about the fact that ECM is not the same as classic conflict mapping, but more “a tool for finding and keeping orientation in applied conflict work. It helps the conflict worker in the analysis of the dysfunctional relations, finding balance in the confusing web of themes, levels and layers of the conflict pyramid” (Innsbruck Peace Program webpage, Introduction).

I will use the principles of conflict transformation and the ECM when drawing a conflict map of the conflict in Ukraine.

2.2.3 Applying my own experience

Throughout this thesis, I will add short sections about my own experience of Ukraine. I will do this first because I want my thought processes to be open and transparent to the reader. My experience of Ukraine will affect the choices I make while writing this thesis. I do not subscribe to the idea of the objective researcher, but I do believe in the importance of making the researcher’s biases and subjective positions visible. Secondly, I hope that my personal experiences will give the thesis a more human character. After all, in all conflicts, any and all actors are human beings with their own stories and perspectives on the conflict.
3 State of the art

In order to position my thesis in current debates, both on the conflict in Ukraine and within peace studies more generally, I will present the most relevant literature within both fields.

3.1 The conflict in Ukraine

Referring to game theory, Charap and Colton (2017) argue that the crisis in Ukraine is a negative-sum game, that is, a scenario in which both parties end up worse off (in contrast to a zero-sum game, where one party is better off and the other equally worse off, or positive-sum games, where both parties end up being better off).

The parties are worse off in different ways and at different scales. For the EU the crisis represents a direct security threat and a costly failure of the Eastern Partnership program to create stability in countries neighbouring the EU. Russia is worse off on many parameters, being isolated and in an economically worse state due in part to sanctions, and in part to the fact that both the takeover of Crimea and the war in Donbas have been expensive affairs, as well as causing it heavy human losses too. The United States is worse off because it now needs to bolster military expenditure in Europe and has suffered a complete breakdown in US-Russian relations. Ukraine, the party most heavily affected, has lost more than 10,000 people in the war, the economy is in a worse state than before the crisis, and nationalism is on the rise (Charap and Colton 2017, pp. 21-22).

Charap and Colton argue that the negative-sum conflict we see in Ukraine today is a result of a zero-sum game played by all parties in the conflict, since the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the political situation in Europe. They argue that “constructive, considered policy and action in this region were the exception, not the norm, for all sides” (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 23) and that Ukraine has become just the latest subject of
dispute in the contest between Russia and Europe. All parties (Russia, the EU and the USA) were trying to pull Ukraine in their own direction, without consideration for the other parties. Ukraine, for its part, was trying to say yes to everyone without saying no to anyone.

Menon and Rumer, in their book *Conflict in Ukraine: the unwinding of the post-Cold War order* (2015) problematize Russia’s actions by stating that:

“For the first time since the end of World War II, a country that had previously committed itself to observe the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of fellow European states has annexed a portion of its neighbour’s territory. Moreover, having explicitly rejected some of the fundamental principles of European security and stability it had previously accepted, Russia has embraced a foreign policy doctrine based on ideas of ethnic kinship and asserted its right to continue to violate those basis principles” (Menon and Rumer 2016, p. 157)

In analysing the conflict, they point to a regional explanation for the crisis: although the conflict may be situated in Ukraine, the problem lies between Europe and Russia (Menon and Rumer 2015, p. 162). They argue that the post-Cold War European security and political architecture was built on two institutions – the European Union and NATO – and that “whereas Russia’s former satellites in Central Europe and the Baltics had a clear destination at the end of their post-Communist transition and a guaranteed place in Europe’s security and political structures, Russia did not. It would have to prove its European identity” (Menon and Rumer 2015, p. 161).

Moreover, Menon and Rumer argue that, after the West “won” the Cold War, the dearly bought lessons from the two World Wars seemed to have been forgotten, so that Russia was not offered, as was Germany after the Second World War, integration into a European security order (Menon and Rumer 2015, p. 160).
Richard Sakwa, in line with Menon and Rumer, argues that “the failure to create a genuinely inclusive and symmetrical post-Communist political and security order generated what some took to calling a ‘new Cold War’, or more precisely in my view, a ‘cold peace’” (Sakwa 2015, p. XII).

In his book *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderland* Sakwa presents a more Russia-oriented attitude, to which some scholars have reacted. Charap and Colton write: “to decry Western policy as deliberately hostile and portray Russian actions as having a ‘rational and empirical basis’, as Richard Sakwa does, obscures that interaction [between West and Russia] completely” (Charap and Colton 2015, p. 25). Sakwa’s full sentence runs as follows: “Russia’s stance of resentment and self-exclusion, despite having, as argued throughout this book, a *rational and empirical basis*, needs to be modified to encompass the fact that neither NATO nor the EU is systemically hostile to Russia’s interests” (Sakwa 2015, p. 255; my italics). Despite this recognition by Sakwa that NATO and EU are not *systematically* hostile towards Russia, the argument that Russia has a rational and empirical basis for invading a country whose sovereignty it recognised in the Budapest memorandum of 1994 can and should be challenged. Taras Kuzio has put forward the argument that Sakwa’s biases may arise from the fact that he uses very few Ukrainian sources compared to the number of Russian sources he uses and that he has never visited the eastern part of Ukraine (Kuzio 2016).

However, Sakwa is an acknowledged scholar, and his book has also received a lot of positive comment for being willing to challenge the prevailing truth about the crisis in Ukraine and for criticising the West’s role in the conflict.

Another scholar who has taken a firm stance in the conflict is Taras Kuzio. Kuzio argue that “the roots of Putin’s war against Ukraine, Europe’s biggest crisis since World War II, lie in Russia’s inability to come to terms with losing an empire and its prioritisation
of building supranational structures rather than focusing on creating a Russian nation state” (Kuzio 2017, p. 357). Like almost all the main scholars I have used in this thesis, Kuzio comments on Putin’s statement at the 2008 NATO–Russia council in Bucharest, where he described Ukraine as an ‘artificial’ country (Kuzio 2017, p. 5; Menon and Rumer 2015, p. 1; Wilson 2014, p. 149).

One of Kuzio’s main arguments is that Russia never stopped being at war with the West. All actions taken by the West, including those taken after the West believed the Cold War had ended, are seen by Russia as aggressions. He argues, for example, that:

“Putin and other post-Soviet authoritarian leaders have always understood colour revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and twice in Ukraine not as genuine public protests standing up for human rights and democracy, but as CIA and EU conspiracies seeking to undermine what President Medvedev coined as Russia’s ‘zone of privileged interest’.” (Kuzio 2017, p. 3)

Hence, his argument is that Putin and Russia believe that the West is out to get them in a war that they (Putin and Russia) did not begin, but have been forced to respond to and, consequently, act accordingly, for example, by launching cyber-attacks around the world, interfering in the presidential election in the USA and invading a neighbouring country (two, actually, if we include the war with Georgia in 2008) (Kuzio 2017, p. 7 and pp. 4-5).

Andrew Wilson, Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, has written a detailed and very comprehensive book, Ukraine Crisis: What it means for the West and has previously published a number of books about Ukraine and the post-Soviet world.

Wilson argues that Russia’s addiction to dangerous myths affected its decision to annex Crimea and engage in the conflict in Donbas. The myths that Russia had been humiliated in the 1990s, that former Soviet territory somehow represents the ‘lost’ territory of historical Russia and that NATO was encircling Russia with its eastern
expansion were all, according to Wilson, part of the explanation for why the Russians went ape and annexed a part of a sovereign neighbouring country (Wilson 2014, p. vii). Wilson furthermore argues that these myths are not true (Wilson 2014, p. 9), but even if they had been (which they were and are for many Russians), they could have generated many other responses, for example, attempts to befriend or discuss NATO expansion, instead of invading a neighbouring country.

However, notwithstanding his focus on Russian myths, Wilson also makes an argument on the national level, arguing that the crisis in Ukraine also sprang from the level of corruption and dissatisfaction with the current state of things in the country (Wilson 2014, p. viii).

Matilde Kimer turns the focus away from large-scale regional and international politics in her book The War Inside: tales of destinies from the Revolution in Ukraine. The book is a personal tale from when she, as a journalist, covered the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in the east. The book follows two Ukrainians, Anna and Bogdan, who in different ways are dragged into the war, but Kimer also writes about her own fascination with and bordering addiction to the war, as she finds herself disappointing her family time and time again by returning to cover what is happening in Ukraine. She gives the war a human face and an aspect that academic books often cannot give, but her book is very important in providing a fuller understanding of what war means. I therefore consider it to be an important contribution to this thesis.

3.2 Peace studies

Peace Studies is a relatively young academic discipline, its seeds being planted after World War I, with the establishment of International Relations as a distinct academic discipline.

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7 In Danish: Krigen indeni – Skæbnefortællinger fra revolutionen i Ukraine. My translation.
and initiatives in the fields of psychology, politics and International Studies, which would later become important for the interdisciplinary study of conflict resolution. However, genuine developments that were significant in establishing Peace Studies were not made until after World War II (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall 2008, pp. 34-36).

The Gandhian principle of non-violence and nuclear disarmament lend inspiration to the first institutions of peace and conflict research in the years after World War II. While the North American pragmatist school was being developed, another, more structuralist approach was born in Scandinavia in the by now well-known work of Johan Galtung.

Galtung introduced the conflict triangle of direct, cultural and structural violence and added to it the distinction between ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ peace. Negative peace is characterised by the absence of direct violence, close to the form of peace advocated by the North American pragmatist school. Positive peace is the overcoming of structural and cultural violence (Ramsbotham et al. 2008, p. 41).

Galtung founded the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and was the founding editor of the Journal of Peace Research, launched in 1964. He argued that the discipline of Peace Studies should go beyond the enterprise of war prevention to encompass also conditions for peace and peaceful relations. Central for him was the search for positive peace through human empathy and solidarity, as well as the search for alternative values in non-western cosmologies (Ramsbotham et al. 2008, p. 42).

Another scholar who affected the development of peace studies is John Burton. Despite working largely within the frame of prescriptive conflict resolution (see the following section), he remains important for this thesis in two ways. The first is his work, together with Edward Azar, on protracted social conflicts. The two focused on the hybrid level of war that exists between interstate war and domestic unrest (Ramsbotham et al. 2008, p. 42).
They argued that conflicts after 1945 were of a different kind than interstate total wars in that they were not struggles between states over “territory, economic resources, or East-West rivalry” but revolved around “questions of communal identity” (Ramsbotham 2005, p. 114). They further explained how “protracted social conflicts often represented a prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation” (Ramsbotham 2005, p. 93).

The question of basic needs leads us to the second point in Burton’s contributions to Peace Studies. He used Maslow’s needs theory to distinguish between basic needs and interests. Interests are primarily material goods that can be traded, bargained over and negotiated, whereas needs, such as security, identity and recognition, are non-material in nature and cannot be bargained over. They are also not a scarce resource, and their existence does not rely on a zero-sum or negative-sum understanding. Hence, conflicts based on basic needs can be resolved and (at least in theory) it is possible to meet the needs of both parties (Ramsbotham et al. 2008, pp. 45-46).

Another important scholar to mention here is Adam Curle. Curle stressed the importance of soft mediation in conflicts and developed the idea of track-two diplomacy, which would later evolve into multi-track diplomacy. Curle argued that “Since conflict resolution by outside bodies and individuals has so far proven ineffective, it is essential to consider the peacemaking potential within the conflicting communities themselves” (cited in Dietrich 2013, p. 10). He also held the view that the process of peace-making centres around relationships and consists in making changes in relationships that will allow for changes in the conflict (Ramsbotham et al. 2008, pp. 50-51 and Dietrich 2013, p. 163).
Probably Adam Curle's most important contribution to peace studies for this particular thesis is that he inspired Lederach and paved the way for the latter to develop his concept of Conflict Transformation, introduced in Chapter two.

3.2.1 Conflict resolution, management and transformation

Most of the early influences from conflict studies that I have presented so far have been exerted within the frame of conflict resolution or conflict management. Conflict resolution and conflict management operate within a modern understanding that sees conflict as a disturbance that needs to be contained. The word ‘resolution’ points to the understanding of conflicts as something that can be re-‘solved’ or ‘solved’ in a conclusive understanding of the word (Lederach 2014, p. 28).

The eagerness to solve problems leads to short-term pain relief and a focus on immediate solutions to present problems. Mediators are often ‘third parties’ to the conflict and are expected to mediate objectively, often with a pre-given set of rules to negotiate by.

Different from conflict resolution and conflict management is conflict transformation. Conflict transformation is directed towards change and not only addresses the immediate situation, but also works within the context of the conflict. Following Adam Curle, conflict transformation sees conflict work as relationship-oriented work rather than content-oriented work.

The perspective view of conflict differs in the sense that conflict resolution, as noted earlier, sees conflict as something in need of containment, as a result of which the focus has been primarily on methods of de-escalating conflict. Transformation sees in conflict “life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes” (Lederach 2014, p. 16), and it responds to the ebb and flow of social conflict by both engaging in and de-escalating the conflict, depending on what may shape constructive change. Hence,
transformation sees conflict episodes as an opportunity to work with the epicentre of the conflict (Echavarría Alvarez and Koppensteiner 2018, p. 5 and Lederach 2014, pp. 28-30 and 16).
4 Ukraine’s pre-conflict history

Whenever one works in or with Ukraine, and in particular when working with the conflict in the eastern part of the country, it is very important to be somewhat familiar with Ukraine’s history, as questions of identity and belonging, justice and righteousness, are answered with reference back in time, sometimes very far back in time.

Many of the authors who write about the conflict in Ukraine begin their historical examination around 1917, if not after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. While I completely understand the practical need to do this, I also consider it a mistake. Ukrainians do not consider that their history began in 1917, let alone in 1991.

In the summer of 2018, I was attending a Russian language program in Kyiv. We were discussing the relatively new law of education that Ukraine adopted in September 2017. The law caused some controversy because it dictates that the educational language in any higher education institution has to be Ukrainian. The law furthermore explicitly states that the state promotes the study of international languages, first of all English.

Russian has been the standard academic language in Ukraine, the reason being that most people in Ukraine are fluently bilingual, study materials and books are often in Russian, and professors who were university students in the Soviet Union are used to Russian as the academic language.

The law caused controversy with minorities and advocates of minority rights, who point to the problem of having only one allowed language for higher education, as it gives minorities the extra burden of being forced to study in a language different from their mother tongue.

During our group discussions in the language program, I made the mistake of implying that I had a hard time following why language has become such a large part of the conflict and that the new law would only alienate their large Russian-speaking minority even more. My teacher instantly got very disturbed by my contribution and started an explanation of Russia’s oppression of Ukrainians and the Ukrainian language. She ended her rather long speech with the words: “They took everything from us, they even got their name from us.” This comment refers back to Kieven Rus, beginning about 1000 years ago.

Comments like that are not uncommon because it does reflect the way history is very present in the minds of both the Ukrainian and the Russians in this conflict.
Therefore, because history will play an important role in my argumentation later in the thesis, this examination of Ukraine’s history starts with the very beginning, works its way up through time and ends at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti\(^8\) in Kyiv, that is, with the Orange Revolution.

4.1.1 The rise and fall of Kiev

If you go for a stroll in Kyiv city centre, you might pass the beautiful Saint Michael’s Golden-Domed Monastery. If you continue to walk around the monastery, you will find yourself in a rather large and quite steep park. In the middle of the park you will find a statue of the man who has given his name to the hill on which the park is located. The park is called Volodymyrska Hill Park, and in the middle you will find a statue of the ruler of Kiev, Volodymyr.

Volodymyr\(^9\) is descended from the first ruler of Rus, the Varangian (Scandinavian Vikings) Riurik, who, according to *The Primary Chronicle*,\(^10\) arrived in the Novgorod region in the middle of the tenth century at the invitation of the local tribes to rule what was soon to be known as Rus (Moss 2005, p. 15).

The origin of the name Rus, as well as the influence of Scandinavians on the foundation of Kievan Rus, are much discussed. No consensus has been reached on either the origin of the name or the extent of Viking influence over the rise of Kievan Rus, except for general agreement that Scandinavian influence on East Slavic society and culture was minimal and that the rise of Kyiv was not the achievement of just one group of people, but the result of Slavic/Scandinavian interrelationships (Subtelny 2009, pp. 24-25).

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\(^8\) Independence Square. Known to many as Maidan Square in Kyiv and therefore also referred to simply as Maidan in this thesis.

\(^9\) Vladimir and Volodymyr are the Russian and Ukrainian versions of the same name, therefore in history books both names may appear for the same person.

\(^10\) *The Primary Chronicle* was written by monks between 1040 and 1118. It remains a valuable source of information today, though its historical accuracy is not perfect. The faithfulness of its accounts of events is not to be compared to modern-day historical accounts (Moss 2005, 15).
In 988 Volodymyr took the decision that made him one of the most famous rulers of Rus to this day, namely accepted Christianity and began imposing it on his subjects (Moss 2005, pp. 17-18). Today he is known all over Russia and Ukraine as the ruler who Christianized Kiev Rus.

Kyiv was the centre of the Rus lands, but in the late Rus era new centres of power provided more competition. At this time, Kyiv no longer had a strong, unifying ruler, and other political centres were becoming increasingly significant (Moss 2005, pp. 54-56). Thus, even before the Mongol invasion the Rus lands had been weakened by an increase in regionalism (Subtelny 2009, p. 56).

The Mongol invasion of 1237-1241 marked the end of the Rus era. The Mongols of the Golden Horde ruled over most of the former Rus lands for more than a century. They ruled indirectly and relied on the cooperation of Rus princes. Administrators and armies made sure that the will of the Khan was carried out and that his taxes were collected (Magocsi 2010, p. 115).

Only a few decades after the Mongol invasion of Kyiv, the Lithuanians slowly but steadily began annexing the western parts of Mongol-ruled Rus territory, and in 1380 Poland and Lithuania annexed most of the Belarussian and Ukrainian parts of Rus (Moss 2005, p. 65).

However, after the Mongolian invasion the status of Ukraine changed from a state where its inhabitants controlled their own destinies and influenced those of their neighbours (Subtelny 2009, p. 69). After the invasion of first the Mongols and later the Lithuanians, Polish and Russians, the Ukrainian lands would no longer form the heartland of important political entities, and except for a few brief moments of self-assertion, the fate of Ukraine's inhabitants would be decided in far-off capitals such as Warsaw, Moscow or Vienna (Subtelny 2009, p. 69).
4.1.2 Lithuanian and Polish rule

At the beginning of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century the Lithuanians moved into Belarus and from 1340 moved into Ukraine under the slogan \textit{All Rus must belong to Lithuanians}. In 1362, under the leadership of Algirdas, the Lithuanians occupied Kyiv and moved even further, making the Grand Principality of Lithuania the largest political entity in Europe (Subtelny 2009, p. 70 and Moss 2005, p. 84).

Alongside the Lithuanian expansion into Ukraine, the Poles expanded from the west, and while the Lithuanians expanded rapidly, showing respect for local culture and customs as they did so, the Polish expansion was less smooth and less respectful of local religion and traditions.

In 1340 the Polish king Casimir the Great moved into Galicia in the west of Ukraine. However, the advance did not go as planned, and in 1344 a long battle for control of Galicia broke out between Lithuania and Poland (Magocsi 2010, p. 137).

Most Ukrainians sided with the Lithuanians in the battle. The Poles saw themselves as the “buffer of Christianity” and viewed their non-Catholic enemies as morally and culturally inferior, something the Ukrainians had not encountered in the conflicts between princes that had previously been fought on their land (Subtelny 2009, 73).

In 1366 the war ended with the Polish occupation of Galicia and part of Volhynia. The Polish occupation of the western Ukrainian lands had great implications for both people. Subtelny (2009) explains how:

For the Poles, it meant a commitment to an eastern rather than the previously dominant western orientation, a shift that carried with it far-reaching political, cultural, and socioeconomic ramifications. For Ukrainians, the impact went far beyond the replacement of native rulers by foreigners: it led to the subordination of Ukrainians to another people of a different religion and culture. Despite certain positive effects produced by this symbiosis, eventually it evolved into a bitter religious,
social, and ethnic conflict that lasted for about 600 years and permeated all aspects of life in Ukraine. (Subtelny 2009, p. 74)

Leaders of Poland and Lithuania realised that they had more to gain from uniting than from fighting. As Moscow, which had grown in size, prestige and power, started posing a threat, a union was negotiated between Poland and Lithuania.

4.1.3 The rise of Moscow, the Crimean Khanate and the second Polish-Lithuanian union

Whereas the Lithuanian Grand Princes showed little interest in keeping the goodwill of their Ukrainian subjects, the rising power of Moscow cultivated them. In 1480 Moscow cast off the last of the centuries-old Mongolian yoke and formulated the Third-Rome doctrine. This doctrine stated that Moscow was to be the third and last holy empire after the fall of Rome and Constantinople. Ivan III (Ivan the Great) of Moscow started calling himself Sovereign of all Rus and claimed that all the lands of Kievan Rus should belong to Moscow (Subtelny 2009, p. 78). Ivan III was quite successful in his conquests, and much later Russian historians called him the gatherer of the Russian lands (Moss 2009, p. 88).

To the south of Ukraine, the Crimean Khanate was formed in the wake of the Golden Horde’s slow decline. Despite controlling the vast steppes between the Kuban and Dniester rivers, the Crimean Khanate found itself unable to subjugate the richer trading cities along the coast. The much stronger and rapidly growing Ottoman Empire managed to conquer the coastal cities and forced the Crimean Khanate to accept it as its overlord. The Crimean Khanate did, however, keep a large degree of autonomy and often staged raids into the neighbouring Ukrainian lands to capture slaves, which were sold in the markets of Constantinople and Caffa (Subtelny 2009, p. 78).

To the north of Ukraine, it became clear in the early 16th century that the Lithuanian Principality was in trouble. Having lost large parts of Ukraine to Moscow, it turned to Poland for help. This resulted in the conclusion of the Union of Lublin in 1569,
under which much of Ukraine, which had previously belonged to the Lithuanian Principality, was now directly attached to the Polish crown (Magocsi 2010, pp. 142-143).

The inclusion of Ukrainians in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth meant a greater exposure to western ideas for Ukrainians, as well as a drastic decline in the living conditions and freedoms of the peasants. Inequality increased, and while the living standards of Ukrainian peasants fell, the nobility of the Commonwealth were given more privileges, especially those who could or would identify with Polish culture, as power, wealth and privilege were increasingly associated with Polishness. This Ukrainian experience would lay the foundations for a troubled relationship between Ukraine and Poland in the future (Subtelny 2009, p. 91).

If we pause to consider Ukraine in the middle to end of the 16th century, it had the rapidly growing tsardom of Moscow to the east, the Crimean Khanate backed by the large and powerful Ottoman Empire to the south, and the just renewed union between Poland and Lithuania to the north and west, a situation that painted a dark picture for the future of a sovereign Ukrainian state. It would also take almost five hundred years before Ukraine became an independent country.

4.1.4  Ukraina – the land at the periphery

Up until the middle of the 16th century, the western part of Ukraine had been the centre of much attention, but in the second half of the 16th century attention was turned towards the vast steppes of the Dnieper basin in the east. The land was at this time specifically referred to as Ukraina, meaning at the edge. In the 16th century the “Wild Fields” of the Dnieper basin were wild primarily because of the Tatars of the Crimean Khanate, who raided it for all valuables and people, the latter being sold as slaves to the Ottoman Empire (Magocsi 2010, p. 185-189).
Among the more notable developments in the Wild Fields was the rise of a new frontier class, the Cossacks. *Cossack* was originally a Turkic word referring to “the free, masterless men who lacked a well-defined place in society and who lived on its unsettled periphery” (Subtelny 2009, p. 108). The Cossacks were multi-ethnic, but the majority of those who lived by the Dnieper basin were Ukrainians. By the Don river further east a Russian version of Cossackdom developed.

In the early days of the Cossacks, they, and especially the Zaporozhians (Cossacks men living in Fort Zaporozhian Sich, where they practiced democracy and had a policy of equality) were seen by the general Ukrainian population and by the nobles of the Commonwealth, as troublemakers and social outcasts. However, attitudes towards them changed in time. Many in Europe suffered at the hands of the violent Ottomans, and anyone who dared stand up to them almost automatically earned respect and recognition for doing so (Subtelny 2009, p. 111).

4.1.5 The Pereiaslav Agreement

The Pereiaslav Agreement is interesting as the agreement that first brought Ukraine and Russia together. Because of the conflicts that would later erupt between the two states, it has been much discussed through time. The discussions and arguments about the nature of the agreement have been affected by the fact that the original documents are lost and no trustworthy copy has ever been found. However, there are five major interpretations of the nature of the Pereiaslav agreement:

1. The agreement is a *personal union* between Muscovy and Ukraine, meaning that the two countries had the same sovereign, but different governments
2. The agreement was a *real union* incorporating Ukraine into the Muscovy lands and subordinating the people to the tsar
3. The agreement was a form of *vassalage*, where the Tsar agreed to protect Ukraine in return for tribute, military assistance and so on.
4. The agreement was a *temporary military alliance* between Moscow and Ukraine.
5. The Soviet explanation, presented on the 300th anniversary of the signing of the agreement in 1954, claims that it was a union of the two peoples, who had understood that the salvation of the Ukrainian people lay only in unity with the great Russian people


There is no doubt that the agreement was of great importance both when it was signed and later on numerous occasions, when the nature of the relationship between Ukraine and Russia was discussed.

After the signing of the agreement, a few more years of war between Poland, Ukraine and now Moscow followed. In 1657 the Cossacks established their own form of government in the land they continued to call the Zaporozhian Host, but which the Poles called Ukraine and the Muscovites Malorossiia (little Russia)

4.1.6 The divided lands

The Ukrainian lands were, roughly speaking, divided by the Dnieper river into the overlordships of Poland and Russia. The Left Bank, Zaporozhia and Sloboda were Russian-controlled, the Right Bank, Volhynia and Galicia Polish-controlled. Other areas, like Podilia and Crimea, were controlled by the Ottomans, the western part of Carpathia by Hungary. It would be almost another three hundred years before the Ukrainian lands were to be united.

The Ukrainian lands developed in very different ways, with a strong Polish overlordship, a strong western influence and the dominant Catholic Church in the west, while in the east society was organised along military lines, with a Hetman as the leader, the Orthodox Church still dominant, and cultural influence from its eastern neighbour, Russia.

4.1.7 The absorption of the Hetmanate

Moscow was eager to turn its overlordship over the Malorussians into direct control. Peter I of Russia (later known as Peter the Great) emerged as the victor in the Battle of
Poltava in 1709 between Moscow and the Hetmanate, which marked the beginning of the ending of Ukrainian attempts to break away from Russia (Subtelny 2009, pp. 160-165).

The next century saw the slow process of the complete absorption of the Ukrainian lands into the Russian Empire, a process that occurred in three stages. The first territory, the Sloboda Ukraine, was fully incorporated into the Russian imperial structure in the 1760s, followed by the Zaporozhia in the 1770s and the Hetmanate and Crimean Khanate in the 1780s (Magocsi 2010, p. 227).

The Russian centralization of these lands had the following three goals according to Subtelny: “(1) to coerce the Ukrainian elite and general populace into complete obedience; (2) to coordinate Ukrainian government, economy, and culture with those of Russia; and (3) to extract the maximum from Ukraine's human and economic resources” (Subtelny 2009, p. 166).

Shortly after Catherine II declared the Crimean Khanate to be part of the Russian Empire in 1783, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth fell apart from the pressure of its surrounding enemies, Russia, Austria and Prussia. The three countries divided the territories of the Commonwealth between themselves, and Ukraine saw yet another division. The most westerly part of Ukraine, Galicia and Bukovyna, came under Austrian rule, while the Right Bank was incorporated into the Russian Empire (Subtelny 2009, pp. 176-177).

4.2 Ukraine under imperial rule

If one was lucky enough to be given a medal of honour by Catherine II, one would have noticed the inscription “I have recovered what was torn away”, are reference to imperial rule over Ukraine. This attitude, that Malorussians were basically Russians and that the Ukrainian lands were an integral part of Russia, continues to this day. The differences between Russians and Malorussians were seen as resulting from the separation and not
as something inherently Ukrainian. This also meant that the Russian Empire expected the features that did distinguish Malorussians from Russians to disappear naturally and Malorussians to become true Russians, as the two peoples and lands were reunited.

4.2.1 The First World War and the Revolution

Because of the division of the Ukrainian lands between the Russian and Austrian Empires, Ukrainians had to fight on both sides in the First World War. Soon after the first signs of aggression, groups such as the General Ukrainian Council and the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, working for Ukrainian independence, were formed in both the Austrian-ruled and Russian-ruled parts of Ukraine.

At the beginning of the war Russia occupied Galicia, where a policy of Russification began. The empire consequently referred to it as a reunion of the ancient Russian lands and stated that the lands were now forever reunited with Mother Russia (Subtelny 2009, p. 341). This statement turned out to be rather empty, since not long afterwards Austria went on the offensive and took back Galicia.

Russia saw two revolutions in 1917. The first was in essence more a collapse of power than a revolution as such. After the tsar abdicated in March following massive protests, the process of building a new system of governance started and, with that, a relatively non-violent struggle for power and influence occurred in Petrograd (now Saint Petersburg), until the Bolsheviks took power in the October Revolution and turned the non-violent struggle violent. The two revolutions were followed by three years of very violent civil war in what had been the Russian Empire.

In Ukraine the news of the collapse of the Tsar’s rule in Russia was exploited to create the Central Rada (Rada meaning ‘council’ in Ukrainian). The Central Rada enjoyed increasing support from many sides the first months of its existence and began to see itself as Ukraine’s parliament. On 23 June 1917 it issued its first manifesto, which declared “Let
Ukraine be free. Without separating entirely from Russia, without severing connections with the Russian state, let the Ukrainian people have the right to order their own lives in their own land” (Subtelny 2009, p. 346).

The years between 1917 and 1919 were characterised by instability in Ukraine. The Bolsheviks invaded first in 1917, but did not succeed in seizing power. The Central Rada was disbanded and replaced with a Hetmanate for a short period in April 1918, but in December 1918 the so-called Directory replaced the Hetmanate, and by early 1919 the situation had become so unstable that the Bolsheviks decided to try another invasion (Magocsi 2010, p. 500).

Despite the obvious failure of the organs of power in this period, one important achievement can be ascribed to them, namely putting Ukrainian nationality on the agenda. They stubbornly pushed this agenda and removed all ambiguity over the existence of a separate Ukrainian nationality (Subtelny 2009, pp. 350-353).

4.2.2 Western Ukraine

Returning to the western part of Ukraine, for their part these organs of power had other struggles to deal with during the war and the revolution. Hard as Galicia was hit during the war, just as rapidly they were ready to continue the political battle for independence after the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated in the fall of 1918.

The Ukrainians in the west found themselves in a similar, yet still somewhat different situation than those in the east in trying to build a new independent Ukrainian state, but apart from the goal itself, the situation differed between west and east Ukraine.

The West Ukrainians created the Ukrainian National Council, which declared its aim as being to gather together all the West Ukrainian lands. Poland, unsurprisingly, also laid claim to western Ukraine. On 31 October a group of Ukrainian officers took matters into their own hands, gathering together all the Ukrainian soldiers who had fought in the
now disbanded Austrian units and taking control of Lviv. The citizens of Lviv awoke on 1 of November to the news that they were now citizens of Ukraine, and soon afterwards the West Ukrainian National Republic was formally constituted (Magocsi 2010, p. 548).

The new republic, very unlike its fellow compatriots in East Ukraine, took the administration in hand and, despite fighting a war with Poland, it managed to maintain its stability and effective administration.

The war with Poland started successfully for the Ukrainians, but by mid-July the Poles had reoccupied most of eastern Galicia, and the West Ukrainian army had to cross over the river into East Ukraine, where many continued the struggle with the Bolsheviks for a Ukrainian state (Subtelny 2009, pp. 365-369).

In June 1919 the Polish occupation of Galicia was approved by the Entente's Council of Ambassadors on the basic of Polish propaganda claiming that the Ukrainians were too backward to govern themselves (Subtelny 2009, p. 371).

The struggle for Ukraine continued for two years, until 1921. At first the two Ukrainian governments and armies fought together, but after a series of defeats they had to withdraw and integrate into the White army and the Polish army. Some, however, continued the fight for independence in a guerrilla war. Anti-Bolshevik partisans numbered around 40,000 men before 1921, when the Bolsheviks committed about 50,000 men to the struggle, most of whom were members of the Cheka,\(^\text{11}\) to the fight against the partisans, conquer Ukraine and establish their control over it (Subtelny 2009, p. 376).

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\(^{11}\) The secret police in Russia at that time.
4.3 The Soviet period

In Ukraine’s *Golden Decade* in the 1920s a relative weak Bolshevik Party was focused on regaining its strength and popularity and therefore did not interfere in Ukrainian matters too much, partly due to a lack of resources to do so, and partly from a belief that it would benefit the Bolshevik Party in the end. Nation-building in Ukraine happened at light speed, and the nationalism that had been sparked by the Revolution and the civil-war became visible in art, literature and education. The Ukrainians began to see themselves as one nation with the right to a nation state, and some even started talking about *our own way to communism* as an alternative to the Russian-led Soviet Union (Subtelny 2009, p. 403 and (Magocsi 2010, pp. 570-573).

Free, open and experimental as the twenties had been in the Soviet Union, so the thirties were closed, limited and terrorising. While industrialisation occurred in the Soviet Union, Ukraine’s industrialisation was impressive, and as a result people started moving to the cities in high numbers. Life in the countryside was not easy, as no one was safe from Stalin’s hunt for Kulaks,¹² and many middle-income or even poor peasants were targeted as Kulak supporters. This process basically destroyed general knowledge about the cultivation of land that Ukraine, a peasant country, had enjoyed for thousands of years, as most experienced farmers were sent to work camps in the arctic or to Siberia for being Kulaks (Magocsi 2010, pp. 594-595).

4.3.1 Holodomor

The consequence of the exile of farmers, together with a series of catastrophic decisions made by the Communist Party and a plan to target the Ukrainian intellectual and political class, resulted in the destruction of the Ukrainian idea.

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¹² Wealthy peasants, who often owned larger farms and larger numbers of cattle.
The word Holodomor is a mixture of two Ukrainian words, holod meaning hunger and mor meaning extermination. The hunger-until-exterrmination that the man-made famine in Ukraine in 1932-33 essentially was killed between three and six million people, most of whom were Ukrainians (Subtelny 2009, p. 414 and Applebaum 2017, p. xxiv).

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer who invented the word genocide, spoke of Holodomor in Ukraine as a perfect example: “it is a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation” (Applebaum 2017, p. 356). The use of the term 'genocide' later became more legalistic, and therefore it is still discussed today whether the Holodomor can actually be called a genocide. However, there is no doubt that in the minds of Ukrainians it was genocide, and in 2010 a Ukrainian court found Stalin, Molotov and others guilty of perpetrating it (Applebaum 2017, p. 358).

4.3.2 West Ukraine

While the East Ukrainians were struggling and dying under Soviet rule, the West Ukrainians were being discriminated against in their new countries – Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. This discrimination resulted in a pure obsession with achieving Ukrainians’ own state, an obsession that is still visible today in the much higher level of nationalism in western Ukraine.

After the First World War Ukrainians in Poland numbered 5 million and constituted about 15% of the country's population, being one of the largest nationalities in Europe not to receive independence and its own state after the war (Subtelny 2009, pp. 425-427).

In the interwar period attempts were made, some quite successful, to normalise the relationship between Ukrainians and their Polish rulers, but the underlying Ukrainians’ idea, that they should have independence and govern their own lands, continued until the Second World War.
4.3.3 The Second World War

The first period of the Second World War in Ukraine occurred when Nazi Germany attacked Poland in 1939 and soon afterwards the Soviets moved in and occupied western Ukrainian territory. Apart from the West Ukrainians having to get used to another repressive occupation force as their rulers, not much changed for them. Nonetheless, when the Soviets occupied western Ukraine they at first made a great effort to win the hearts and minds of the Ukrainians and started a Ukrainification of the area by building Ukrainian schools and universities, quite the reverse of the eradication of Ukrainian culture that the Soviets had committed years earlier in eastern Ukraine.

This Ukrainification policy did not last long, and as officials and military servicemen moved into western Ukraine they soon began to revert to business as usual, with mass deportations and arrests becoming the norm in western Ukraine already in summer 1940 (Subtelny 2009, p. 455). Western Ukrainians soon agreed that Bolshevik rule had to be avoided at all costs.

A lot changed later on in the war, when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, thereby bringing war officially to all the Ukrainian lands.

4.3.4 Nazi German forces in Ukraine

Even before the war had come to Ukraine, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) had trouble agreeing among themselves on what direction to go in. This led to a split in 1940, when the older, more moderate wing followed Andriy Malnyk into OUN-M and the younger, more radical wing followed Stepan Bandera into OUN-B.

Shortly before German troops invaded the Soviet Union, OUN-B and the German forces created a Ukrainian military unit in the German army called the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists. The OUN-B hoped that this unit would become the core of a Ukrainian army. Only a few days after the Germans’ entry into Ukraine, without consulting the Germans
the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists and the OUN-B declared the establishment of a new Ukrainian state in the newly German-occupied Lviv area. Bandera and his associates were arrested by the Gestapo within days of this declaration (Magocsi 2010, p. 671).

In general Ukrainians welcomed the Nazi German forces, whom they saw as liberators. This was true in the whole of Ukraine, but especially in the western part, where Soviet rule was especially unpopular. After the Germans occupied Ukraine, local Ukrainian administrations started popping up all around the state, more than a hundred non-communist newspapers appeared, and the peasants finally hoped to be able to rid themselves of the much-hated system of collective farms. This all ended shortly after the arrival of the new and hardline Reichskommissar of Ukraine, and support for the German forces changed when the Ukrainian population witnessed the brutality of the new occupational forces (Subtelny 2009, p. 467).

Thus, the Nazis were not the liberation force the Ukrainians had hoped for. Their brutal behaviour in Ukraine became evident within months of their arrival when SS execution squads killed about 850,000 Jews. When the stories of Soviet prisoner-of-wars camps, where prisoners were kept in outdoor open-air camps and left to die there from hunger or disease, reached the Soviet front, the resistance of the Soviet soldiers, many of whose comrades had surrendered almost voluntarily earlier in the war, greatly increased and the war became very much more difficult for the German forces (Subtelny 2009, p. 468-69).

The creation of the SS Volunteer Galicia Division in 1943, together with the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists before the War, constitutes one of the more official cases of Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazi German forces. The 13,000-strong SS Volunteer Galicia Division was created under the condition that they would only fight against Soviet troops. However, they were not the only Ukrainians to fight with Germany during the

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War: of the one million Soviet citizens who fought in German uniforms in 1944, 220,000 were Ukrainians.

On the other hand, there was already a high degree of resistance towards the Germans by the summer of 1941. Local partisans, nationalist groups and Soviet partisan movements all took up resistance, and guerrilla-style attacks started occurring. Despite the more organised nationalist and Soviet partisan groups, locals without any particular political orientation organised themselves into partisan units to attack German supply lines as a reaction to the brutal treatment from the Nazi regime (Magosci 2010, pp. 679-80).

4.3.5 Soviet forces in Ukraine

When the chances of war changed and the Soviets started their offensive after their victory in the Battle of Stalingrad, another push began into Ukraine, this time from east to west and with the Germans in retreat. The Soviet forces did not stop their offensive when they reached the old Soviet border, but followed the Germans all the way to Berlin, where the latter capitulated.

This, of course, means that all ethnic Ukrainian territory was now in the hands of the Soviet Union, but to get support from Ukrainians the Soviet Union gave the Ukrainian Soviet Republic some autonomy, and Ukrainian culture was once again promoted superficially in the name of winning public support.

In western Ukraine the Soviet forces received the coldest welcome anywhere in the country. The West Ukrainians had already decided the last time the area was in Soviet hands that that should be avoided at all costs. Many West Ukrainians fled together with the retreating German forces and settled in territories that were not in the hands of the Soviet forces.
For those who stayed behind the Soviets’ plan was clear – they were determined to impose their rule swiftly and uncompromisingly. Whereas Stalin had come to accept the presence (however regulated) of the Orthodox church in eastern Ukraine, the Greek-Catholic Church in West Ukraine was immediately forced to incorporate itself into the Orthodox Church, and the Metropolitan was placed under house arrest.

The presence of Soviet forces in western Ukraine and the belief that the Allies would soon join the fight against the Soviets when they moved further into Europe led the UPA and OUN to continue their partisan fighting against the Soviet army (Subtelny 2009, pp. 478-80).

4.3.6 Ukrainian losses in the war

About 5.3 million Ukrainians or one in six of the population died during the war, and another 2.3 million were forcibly deported to Germany as Ostarbeiter. Over 700 cities and 28,000 villages were completely destroyed and its inhabitants killed. To put this into perspective, for every village that was destroyed in France, 250 villages were destroyed in Ukraine (Subtelny 2009, p. 480).

One small positive effect of the war is worth mentioning. All Ukrainians found themselves in the same country after the war, in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and it would stay like that for the rest of the Soviet Union’s existence (Subtelny 2009, p. 480).

4.3.7 Ukraine in the Soviet Union after World War II

The tension between merging the different nations into a single communist mass and showing the world that the Soviet Union treated its ethnic minorities better than anywhere else in the world was a driver in Soviet nationality policy throughout its existence.
Lenin had the idea that minorities would only fully and willingly embrace socialism once they ceased to feel oppressed by the Russian majority in the union and therefore that nationality and the right to a native language existed side by side with policies to encourage assimilation throughout the Soviet Union (Gorenburg 2006, pp. 276-78).

The Soviet government began its official policy of widespread Russification throughout the whole union in the 1950s. However, unofficially Russification had started already during the Great Terror of 1936-38, when minority leaders were accused of nationalism and entire ethnic populations, including Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, Chechens and others, were exiled to Central Asia and Siberia (Gorenburg 2006, p. 279).

In 1958, as part of a school reform, President Khrushchev introduced Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and already by mid-1960s it had become clear that in the Soviet Union socialism spoke Russian (Gorenburg 2006, p. 279). Although the school reform allowed parents to choose the language of education for their children, parents were strongly encouraged to send their children to Russian-speaking schools. Parents were already prepared to do this out of a perception that fluency in Russian was a good career move. Despite the school reform, however, native languages remained the norm elsewhere in the Soviet Union, but in eastern and southern Ukraine, including urban areas, Russian became the predominant language of education (Gorenburg 2006, p. 280). In urban areas a prestigious career required fluency in Russian: a simple knowledge of Russian was not enough (Gorenburg 2006, p. 281).

Because of the adoption of the Russian language and Soviet culture by many minorities, Soviet policy-makers believed that they had solved the nationality problem in the early 1980s by integrating (through assimilation) the minorities and the Russian population into a single Soviet people. However, this proved wrong, and when Gorbachev
announced a loosening of Soviet policies with the Perestroika program, minority nationalists started shooting up everywhere in the union (Gorenburg 2006, p. 298).

4.4 The fall of the Soviet Union

The period after the fall of the Soviet Union is described everywhere as chaotic. The chaos that most of the new countries that emerged out of the fall of the Soviet Union experienced in the 1990s came from the far-reaching changes that their societies had to go through, from communism to democracy, from one party to many, from the planned economy to capitalism, and so on and so forth. Almost like lightning, millions of former Soviet citizens found themselves in a completely new situation, one that for many was initially met with optimism, though soon the majority started doubting whether their current situation was actually better than before, and the small minority for whom the situation was truly better had no interest in sharing their recently acquired wealth.

4.4.1 The decision is made

After Glasnost and Perestroika in the 1980s, an increasing number of Ukrainians started dreaming about independence. In the beginning the dream was not as ambitious as having an independent country, but only more independence within the Soviet system. In particular the opening of the old Soviet-era archives, and with it the rediscovery of their own history of repression, especially the 1932-33 Holodomor created opposition against the communist Soviet system, but also the Chernobyl disaster and its terrible handling by Moscow, together with the attempts of the communists to hide it from the public, led many Ukrainians to desire if not independence, then at least a higher degree of autonomy (Subtelny 2009, p. 581-574).
In the August 1991 coup in Moscow communist hard-liners attempted to reinstall the old Soviet-style leadership and essentially erase the years of Gorbachev and his reforms. In the fall after the coup the wish for actual independence grew stronger in Ukraine, and in the referendum of December 1991 an impressive 92% of the population voted to leave the Soviet Union.

On 7-8 December 1991 Ukraine met with representatives of Russia and Belarus and, as one of the founding states of the USSR, dissolved the union and started establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Subtelny 2009, pp. 581-583).

4.4.2 Living conditions in the new state

It was not uncommon to hear Russia referred to as the *Wild East* (Dikij vostok) in the 1990s, just as there was a saying about Ukraine in that period, that only two laws were in force there: *Murphy’s law* and *the law of the jungle* (Subtelny 2009, p. 587).

Living conditions for Ukrainians in the first ten years of the country’s independence were usually very hard. Only a very few oligarchs managed to enrich themselves from the new policies and economic climate, most often in a period of hyperinflation, by exchanging Ukrainian currency into American dollars, only to exchange it back at an increased rate some time later. They also bought up the government’s production facilities, which had been put on sale as part of the privatisation policy, for next to nothing.

The living standards of ordinary Ukrainians, on the other hand, deteriorated markedly in the 1990s. Some statistics will speak for themselves. For example, while 15% of people in the Ukrainian republic in 1989 were living under the poverty line, the number had increased to 50% three years later. In 1992 inflation was at 435%, and in 1993 prices surged by more than 1000%, causing average salaries to be basically worthless.
Furthermore, unemployment rose to a rate of 33%, and many people even in work were never paid. By 1999 the country was facing the threat of bankruptcy.

No matter who I have spoken to, Russians or Ukrainians, the 1990s are unanimously referred to as the hardest period in the country’s history, and having read just a little about the long and violent history of the two countries, that really says a great deal. Of course, the 1990s are also often mentioned, because people remember them still, but the story is certainly told vividly that the instability of the 1990s was a horrible time.

One woman told me that at the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, she had saved enough to buy two cars, but soon afterwards the money was worth nothing. I asked her why she did not buy a car when she had the money. To which she replied: “There were no cars to buy”.

There were no cars to buy in the Soviet system and we have probably all seen photos or heard stories of the empty shelves in the shops and the long lines people had to wait in just to buy groceries. This was a social phenomenon that liberalism and capitalism promised to change for the better. During the 1990s the shelves were slowly filling up again and the lines were shortened, but that was mostly because very few people had the money to buy anything with. Not until economic stabilisation and growth slowly started occurring right around the turn of the new millennium were people able to enjoy the economic freedom and prosperity they had been promised.

4.4.3 The Orange Revolution

In the fall of 2004 Ukraine had presidential elections. During the election campaign, it soon became clear that the top candidates would be Victor Yanukovych and Victor Yushchenko. Yanukovych was endorsed by the sitting president, Leonid Kuchma and the oligarch elite in the Ukraine and was Russia’s favourite. Running against him was Yushchenko, known from his time as the head of the National Bank in Ukraine. He stood for change, reforms and a western orientation. He was therefore the favourite candidate of the USA and EU.
A few months before the election Yushchenko was poisoned with dioxin and flown to Vienna to receive specialised treatment. He survived, but returned to Ukraine with scars covering his body. The poisoning gave him martyr-like status among his supporters in Ukraine, and many across the country blamed the sitting president (who was already believed to have ordered the killing of journalist Georgiy Gongadze) and his protégé Yanukovych (Kappeler 2016, pp. 292-293).

In the first round of the presidential elections Yushchenko achieved 39.9 percent of the votes and Yanukovych 39.3 percent. However, it was later confirmed that the election results had been manipulated in favour of Yanukovych. After the second round Yanukovych was announced the winner, with 49.5 percent against Yushchenko’s 46.6 percent. However, once again electoral fraud was suspected and later proved (Kappeler 2016, p. 294).

The manipulation of both rounds of the elections initiated mass protests in the Maidan. In the evenings following the elections between half a million and a million people demonstrated in the Maidan to show their disapproval of the election results and their support of Yushchenko (Kappeler 2016, p. 295).

Yanukovych’s supporters also demonstrated, but not to the same extent. In the eastern part of Ukraine 150,000 people gathered in the city of Donetsk to demonstrate against Yushchenko and about 10,000 went to Kyiv to demonstrate.

After a week of peaceful demonstrations, the Verkhovna Rada criticised the conduct of the elections, the second round was declared invalid, and a new election date was set.

In the final round of the elections Yushchenko achieved 52 percent of the votes against Yanukovych’s 44 percent. The regional pattern was, as expected, that in the south and east Yanukovych had the majority (with the most extreme examples being Donetsk
and Luhansk, with 93.5 percent and 91.2 percent respectively), and in the west and central part Yushchenko had the majority (with 93 percent in Galicia) (Kappeler 2016, pp. 206-207 and Young 2015).

Ukrainians often speak with pride about the Orange Revolution, as the time when society mobilised, stood up to a corrupt regime and won peacefully.

4.5 Crimea

Is Crimea Russian or Ukrainian? To fully understand this question and why it is often posed, it is once again helpful to know the history of the peninsula.

The story of how Crimea was given to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic as a present by General Secretary Khrushchev in 1954 is often told, sometimes with the addition that he was drunk at the time. Drunk or not (he may very well have been, as it was not unusual in the Soviet Union to make political decisions while consuming large amounts of vodka), the proper protocol was followed when Crimea was transferred to Ukraine. Others argue that, rather than being a present, Crimea was given to Ukraine to make the republic less Ukrainian (Wilson 2014, p. 99 and Taylor 2014). The official explanation for the transfer was that it coincided with the commemoration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the reunion of Ukraine and Russia (Kuzio 2017, p. 25) in the Pereiaslav agreement.

No matter what we call the transfer, it took place in 1954, and from being Russian Crimea went to being Ukrainian. During Soviet times this was a pure formality, as it was all one country anyway. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 it suddenly mattered, as Crimea was now officially part of the newly formed independent Ukrainian state.

Both Russian media and politicians in Russia leave little doubt that they see Crimea as Russian rather than Ukrainian. After the annexation of the peninsula in 2014 at
a celebration called “We are together,” Russian president Vladimir Putin addressed the Crimean population and during the speech said: “After a long, hard and exhausting voyage, Crimea and Sevastopol are returning to their harbour, to their native shores, to their home port, to Russia” (Kremlin 2014a). But how fair is it to say that Crimea’s home port is Russia?

The Russian Empire under the leadership of Catharine the Great annexed Crimea in 1783, but despite it still being part of the Russian Empire a hundred years after its annexation, in 1897 Russians only made up 33.1 percent of the population (Wilson 2014, p. 102).

Crimea was at this time a big melting pot of people. The largest part of the population was the Crimean Tatars (35.6 per cent in 1897), largely descendants of Mongolian rule who had arrived there in the thirteenth century. The Crimean Tatar Khanate flourished in Crimea from the 1440s to Catharine’s conquest in 1783. Many other ethnicities were found on Crimea, among them Greeks, Armenians, Germans, Bulgarians and Krymchaks (Wilson 2014, p. 102).

Even though the Crimean Tatars had been a large majority at the time of the Russian annexation of Crimea and remained the majority a hundred years after, their numbers fell over time due to voluntary and forced emigration. The first wave of emigration happened during the Russo-Turkish war but before the annexation, the second in connection with the annexation, and the third during and after the Crimean war in 1853-56.

After the 1917 Revolution, Crimea became a sovereign socialist republic in the Soviet Union (i.e. not part of the Russian Socialist Republic). Due to the terrible living conditions...
conditions, including two famines, approximately 50 per cent of the Crimean Tatars had either died or had left Crimea by 1933.

A large proportion of the remaining Crimean Tatars were deported during the Second World War, when Crimea had become part of the Russian Socialist Republic. Stalin accused the Tatars of collaboration with the German forces and deported them from Crimea in enormous numbers. Most adult Tatars were at this time fighting in the Soviet army, and therefore in May 1944 one wave of deportees consisted largely of elderly men and women, and women and children. The men followed soon after their return from the war.

Many Crimean Tatars died either while being transported or due to the conditions they faced in Siberia. How many lost their lives due to the deportations is uncertain, but numbers range from 27 percent to 46 percent, and the Crimean Tatars were only allowed to return home in the very last years of the Soviet Union, from the late 1980s, though at that time many chose not to (Wilson 2014, pp. 103-104 and Taylor 2014).

In looking at the history of Crimea, it is not obvious that Crimea's home port is Russia. The peninsula was part of Russia from 1783 until 1917 and then again from 1945 to 1954, as well as being part of Ukraine from 1954 to 2014, but it is definitely the Crimean Tatars who have the strongest historical claim to the peninsula.

At the beginning of this chapter I wrote that history is still very present in the minds of Ukrainians, an example of this being the winner of the European Song Contest in 2016, the Ukrainian Jamala of Tatar descent, who won with her own composition called 1944 about Stalin's deportations of Tatars from Crimea (Eurovision 2016).
5 Conflict episodes

As I briefly remarked in outlining conflict transformation and Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM), one of the elements in a conflict is the visible surface, that is, the episode. In the following I will outline the episodes of the conflict in Ukraine. To continue the metaphor of looking through the window of conflict transformation, this is the window that is being made.

Following ECM, I will look for themes in the episodes. The themes are centred around justice, security, truth and harmony, and they correspond to the four peace families: the moral, the modern, the postmodern and the energetic, introduced earlier. A conflict will most likely involve all four themes, as they are interrelated and will be connected. However, the first necessary step, pointed out by Dietrich, to approaching a conflict in elicitive conflict work is to define the cardinal directions and the main theme (Dietrich 2018, p. 53).

As the aim of this thesis is to draw a map of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, a conflict that has been going on for more than five years, I find it necessary to draw the episodes with special attention to pivotal happenings, as I cannot outline everything here that has happened in the last five years. Therefore, in the following, I will take the timeline of the conflict, highlight essential periods and events, and then analyse the theme of the event, suggesting whether the balance has shifted from one dominant theme to another.
5.1 Overview

For the sake of an overview and a better understanding, the timeline of the conflict can be divided into three phases. Claus Mathiesen (2018) divides the conflict into the following phases. The first phase is the escalation phase, which goes from the beginning of the Orange Revolution in the Maidan and ends with the Russian annexation of Crimea. The second phase is the high-intensity phase that runs from the beginning of the conflict in eastern Ukraine to the signing of the Minsk II agreement in February 2015. The last phase is the low-intensity period that starts with the signing of Minsk II and is still ongoing (Mathiesen 2018, p. 249).

The terms high intensity and low intensity refer to the kinetic nature of the conflict, that is, how intense the armed fighting is. From this perspective, it makes sense to place the annexation of Crimea under the escalation phase, since almost no weapons were fired during the annexation. On the other hand, the annexation can also be seen much more as a result of the escalating conflict in Kyiv than as part of the escalation phase itself.

I have divided this section into the following sub-sections: the Revolution of dignity (phase one), the high-intensity period of the war (phase two) and the low-intensity period (phase three). I have taken the annexation of Crimea out of the first phase and placed it between phases one and two by calling it phase one-and-a-half in order to indicate the transitional nature of this event.

5.2 The Revolution of Dignity: Phase one

When a group of students decided to take matters to the street in Kyiv in November 2013, the reason was Ukraine’s withdrawal from an association agreement (AA) and a free-trade agreement (the DCFTA or Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) with the EU.
The president was days from signing the agreement that would open up the possibility of more trade with the EU when he decided that the consequences for Ukraine’s trade with Russia would be too severe. Russia had repeatedly declared that, in the case of a free-trade agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Russia would have to close its borders with Ukraine. Many in Ukraine saw this *all or nothing* attitude from Russia as an attempt to coerce Ukraine into choosing Russia as their main future trading partner and thereby stay in Russia’s sphere of influence.

The president, Viktor Yanukovych, decided at the last minute not to sign the agreement, sparking protests among young students in Kyiv, who had hoped for a future, if not as European citizens, then at least one with the possibility to enjoy some of the same commodities and even in time perhaps the same living standards as the EU (Wilson 2014, pp. 66-68, Shveda and Park 2015, p. 87, Kimer 2016, p. 12).

The main theme of the first days of the protest was guided by the notion of justice. In its widest sense, people in Kyiv felt there had been a *breach* in the contract between the power-holders (primarily the president) and the people. The contract promises a *better*, wealthier future in return for civil obedience. The students who gathered on the Maidan had clearly seen a hope for change in a country where development had largely stagnated and corruption determined the everyday lives of most people. The hope was initiated by the EU’s promise of economic development and prosperity in return for loyalty. When the hope of change was lost, they took their dissatisfaction and disappointment into the street.

5.2.1 The initial government response

The government responded with excessive violence against the demonstrations that took place on the Maidan in Kyiv on 30 November. This was recorded and shown online by Hromadske TV (Civic TV) with interviews from the square being conducted using
handheld cameras, thus ensuring that the protesters’ side of the story came out, as most other TV channels in Ukraine are government-controlled.

The violent response sparked public support for the demonstrations on the Maidan, more protesters now being motivated to protest against the violence being used by the authorities rather than against Yanukovych’s decision not to sign the EU agreement (Wilson 2014, p. 69, Shveda and Park 2015, p. 87-88 and Charap and Colton 2017, p. 122).

Despite the fact that the city authorities banned all further demonstrations, the following day hundreds of thousands were on the streets protesting, and many volunteered to support the logistics in the background (Kimer 2016, pp. 21-29).14

I suggest that the violent reactions from the government changed the focus of the conflict. Where the dominant theme in the beginning had been justice, after the beatings of protestors it shifted to security, that is, security from the actions of a repressive and corrupt government, who cared first about themselves and about power and only then about the people, and who, in this case, reacted with violence against peaceful, legal demonstrations.

Security is a theme that deals with the material sphere, the fear of losing one’s belongings, but also one’s life. The promise of the nation state is a promise to keep its

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14 One of the people we meet in Kimer’s book is Anna, who is working voluntarily around the clock to support the revolution on the Maidan and later the soldiers who are fighting in the east.
citizens safe from external threats beyond its borders (Innsbruck Peace Program Website, *Modern Peaces*) The nation state is not supposed to represent a threat to people's safety as it did when the government reacted violently against the demonstrators.

Truth as a theme was also present in this episode. The new internet-based TV channels represent an attempt to *get the truth* out in a conflict where the government had previously had a monopoly on story-telling.

Justice also remained an underlying concern, however, which I believe is some of the explanation for the big turnout of protestors on 1 December. After security and justice became the dominant themes, everybody who had reason to demand justice based on the past actions of the government or any official body came on to the streets, making the Maidan Revolution of Dignity about much more than the EU agreement. The student protests and the way the government dealt with them was, in popular discourse, merely the straw that broke the camel's back.

5.2.2 The war in the streets of Kyiv

On 16 January 2014 the Verkhovna Rada (the Ukrainian Parliament) adopted the *laws of 16th January*, which soon came to be called the *dictatorship laws* by the media, NGOs and protestors. Among other things, the laws restricted freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and in essence made the demonstrations illegal, as well as turning Ukraine into a country that resembled the dictatorship in Belarus (Shveda and Park 2015, p. 88).

However, laws proved useless not only because the authorities were unable to arrest anyone in Kyiv at that moment, they were also counterproductive. Wilson (2014) quotes a journalist asking: “If you can be arrested for wearing a hat or writing a Facebook post, why shouldn’t you throw a Molotov cocktail or a cobblestone?” (p. 82). I suggest that, rather than legitimizing throwing Molotov cocktails, the laws served as evidence for the
protestors that the authorities would turned increasingly authoritarian if they found themselves unable to solve problems.

With the authorities turning increasingly authoritarian and the atmosphere on the streets becoming more and more radicalized, the violent clashes on the streets became more and more frequent, reaching a climax on 18–22 February. When on 18 February the protestors set the ruling Party of Regions building on fire, the government answered with Operation Boomerang, a Secret Service (SBU) operation, and Operation Surge, a mission by the Interior Ministry. That night the Maidan protestors managed to stand their ground while the two different missions set out to remove them. To show that this scenario can easily be compared to war, one need only know that two armoured personnel carriers were stopped and set on fire in the streets during the fighting (Wilson 2014, pp. 87-89).

On 20 February the first sniper shots were fired. That day protestors were shot down by professional snipers from the roofs of buildings around the Maidan. There were 113 deaths in the Revolution – the heavenly hundreds are the heroes of the Revolution of Dignity and their photographs are still shown on a remembrance wall close to the Maidan.

The day after these events the protestors stormed the presidential palace. Yanukovych fled from Kyiv, first to Kharkiv in northeast Ukraine, from there to Crimea, and from there again to Russia. The day afterwards Parliament removed Yanukovych
from his position as the President of Ukraine (Shveda and Park 2015, p. 88, Charap and Colton 2017, p. 124).

The nation state was born out of a need for security and promises to maintain order, control and security for its citizens. When the government turned increasingly authoritarian, taking away basic rights from its citizens in an attempt to retain power, keep control and in essence perpetuate its own legitimate existence as the provider of security, the theme of the conflict changed. I suggest that in this last period of the Revolution of Dignity the theme of the conflict was again security.

In the late summer of 2018 I was going for a walk with Oksana, the mother of my host family (with whom I lived while I was attending a language course in Kyiv), and as we were walking around downtown Kyiv, we came by the congress centre, Ukrainian House, when she pointed to the building she said something like “In there Julia [her daughter] had her first performance when she was a kid…. During the revolution we turned it into a hospital and treated the wounded from the Maidan”. I asked her if she had participated (she is a woman in her fifties with two kids, and I had perhaps not expected her to have been involved), to which she answered, “We were all involved”. While this is of course an exaggeration, since not everybody got involved, it does point to the fact that the Revolution of Dignity was a revolution of the masses and that a very large number of people came regularly to the Maidan square in that period.

Plate 4: The lobby of Hotel Ukraïne was turned into a field hospital during the shootings on 20 February. Photo credit: Matilde Kimer
5.3 The annexation of Crimea: Phase one and a half

While the Revolution was centred mostly in Kyiv, other parts of Ukraine saw uprisings too in support of both the Revolution of Dignity and the Anti-Maidan demonstrations. This was also the case in Crimea. The local Crimea Tatars were mostly in the forefront in the pro-revolution demonstrations, while ethnic Russians and pro-Russian Ukrainians stood for the anti-Maidan demonstrations, fearing for the consequences for them if a pro-European and anti-Russian line was established in Kyiv.

Already on 27 February the little green men\(^{15}\) started appearing in Crimea. They were young men in military dress but with no insignia or other markings to indicate where they came from. They did not answer questions or give away their country (or region) of origin.\(^{16}\) Later it became clear that the little green men were a mixture of Russian forces normally stationed at the Russian naval base in Sevastopol, local volunteers and Russian special forces, who were leading the operations (Wilson 2014, p. 111 and Sakwa 2016, p. 104). On 1 March, Putin obtained unanimous approval from Russia’s upper house to deploy forces in Ukraine, until the “normalisation of the socio-political situation there” (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 126).

The little green men first took control of the airports on the peninsula and then took over important government buildings and military bases. While the Ukrainian military did not receive any orders from a higher chain of command, they acted on the orders of their local base commanders, their actions ranging from negotiating a local ceasefire with the military personnel who showed up outside the gates to escaping to the Ukrainian mainland to switching sides by declaring their loyalty to the Russian Federation.

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\(^{15}\) In Russian they were referred to as either зелёные человечки meaning ‘green men’ or Вежливые люди meaning ‘friendly people’.

\(^{16}\) For an interesting visual reference, see the Vice News series “Russian Roulette in Ukraine” by journalist Simon Ostrovsky, Episode 1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNKsLiK52ss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNKsLiK52ss).
(as many as two-thirds chose this option), but none of them resorted to fighting (Wilson 2014, pp. 112-113 and 117, Charap and Colton 2017, p. 130).

While the whole world was busy wondering what was going on in Crimea, the Crimean Soviet arranged a referendum on 16 March 2014. The referendum asked two opposing questions: 1) Are you in favour of the reunification of Crimea with Russia as part of the Russian Federation? 2) Are you in favour of restoring the 1992 constitution and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine? (Sakwa 2016, p. 104).

In 1992 the Crimean Supreme Soviet had renamed the peninsula the Republic of Crimea and declared self-government. The decision was to be ratified by a referendum, but the referendum was never held. In 1995 the Ukrainian Parliament discarded the constitution, and in the Ukrainian 1996 constitution Crimea was incorporated into Ukraine as an Autonomous Republic (Sakwa 2016, p. 101 and Kimer 2016, p. 104). The 16 March referendum in Crimea therefore did not include an option to return to the Pre-Maidan status as an integral part of Ukraine.

The official turnout for the referendum opted for reunion with the Russian Federation, but since no international organisations were allowed to observe the referendum and because all the election stations were manned by armed pro-Russian forces, it has never been widely recognised by anyone other than Russia.

Only a few days after, on 21 March, the Upper House of the Russian Parliament ratified the treaty to include Crimea in the Russian Federation, and from then on Russia has considered Crimea to be Russian (Wilson 2014, p. 113).

The theme in the annexation of Crimea centres around truth. The conflict arose out of diverging truths – the truth for the protestors on the Maidan, that Ukraine was better off orienting itself to Europe, was not shared by everyone in Ukraine, especially in Crimea, but the conflict itself also plays on many truths. The little green men embody the
theme of truth perfectly, since for so long no one knew who they were, but everybody had
their own ideas and developed their own truths about it.

Where the postmodern understanding of peace(s) arises from refraining from a single ultimate modern truth and provides room for the simultaneous existence of many truths because each truth happens in the here and now, in relations between people, and relations again twist and change truths, the corresponding understanding of truths as a weapon can be observed in the annexation of Crimea and later in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

5.4 The high-intensity period of the war: Phase two

If the annexation of Crimea introduced the postmodern notion of many truths as a weapon, it is safe to say that the conflict in eastern Ukraine is born out of that notion. Postmodern in nature, time and time again the conflict challenges the common knowledge about the world by introducing a highly confusing number of truths on a topic. This is a Russian speciality (though one used by others too) that even gave a name to what some claim is a new type of warfare – hybrid warfare.

5.4.1 A note on Hybrid warfare

Hybrid warfare is often associated with Russia’s presence in eastern Ukraine, but the term was used before that, as was, as many historians have pointed out, the techniques (Splidsboel Hansen 2017, p. 4). In an article of February 2013, the Russian defence minister, Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov, explained how, in his view, perfectly well-functioning states could “in a matter of months and even days, be transformed into an area of fierce armed conflict, become a victim of foreign intervention, and sink deep into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe, and civil war” (Galeotti 2018, p. 1) by using what he called Hybrid warfare, that is, warfare using subversion, sabotage and disinformation to prepare the battlefield for potential armed conflict (Galeotti 2018, p. 1).
Gerasimov also noted that future warfare would be characterised by not being declared, by a broad use of kinetic and non-kinetic tools, by the distinction between the civilian and military spheres being blurred and lastly by the battle taking place in both the physical sphere and information space (Splidsboel Hansen 2017, p. 4).

Despite its later interpretation by many western media organizations, in all likelihood the article was not intended as an official explanation of what Russia was doing in Ukraine. More likely, in mentioning *foreign intervention* and the power it has to destroy states, Gerasimov was thinking rather of the USA’s alleged role in creating the Arab Spring. Nonetheless, it is a useful summary of modern 21st century warfare and the challenges it brings to conventional armed forces. Gerasimov does, however, present the article as a set of lessons that the Russian army should use and implement in order to train and equip its armed forces on that basis (Galeotti 2013 and Gerasimov 2013, p. 2).

5.4.2 The beginning of the war

Already before the annexation of Crimea an uprising had begun in the far east of Ukraine. On 1 March a crowd of around seven thousand people gathered in Donetsk city carrying Russian flags and the flags of an organisation called *Donetsk Republic*. There were similar gatherings of protestors in other places in eastern Ukraine, who feared what they saw as radical nationalists who had violently overthrown the president in Kyiv, and many also expressed the fear that they would lose the right to speak their mother tongue, Russian.

Shortly after Yanukovych fled Kyiv, Ukraine’s parliament voted to cancel the status of Russian as the second official language in the country. The acting president refused to sign the measure, and therefore it was never passed. Not long afterwards, members of the same parliament affirmed that no one wanted to limit the use of Russian or the right to speak it in Ukraine. But too late, it seems, the damage was already done, and people in the east had their fears confirmed that the new government in Kyiv would
not be particularly likely to look after their interests (Recknagel 2014, Charap and Colton 2017, p. 125).

From April insurgents occupied government buildings in Donetsk, Gorlovka and Kramatorsk. There were also attempts to occupy buildings in Kharkiv, but when around seventy anti-Maidan protesters were arrested on 8 April protestors in the city took no further action. The protesters in Donetsk occupied the regional administration and proclaimed the formation of the Donetsk People’s Republic (Donetskaja Narodnaja Respublika or DNR), and not long afterwards, on 27 April, the same thing happened in Luhansk, which led to the formation of the Luhansk People’s Republic (Luhanska Narodna Respublika or LNR). The two People’s Republics then formed the Donetsk People’s Army, whose leader became Igor Strelkov Girkin (Sakwa 2014, p. 150). On 11 May 2014 local referendums were held in which, according to Donetsk separatist leaders, 89% voted yes, with a 75% turnout, to the creation of an independent people’s republic. The vote in Luhansk was 96% in favour, also with a 75% turnout. Many people have contested these figures, and the referendums have not been recognised by anyone, including this time Russia. International recognition or not, on 11 May 2014 the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic were officially formed (Wilson 2014, p. 132 and Yashin and Shorina, 201517)

At this time the protesters in Donetsk occupied government buildings and the uprising continued to spread in all of Donbas. At this stage the protesters were still mostly locals, untrained volunteers who were not the same as the well-trained, well-equipped Little Green Men who had been seen in Crimea not long before (Sakwa 2016, p. 150).

17 Ilya Yashin and Olga Shorina are the editors of a report by Boris Nemtsov on the war in Ukraine. The report was published posthumously in May 2015, as Nemtsov was killed on 27 February 2015 in Moscow.

I suggest that in the first month of the conflict in Donbas the conflict theme was justice. At the very beginning of the war people in Donbas demonstrated and protested for the same overall reasons as people had done it in Kyiv months before; first of all, out of a failed promise of development and prosperity. The western-oriented government that was now in power in Kyiv did not offer the eastern part of Ukraine a golden outlook for the future. Secondly the protestors expected a violent response from the nation state’s representatives (and eventually got it), which tells us that security was also an issue as a conflict theme.

Some of the differences between eastern and western Ukraine can, of course, be explained by the history, which I have written about in Chapter four, but some of it is also down to demographics. As Sakwa (2016, p. 149) notes: “Whereas the Maidan protestors were ‘middleclass and nationalistic’, the anti-Maidan movement in the Donbas was ‘lower class and anti-oligarchic (and Russian nationalist)”. The difference between western, central and eastern Ukraine is not only about the EU, USA and Russia and those with whom various groups of people mostly identify or about language (which I think is the least of all the issues), it is also about class, economics and social status. The people in eastern Ukraine were still working in the industry of black-energy, mines and coal, or in iron and steel production. They had perhaps not benefitted as much as others from the fall of the Soviet Union and its transformation into a capitalist market economy.

Furthermore, much of the energy and iron produced in Donbas was exported to Russia, so when the new government in Kyiv wanted to sign an Association Agreement with the EU, and after Russia had already warned that its signing would trigger
consequences for trade between Russia and Ukraine, some in eastern Ukraine might have felt a real threat to their jobs and with it their ability to support their families.

5.4.3 The downing of MH17

On 17 July 2014, a Boeing 777-200 Malaysian Airlines plane disappeared from the radar as it was flying over eastern Ukraine. Later a signal from the plane’s Emergency Locator Transmitter was received, and the plane was located. All 298 passengers and crew lost their lives (Dutch Safety Board, 2015).

The crash was caused by a missile fired from a Buk surface-to-air system. Both the online investigative media Bellingcat and the Dutch Safety Board¹⁸ agree with the conclusion that the plane was shot down by a missile fired from a Buk system (Dutch Safety Board 2015 and Bellingcat 2017).¹⁹ In its 2017 report Bellingcat also concluded that the missile system was taken into Ukraine from Russia a few days before and left Ukraine to return to Russia the next morning. The report contains a detailed reconstruction of the route the Buk travelled from its place of origin at the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade in Kursk to the place where it fired at the MH17 (Bellingcat 2017).

In the days leading up to the downing of the MH17, there had been a lot of activity in the air above the conflict area. The Ukrainian army was advancing and taking territory previously held by the separatist forces, hence Ukrainian jets were operating heavily in areas close to the frontline, for example, on 15 July, when a Ukrainian jet struck a residential building in the city of Snizhane, killing eleven civilians and injuring eight (Bellingcat 2017). The high level of air operations resulted in the loss of a Ukrainian Antonov AN-26 military transport plane on 14 July and another material loss two days

¹⁸ The Dutch Safety Board has published the official report on the MH17 crash. The report was conducted by an international team, including the following countries: Ukraine, Malaysia, USA, UK, Australia (provided information on request) and Russia (provided information on request).

¹⁹ Russia has not recognised either the Dutch Safety Board’s report or the Bellingcat 2017 report.
later when a Ukrainian SU-25 attack jet was shot down (Bellingcat 2017 and Dutch Safety Board 2015). In total, from May to 17 July the following planes and helicopters were shot down: four helicopters (two Mi-24 and two Mi-8), and three planes (AN-30, IL-76 and the AN-26 mentioned above) (Yashin and Shorina, 2015).

The shooting down of the two Ukrainian planes in the days leading up to the downing of MH17 indicates that efforts were made to control the airspace above the areas of fighting. It also indicates that the separatist forces had access to surface-to-air weapons and capabilities.

The aftermath of the event rather than the event itself indicates that the theme of the conflict was truth, at least at the state level. After the plane had been shot down and the whole world’s attention was on eastern Ukraine for the first time since the Russian annexation of Crimea, stories of what had happened started appearing at a frequency that made Boris Nemtsov describe it as a *smokescreen* used to hide the actual truth (Yashin and Shorina, 2015).

While it would not be possible to mention all the theories of what happened in this thesis, the main conclusion is that the Russian Ministry of Defence put forward many different theories of what had happened, all pointing to Ukraine as the guilty party. Most, if not all, of their evidence has been proved to have been manipulated so heavily, that expert opinion is that it lacks any credibility as evidence (Yashin and Shorina, 2015 and Bellingcat 2017).

The smokescreen of explanations that appeared after the downing of MH17 clearly demonstrate how the theme of the conflict at the state level is truth(s). Truth has become plural, subjective and manipulated to a degree where no one can claim to know even factual truths and where the manipulation of truth at the top level has a direct effect not only on the conflict, but also on relations between NATO countries and Russia.
In 2016 I was attending Russian language classes at summer school in Moscow. One evening I am sitting in a park near the dormitories where I was living and a young Russian man comes up and starts talking with me. Without knowing my past in the army – without knowing anything much about me – we had only spoken for five minutes – he said “Third World War is coming and Russia is ready for it”. Not threatening, just in an assertive way. I answered that I thought it was a scary thing to say and that Russians, of all people, should know how destructive war is. He, as if surprised by my answer, said “No, no, Russia will never start it. It is NATO who is planning to attack us”. Similar things were said to me three times, by complete strangers, while I was in Russia that summer.

5.4.4 Kinetic examples of the period

While it would go beyond the scope and aims of this thesis to describe the fighting in the east in detail, I will focus on the story of Donetsk Airport, as the battle for the airport has almost become legendary, not to speak of the Ukrainian soldiers who fought in the battle and earned the nickname *Cyborgs* because they fought long endless battles for a pile of ruins that was once a brand-new modern airport.

Donetsk airport was built before the 2012 soccer world championship in Ukraine. The first battle for the strategic strongpoint started in May 2014 when forces from the DNR and LNR took over the airport from the civilian administration. The government forces then moved strongly against DNR and LNR forces and managed to take the airport back. The first battle for the airport lasted for little less that a full day, but it marked the first time government forces had gone so aggressively against those of the DNR and LNR (Tavernise and Roth 2014, Macdonald and Behrakis 2014).

Fighting around the airport broke out again on 28 September in the second battle for Donetsk Airport. The battle went on, almost without a break, until January 2015. It gave a name to the Ukrainian ‘half-man half-machine’-Cyborgs, a media hero-ization of the Ukrainian soldiers, who fought over the airport with determination, engaging in daily shelling and firefights.
About four months after the beginning of the second battle for Donetsk airport, the fighting ended with the withdrawal of the Ukrainian forces, since when forces from the DNR and LNR have retained control of the airport.

Other areas in eastern Ukraine where the fighting was particular heavy and the number of casualties high between mid-April and January 2015 include Avdiivka, Debaltseve, Pesky and Ilovaisk. All these cities’ names, when said out loud, will evoke feelings of sorrow, hopelessness and patriotism in most Ukrainians.

The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights estimate that at least 5665 people (unofficial figures may go significantly higher) were killed in the period from the beginning of the war in mid-April 2014 until 15 February 2015 (OHCHR Report, 15 February 2015).

As the armed conflict took on a life of its own, fighting became the norm in eastern Ukraine, and the losses on both sides grew in number. Revenge and justice were the main themes of the conflict for the soldiers and civilians who lost friends, family and comrades in the fighting. Justice, together with the manipulation of truths, changed attitudes, and violence was justified with reference to past injustices committed towards oneself and to manipulated truths about the other side.

5.5 The low-intensity period of the war: Phase three

Whereas the high-intensity period presented itself as a full-scale kinetic war, the period that followed the signing of Minsk II was much less kinetic and led one to think of the conflict, if not as already frozen, then as freezing, that is, on the path to becoming a forgotten, deadlocked conflict.

5.5.1 Minsk II

The first Minsk agreement was signed on 5 September 2014 and was by and large a failure. The agreement did not manage to create a ceasefire, let alone the peace that had
been hoped. Therefore, the negotiating parties\textsuperscript{20} continued the talks, which ended in the signing of Minsk II and its coming into force on 15 February 2015. The fighting continued for five more days, but slowed down around 20 February (Mathiesen 2018, p. 257).

Minsk II is a thirteen-step plan aimed at achieving a ceasefire, with political steps to end the conflict completely. The agreement speaks of a ceasefire and a line for the withdrawal of heavy equipment, the disarming of all illegal groups and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Ukrainian territory. The agreement also included an amnesty for all those involved in the fighting and for prisoners to be released or exchanged. On a political level the agreement included constitutional reforms to enable decentralisation by the end of 2015 and for Ukraine to obtain control of the international border between itself Ukraine and Russia (BBC Europe 2015 and Financial Times 2015).

Minsk II was never fully implemented either. The withdrawal happened to some degree and the ceasefire is observed periodically, but fighting still occurs regularly. The political parts of the agreement, namely the constitutional reforms and the regaining by Ukraine of its control over the border never happened, and now, almost four years after the signing of the agreement, little indicates that it will happen. Most experts (see Dempsey 2017 and Pifer 2017) blame Russia for not keeping its side of the agreement to withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory or to return the separatist-controlled territories to Ukrainian sovereignty, but the Ukrainian government did not fulfil its part of the deal concerning constitutional reform either giving Donbas special status and a higher degree of autonomy.

My first thought was that Minsk II would represent a view of peace through justice, but contrary to what I imagined, the agreement contains no talk of justice, there is

\textsuperscript{20} Negotiating parties in the Minsk format were OSCE, Russia, Ukraine and representatives from DNP and LNP. Negotiating parties in the Normandy format were Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia.
no call for revenge for past injustices, and instead the agreement promises an amnesty for those who had fought in the war.

Another perspective is that Minsk II represents peace through security. The agreement has a clear link to the material sphere: for example the borders of the nation state need to be upheld and protected in order to honour the promise of order and protection that the nation state owes its citizens and to keep the state safe from foreign intruders. Thus, from this perspective the agreement represents peace through security.

However, yet another perspective might be that at this level Minsk II, in line with the general conflict theme, represents peace through truth. Russia is part of the Minsk negotiations as a neutral mediator that does not recognise or admit any other or more involvement in the conflict than the two other mediators, France and Germany, have. Had Minsk II been fulfilled, it could have been said that the agreement gave Russia an opportunity to contribute to the ending of the conflict without having to admit its involvement. So far this has not happened, and the fact that a party of the conflict that many see as the aggressor is also taking part of the negotiations by claiming to be a neutral party exemplifies how the topic of truth plays into the conflict.

While I was studying Russian, I tried to link up with Russians learning Danish in Denmark, to practice speaking. I meet with a woman, 65 years old who, despite having lived in Denmark for 15 years, did not speak Danish. As a consequence of this, she still watched Russian news. The first time we meet, we were talking back and forth, and the conversation fell on the conflict in Ukraine (this was in 2015). She got very upset and started telling me about how it was important for Russia to protect ethnic Russians against the neo-Nazis, the fascists who had taken over power in Kyiv. She told me quite emotionally about the crimes they were committing against Russians, some of which included killing a new-born baby in the Ukrainian Parliament and Ukrainian soldiers crucifying a boy in Slovyansk. None of those two incidents happened, but the woman I met with had gotten the idea from different media that it did.
5.5.2 A warm, half-frozen conflict

After the signing of Minsk II the intensity of the fighting decreased and the war has not seen the same scale of kinetic activity as before February 2015. However, the conflict is still ongoing, and there are ceasefire violations on a daily basis. For example, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) recorded 18,000 ceasefire violations between 29 October and 11 November and 11,900 ceasefire violations in the two-week period afterwards, from 12 November to 25 November. Correspondingly, on 26 November the number of civilian casualties for 2018 was 220, with 43 deaths and 177 injuries (OSCE Status Report 19 November 2018 and 26 November 2018). Furthermore, in testifying to the extent of non-implementation of Minsk II by both parties, between 29 October and 11 November 2018 the OSCE registered 89 weapons being found in violation of the withdrawal lines agreed in Minsk II (58 in non-government-controlled areas). The latest official number of casualties from the UHCHR from May 2017 records 10,090 dead, including 2,777 civilians, and 23,966 (physically) injured (UHCHR Report 15 May 2017).

5.5.3 Kerch Strait incident

The latest event to receive international attention in the area was the incident in the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, when Russian Navy ships captured three Ukrainian Navy ships. The Ukrainian Navy ships were going from Odessa on the western part of the Black Sea coast in Ukraine to Mariupol in the Azov Sea (also in Ukraine). In order to reach their destination, the ships had to pass through the Kerch Strait and under the newly build Crimean bridge connecting Russia and Crimea. The
Ukrainian Navy ships were stopped in the Kerch Strait, first by ramming and later by shots being fired, and all 23 Ukrainian crewmen were held in Crimea charged with “illegal border crossing by a group of individuals acting in collusion, or by an organised group, or with the use of or the threat to use violence” (Bentzen 2018). Furthermore, Russia says that three crewmen were wounded, while Ukraine says that the number is six (Bellingcat 2018 and Bentzen 2018).

Ukraine and Russia signed an “agreement on cooperation in the use of the Sea of Azov and the Strait of Kerch”21 in 2003 which states that both bodies of water belong to the internal waters of both Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine had been following the agreement up until the incident on 25 November, when Russia detained the three naval ships, arguing that since Crimea is now part of Russia, the agreement is no longer valid and Ukraine has no claim to the Kerch Strait, therefore all military vessels that pass through the Strait must notify the Russian authorities beforehand.

In the 21.00 news on 25 November on Perviyj Kanal (Channel One), one of the state-controlled news outlets in Russia, a story on the Kerch Strait incident explained how the incident was a clear provocation from the Ukrainian side, as Ukraine had not given any notification of its intention to pass its vessels through the Strait, as required by Russian law. These experts also said that it was a deliberate attempt from Ukrainian side to make it look as if they were the victims of Russian aggression in order first of all to draw more attention (and thereby money) form their western partners, but also for the Ukrainian President Poroshenko to introduce martial law and thereby improve his ratings for the upcoming elections (1tv.ru 2018, Video).

These fundamentally different interpretations of the incident, and the impossibility of knowing what actually happened, even by asking factual questions, and despite massive media coverage and both parties gladly sharing their versions with the world, confirm to me that truth is the main theme in the conflict at this level.

5.6 Concluding the conflict theme

After investigating the conflict episode in chronological order, I believe the conflict can be divided into two tracks. The first track is the local level, what I will henceforth call the Grassroots and Middle Range leadership. The second track is the political level, which is not directly involved in the fighting; this level will be analysed further in Chapter 10. The two tracks have different perspectives on the conflict, and different conflict themes dominate the tracks. On the lower-level track the conflict theme is justice, whereas on the top level the dominant theme is truth.

5.6.1 Justice on track one: the local level

Justice is a theme that deals with the past and the future through a focus on wrongdoings from the past and bringing them into the future by promising to right them with justice to the victims. Peace out of justice can only be understood in a vectoral manner: that is, the best is yet to come, and the worst must remain in the past (Dietrich 2012, pp. 113-114). The challenge with this understanding of peace in the future through justice is that it easily justifies violence in the presence as a tool to move from injustice to justice.

The same focus on the future can be found in the Revolution of Dignity playing itself out on the Maidan in Kyiv. The hopeful young protestors believed in a better future of EU membership for Ukraine and consequently economic development. They did not have to look far for inspiration: their neighbour Poland, already an EU member, has a much stronger economy than Ukraine today, despite having had almost the same economic starting point in 1990 (The Economist, 2015).
The EU did play its part with promises of economic prosperity in return for membership of the Union and loyalty to western values, but the EU also, perhaps unknowingly, encouraged an “us” versus “them” mind-set in the protestors with the “in” or “out” rhetoric towards Ukraine. There was little space for the doubters, the easterners or nationalists.

Justice continued as a theme after the conflict escalated in eastern Ukraine. The local protestors in Luhansk and Donetsk did not approve of the power-turnaround in Kyiv because, from their perspective, it put their upward sloping future on to a downward slope, and as justice as a theme prescribes, then “evil is effective in the present and it has to be exterminated in the name of peace” (Dietrich 2012, p. 114).

As the conflict developed and the violence escalated, the government in Kyiv called the protestors in the east *terrorists* and continue to call for justice for the violent wrong-doings of the other side. For their part the LNR and DNR still see the government in Kyiv as an illegitimate power that is trying to silence them with force. They too call for justice for the wrong-doings committed against them.

As the conflict developed, the losses started growing and people were forced to flee, and as people called for the wrongs of the other side to be righted, justice manifested itself as a theme.

5.6.2 Truth on track two

The *Oxford English Dictionary word of the year in 2016* was “post-truth,” an adjective defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (*Oxford English Dictionary, 2016*).

Some people have claimed that the world would never see propaganda again, as during the Second World War, because various information media (especially the
internet) would prevent that from happening, as people could always access more and different news. Now, however, I suggest that we are once again in a situation in which propaganda is becoming increasingly powerful because facts are losing their meaning as truths become increasingly plural, subjective and manipulated. The internet is flooding the world with news that the ordinary receiver of which has no way of verifying, and moreover the stream of news is becoming so intense that people are increasingly leaning towards what they already know.

Thus, the postmodern state that welcomes many truths because it allows subjective, relational truths to emerge in interpersonal meetings and allows people to see the world as more than a mechanical piece of clockwork has now, it seems, developed a shadow post-truth state where even factual truths have become subjective and are easily manipulated.

The use of the manipulation of truths by Top-Leader actors to fit a specific world view and to create what Nemtsov called a smokescreen of information creates a great divide at this layer of conflict (i.e. Russia, Ukraine, the EU and the USA), but it also affects the fighting parties as well as most other people, whether engaged or not in the conflict.

In the international sphere, it can be argued that the conflict in Ukraine, together with the phenomenon of Donald Trump in USA and the war in Syria, have helped put “post-truth” on the agenda and are all good examples of post-truth in action.

5.6.3 Securitisation of the situation

When the uprising first started in eastern Ukraine, the theme was justice, with a heavy influence from truth. The government in Kyiv, being coloured by modernity, saw the uprising as a threat to the nation state and therefore as a matter of security. Hence staged a security-based reaction, just as the Yanukovych government had done on the Maidan. In
speaking the language of Elicitive Conflict transformation, the government saw the episode and not the epicentre, that is, the issues lying below the surface.

A society is an open and living system which needs to remain fluid in order to constantly seek a dynamic equilibrium. Change in a society causes friction and tension and can remove communities from their dynamic equilibrium. Accordingly, expecting society to remain static after a violent disturbance such as the Revolution of Dignity constitutes “at best, a fantasy and, at worst, the prelude to the exercise of violence” (Echavarria Alverez 2018, p. 115).

The securitisation of the situation, where the theme was actually justice, or in a wider frame truth, created a physical and a mental gulf between different groups of people in Ukraine. In time this gulf grew wider, and it is still responsible for a lack of personal stories from those on the ‘other’ side, who are then perceived as a homogeneous group representing a security threat.
6 Finding the Epicentre

I have now presented the episodes and analysed the conflict theme. Recall that the lenses of conflict transformation show the immediate situation, the underlying patterns and context and the conceptual framework in order to find the epicentre, the place where conflict energy is created. Conflict transformation happens at the deeper conflict-affected layers, because if we only manage conflicts at the level of the episode the root of the conflict will remain, and another episode will occur at a later point.

Also, "ECM seeks to understand and clarify a conflict by starting from its material surface, the episode, subsequently making the conflicting parties visible and viewing the conflict dynamics as different levels and through different layers" (Echavarría Alvarez and Koppensteiner 2018, p. 8). As Echavarría Alvarez and Koppensteiner point out, the investigation and detection of the epicentre takes us on an explorative journey of actors, levels and layers.

6.1 Defining the ‘other’

Before I embark on this journey, I would like to return to the question of division within society to allow a deeper understanding of the actors and the conflicting layers that are in play. Banderites and Novorossiya are two strong political currents that many people identify with: they are both rooted in history, both play a large role in formulating identity politics and both create divisions in society because the ‘others’ are perceived as a homogeneous group.

6.1.1 Novorossiya

The term ‘Novorossiya’ dates back to the Tzarina Catherina’s southwards expansion of the Russian Empire in the 18th century. When she incorporated the Ukrainian lands into
the Russian Empire, she gave them the name Novorossiya, meaning New Russia (Magocsi 2010, p. 284).

Shortly after the uprising happened in eastern Ukraine the term Novorossiya started appearing again, and shortly after the referendum that created the two peoples’ republics, they established a union called Novorossiya Republic (Sakwa 2015, p. 150). Even before the Republic was created, people started talking about Novorossiya, and Putin, in his yearly show Direct line with Putin, reminded his listeners that Novorossiya, the regions of Kharkov, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa, had not been part of Ukraine in Tsarist times and that these regions were given to Ukraine in 1920. “Why? Who knows” he said in explanation. He also remarked that the people of Novorossiya should be full citizens of their country, without elaborating further on what he meant or why he thought that they are not full citizens, simply leaving it clear, if unsaid, to the listeners that Russians in Novorossiya were being wronged by Ukraine (Kremlin 2014b). Shortly after this, Russian volunteers in the conflict were mobilised around the slogan “help to the Russians of Novorossiya” (Kuzio 2017, p. 82).

Novorossiya remained a political project until the Parliament of Novorossiya was suspended in May 2015, and after that the project seemed to have been shelved (Sakwa 2015, p. 258). However, in 2017 the President of the DNR, Alexander Zakharchenko, announced the formation of a new republic of Molorossiya covering half of Ukraine, from the eastern border to the Dnipro river and in the south over to the border with Moldova (Ruptly News 2017). The idea of the new state never found popularity with the public, and the project seems to have faded out again.

6.1.2 Banderites

Recall from Chapter three that Bandera, the leader of the OUN-B, had worked for the creation of an independent Ukrainian state to unite all ethnic Ukrainians before, during
and after World War II. The OUN-B and its military wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Ukrayinska povstanska armiya - UPA), cooperated with the Nazi forces during the war because they considered it the best way to achieve their goals. Their cooperation with the Nazis led them to take part in atrocities against Jews, Poles and Russians. After the end of the war, the group kept up a partisan war against the Soviet authorities until Bandera was killed in 1959 (Sakwa 2015, pp. 16-17).

During the Soviet Union the OUN-B and the UIA were targets of Soviet propaganda and were demonized, a practice that continued in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union (Umland 2013, p. 7). To this day the OUN is “a – if not the – major historical source of inspiration for all Ukrainophone nationalist parties, especially the more radical ones” (Umland 2013, p. 7). However, it is not only radical nationalists in Ukraine who admire or even support the Banderites (Banderovites). Ukrainian radical nationalist tendencies are seen as a legitimate expression of Ukrainian identity, patriotism and pride, and in 2007 the city of Lviv erected a statue of Bandera (Umland 2013, p. 8 and Sakwa 2015, p. 17).

In 2010 President Yushchenko awarded Bandera the title Hero of Ukraine, a move that was widely condemned internationally, leading Yushchenko to annul the award a year later (Sakwa 2015, p. 19). This nonetheless suggests that Bandera, despite being a controversial figure, is still enjoys widespread popularity in Ukraine, especially in the west of the country, Galicia, where Ukrainian nationalism is strong.

On my first deployment with OP UNIFIER in Yavoriv in the far west of Ukraine, before our first six-hour leisure trip to Lviv, we were told by the Canadians to keep an eye out for and take special care of the Red and Black flag,\(^{22}\) because of its connection with radical nationalism. During the six hours we spend in Lviv, I think we saw that flag around 35 times. More than the flag, we saw Bandera merchandise in half the shops

\(^{22}\) This was the flag of the UPA, but today it symbolises Ukrainian nationalism, patriotism and pride. The Pravyi Sector ("right sector") has taken over the flag and developed its own version, which resembles the old flag quite a lot.
in the city centre. We stopped paying too much attention to the flags after that day.

6.2 Involved actors

In this section, I will focus my attention on the actors of the conflict. It is relevant for future conflict workers to know the main actors in the conflict before intervening in it in order to be well-oriented in the conflict’s territory.

The actor analysis will take its point of departure in each actor’s involvement in the conflict and each actor’s needs or desires in relation to the conflict. Following ECM, I will look for blockages and dissonances in the dynamic equilibrium between the layers and, following ECM and Lederach’s pyramid, I will divide the actors into levels.

6.2.1 Layers

According to ECM the next move in drawing the conflict map is to consider the actors and their stakes in the conflict. The basic argument of ECM is that the perceiving subject consists of intra-personal layers. The subject meets the world with its persona, the material surface of the subject. Just below the surface is the sexual layer, followed by the social-emotional layer, and after that the mental and spiritual layers.

Despite its resemblance of to the Russian *matryoshka* doll, the inspiration for this model is found in Chakra philosophy. Following the tantric principle of *as within so without*, the model argues that for every intra-personal layer there is an inter-personal layer. Following this logic, the sexual layer corresponds to the family in an inter-personal setting, the social-emotional layer to the community, the mental layer to society, the spiritual layer to the polictitary and awareness to the global level.
Frederiksen, in his reading of the model, draws on Wilber and Habermas in adding a second inter-personal layer, as he argues that each intra-personal layer also has a corresponding social organisation. Hence, he argues that the interpersonal layer of the family corresponds to the social organisation of clan societies, where clans are organised around families or ancestral ties. The social-emotional layer's corresponding social organisation is the tribe, where clans are organised in larger tribal communities, often based on a common mythology. Tribes are again organised into even larger social structures, of which the modern-day nation state is a good example – hence the intra-personal mental layer corresponds to the nation state. The spiritual level finds its corresponding social organisation in the supra-state level. A relevant example of this would be institutions of global governance, such as the United Nations (Frederiksen 2016, pp. 27-28).

Thus, following Dietrich and Frederiksen, the intrapersonal, interpersonal and social organisational layers I will be using follow this logic:

- Sexual – Family – Clan
- Socioemotional – Communal – Tribe
- Mental – Society – State
- Spiritual – Policity – Global government

The conflict in eastern Ukraine is going into its fifth year, and since conflicts are dynamic and continuously affect the actors who engage in them, in the following chapter I will look at how blockages in layers affect the episodes of the conflict, as well as how the ongoing conflict affects the actors’ layers. Hence, while the “conflict rises up towards the surface from the deeper layers of human beings and only emerge as tangible conflicts of interest in a particular episode” (Dietrich 2018, p. 59), it is fair to assume that tangible conflicts will also leave disturbances and dissonances in the deeper layers of the actors.
In this sense, a conflict on this scale may become self-sustaining after a while, when the episodes of the conflict develop into a conflict epicentre. However, it is important to continue to seek for disturbances in the deeper layers, as no matter what the timeframe of the conflict, solving only the visible episode of the conflict will, with a high degree of certainty, lead to new conflicts in the future unless we also attend to the dissonances and disturbances.

6.2.2 Levels

Lederach recognised the need for an analytical framework to describe the levels of the conflict-affected population. The pyramid divides the conflict-affected population into three levels: the grassroots level, the middle ranges and the top leaders. These different levels describe the number of people affected in general terms. While the top-level leadership represents the fewest people, the grassroots base represents the general population at large (Lederach 1997, p. 38).

The process of building peace can be seen as both a top-down process, where change is introduced from the top, and a bottom-up process, where the general population is the driver of change (Lederach 1997, p. 37). As a peace worker, the main thing to take from the pyramid and the division of levels is that the approach to peacebuilding differs depending on the level one is operating at.

When using the pyramid in ECM the principle of correspondence is once again applied. The principles as within so without, as above so below, demand that we alter the
pyramid by turning it upside down and embedding smaller triangles in larger ones. This gives us the Sri-Yantra symbol.

When doing an orientation guide, the levels will be used primarily as a categorising tool and to keep an overview, while the Sri-Yantra will function as a reminder that at all levels there is a new pyramid of levels. This means that within the grassroots level are the top leaders, maybe heads of families, respected neighbours and trendsetters, while also on the top leaders’ level are those who simply follow orders – the grassroots of the top leaders’ level (Innsbruck Peace Program Website, Sri-Yantra).
7 Grassroots level

According to Lederach the grassroots level represents the masses. Life in the conflict area at this level is characterised by a survival mentality. In the worst-case scenario, people at this level struggle to find food, shelter, water and safety. The lines of conflict are often drawn right through local communities, often splitting them into hostile groups (Lederach 1997, p. 42).

In the following I will zoom into the different actors at the grassroots level. I will start with civilians, then look at the different groupings of soldiers fighting on both sides, and lastly shift to the case of veterans who have been killed or wounded in action on both sides.

7.1 Civilians: how could the conflict happen?

Civilians on both sides of the conflict are the first group in this analysis. When the conflict started in Kyiv in 2013, civilians demonstrated against the decision of the president to withdraw from the trade agreement with EU. Likewise, it was civilians who later occupied government buildings when the conflict began in Donbas.

On the other hand, it is the civilians who are suffering the most, as the conflict is in its fifth year, with 1,800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected people (not including those who have fled the conflict into Russia) (UNHCR country fact sheet 2018). On top of that, the UNHCR estimate that 3000 civilians have died due to the conflict and between 7000 and 9000 have been injured (UNHCR Report DEC 18).

7.1.1 Conflicting civilians

Many civilians are involuntary actors in the conflict and never wanted it in the first place. However, as already noted, violence is often just a symptom of a conflict, a disturbance or a dissonance in deeper layers. One of the reasons why this conflict has been able to
escalate to this level of violence lies in the constructions of and division into categories of *them* and *us*.

With reference to Chapter four of this thesis, I wish to reemphasise here the difference between west and east Ukraine. The western part was for long part of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, later the Austrian-Hungarian and even later part of Poland. Despite holding on to their Ukrainian identity, the citizens of western Ukraine were naturally affected by the many years in which they had a different overlord than the rest of the country, which was under Russian imperial rule (see Chapter four for more details).

Galicia in the west of Ukraine is well known as the centre of Ukrainian nationalism. Recall once again from Chapter four how the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), with Stepan Bandera at its head, announced the formation of the Ukrainian state in Lviv in 1941. Bandera still enjoys great popularity in Galicia today, and whoever goes on holiday in the beautiful city of Lviv will have plenty of opportunities to return home with Bandera or Banderovci (the followers of Bandera) merchandise. However, in other parts of the country, and especially in the east, he remains a contested figure because of his and the OUN’s cooperation with the German forces and their part in the Polish genocide (see sub-chapter 6.1.2 for more details).

The migration and movement of labour that happened in the Soviet period placed most Russians in Ukraine in the industrial east, where labour was most needed (Kuzio 2017, p. 23). For example, in Yuzovka (present-day Donetsk) in 1884 local Ukrainians made up only a quarter of the population, while 71 percent were from Russia (Kuzio 2017, p. 172). Although this ethnic composition changed during the next 110 years, the percentage of Russians remained high. After the fall of the Soviet Union, this created an ethnic divide in Ukraine, with the majority of the Russian minority being located in the south and east of Ukraine.
According to Taras Kuzio, the people of Donbas have a stronger and more profound regional identity rather than an identity as Ukrainian citizens. The people in Donbas take pride in their historical position as the industrial powerhouse of the Tsarist Russian Empire and continued to see the Donbas area as the main driver of Ukraine’s economy. This is true to an extent, but as the primary industries consisted of coal and steel production, these old industries were in decline, here as elsewhere (Kuzio 2017, p. 23).

In the Tsarist Russian Empire, it was Russians who mainly worked in the mines in Donbas: Ukrainians saw working there as alien and the miners as dirty, liars and capable of committing murder for a few pennies. This divide was underlined by predigested folklore stories that depicted the coalminers as capable of any vileness. At this period, Ukrainian peasant women would scare their children with stories of bogeymen miners. Many of these stereotypes continue to exist now, a century later, on both sides of the conflict (Kuzio 2017, p. 173).

7.1.2 Disagreement over direction

The differences between west and east Ukraine naturally effect political life. Looking at the three elections since independence in 1991, it becomes clear that the population is split over the direction Ukraine should go in and over who should lead the country.
The three maps clearly show how the majority in the east support a different candidate than the majority in west, while the regions in the middle of the country tend to be more diverse in their support for presidential candidates. In each election the candidates have tended to adhere to either a pro-European or a pro-Russian view. The candidates who want to strengthen cooperation with Russia are generally more popular in the east, whereas those who advocate cooperation with the EU are more popular in the west (Young 2015). However, despite the overall differences between east and west in Ukraine, there is no indication that a majority of the population supported the idea of separatism when the conflict began (Sakwa 2016, 153).

7.1.3 Conflict-affected civilians

It is relevant to zoom in a bit more on one particular group of civilians, namely those directly affected by the conflict, that is, those civilians who are living or used to live in close proximity to the conflict and whose lives have been changed due to it having broken out in their region.

The number of civilian deaths in the conflict as of May 2018 was just above 3000, with conflict-related injuries accounting for between 7000 and 9000 civilians (OHCHR May 2018). Apart from the insecurity and fear because of the regular shelling and shooting, civilians also face restrictions in their freedom of movement and additional dangers because of the large areas that have been mined.

However, the safety situation is not the only threat the population living in the conflict area faces, as more than a million people struggle to get enough food, including roughly one in five elderly people over sixty years old. This problem is growing, as fighting, age, the weather, the destruction of infrastructure etc. is making it increasingly
hard for pensioners to travel from DNR or LNR areas to government-controlled areas to re-register as IDPs once a month in order to be entitled to their pension. As a result, by the end of 2017 over 600,000 elderly people had been cut off from their pension payments from Ukraine (UN OCHA 2018).

The destruction of infrastructure poses another threat in the conflict-affected areas, as fire from both sides regularly hits the Donetsk Filtration Station that provides water to large areas on both sides of the line, leaving civilians without water for long periods at a time (Crisis Group 2018, p. 3).

Other factors that make life difficult for civilians in the conflict-affected areas include the restrictions on humanitarian activities in LNR and DNR that have been imposed by the political elite in the two Peoples' Republics, sanitary problems and reduced access to medical care. All these factors combined, among other negative consequences, have pushed the mortality rate from Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis to the highest in Eurasia (UN OCHA 2018).

7.1.4 Ambiguous government reactions

The Ukrainian government has been criticized for its approach towards this segment of Ukraine's population, which is characterised by a worrying degree of neglect (International Crisis Group).

Already in November 2014 the Ukrainian government announced that it would withdraw all government funding and services from areas outside of its control, as well
as stop pension payments to anyone living in the DNR and LNR who was not registered as an IDP. The reason given was that the government could not allow any of its funding to reach Russian-backed groups. However, many people in DNR and LNR felt betrayed by this move. One young Donetsk resident’s reaction sums up the feeling in DNR and LNR when he said: “We’re not ‘our own’ to them anymore” (International Crisis Group 2018, p. 6).

This feeling of having been abandoned may have been aggravated by the ambiguous comments of certain officials on the Ukrainian side, for example, when Semen Semenchenko, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament, said in a video interview: “Everyone made a choice; some consider themselves Ukrainian citizens and are enrolled in the Ukrainian army, while others sit around and drink vodka ... But still, we need to make sure that those who need milk, eggs and food for children will get that” (Alivemedia 2014, Video). Another official said in an interview with the Crisis Group that many conflict-affected people suffer from a gimme gimme attitude (International Crisis Group 2018, p. 13). Others have claimed that people in the DNR and LNR are being justly punished for being collaborators, a term used by those who are pro-Kyiv about anyone who, from their perspective, did not do enough to avoid the Russian occupation (International Crisis Group 2018, p. 13).

Furthermore, reports that the government was not allowing medicine to cross the contact line into the LNR and DNR, the long registration process to be allowed to cross that line into Ukraine (Walker 2015) and trade blockades have probably further amplified the feeling of neglect and abandonment felt by civilians in the LNR and DNR (International Crisis Group 2018, p. 6).

There may not have been a majority support for separatism before the conflict, but many have expressed disappointment with the Ukrainian government and with
statements like this: “I used to be for a united Ukraine, but the way they are treating us is beyond all limits. They say they are fighting the Russians, so why are they making life difficult for all of us?” (Walker 2015). It is possible that the feeling of having been abandoned and neglected by the government has forced some to reconsider their stance on separatism. If this is the case, then the government’s inability to direct attention to and understand the civilians’ situation may have prolonged the conflict even further.

7.2 Soldiers

Soldiers come in many shapes and sizes, including in Ukraine and in many organisations. The soldiers who have fought on the government side in the conflict in eastern Ukraine come from volunteer battalions, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), the National Guard and the police, while those on the side of the LNR and DNR are locals, mercenaries, Russian volunteers, Russian special forces and maybe Russian regular troops.

7.2.1 Pro-Ukraine and government forces

Understanding the nature of the government’s and volunteer forces that fought in the east between April and June 2014 has proved surprisingly hard. First of all, things were moving very fast in this period, and no detailed written records have been kept. It is not strange, given the circumstances, that a violent conflict was in the offing and indeed, at the end of this period, was in full flow. In the following, I have tried to arrive at an overview of the forces that were created in that period and sent to fight on the Ukrainian government’s side in order to understand the different actors and their motivations.

In spring 2014, when the government buildings in Donbas were taken over by dissatisfied locals and the fighting started, things were, as I have already stated, moving fast in Ukraine everywhere except in the government’s mobilisation office. The most motivated and most patriotic young men and women, who may already have been played a part on the Maidan revolution and who wanted to protect Ukraine from what they saw
as violent hostility and attacks from pro-Russian forces, had no choice but to join the volunteer battalions because the mobilisation offices were simply not accepting people at the beginning of the war (Mamaluij 2016, 13).

When the conflict in Donbas began, the AFU was under-financed, untrained and under-staffed. The armed forces had experienced many years of financial neglect, the security forces had been infiltrated by Russians, and corruption among high-ranking officers meant that whatever materiel was available was sold off before it made its way to the soldiers on the ground (Wilson 2014, p. 137 and Sakwa 2016, p. 96). On paper the armed forces consisted of around 80,000 troops, but it soon became clear that in reality the number of combat-ready troops was only 6,000 (Sakwa 2016, p. 159 and Kuzio 2017, p. 263).

Therefore, many highly motivated young men and women\(^\text{23}\) chose to join volunteer battalions instead. The volunteer militias can be divided roughly into two different groups. Those in the first type were not under government control at the beginning of the conflict. They included, for example, battalions made up by Maidan veterans, who continued the revolution in the east, as well as battalions formed and sponsored by local oligarchs.

Some noted that the oligarch-sponsored battalions might turn into the private armies of oligarchs or turn against the government in Kyiv in a third Maidan if they disagreed with political decisions. However, this did not happen, and these battalions have taken part in some of the hardest-fought battles in Donbas (Wilson 2014, p. 137 and Kuzio 2017, pp. 258-263). By the summer of 2014, all such battalions had been integrated

\(^{23}\) Not a lot of women joined the fighting in the east, and those who did are not recognized alongside their male comrades. See Martsenyuk, Tamara, Ganna Grytsenko, and Anna Kvit. "Invisible Battalion": Women’s Participation in ATO Military Operations (Sociological Research). Kyiv: UWF, 2016 for more details.
into the military structure in either the armed forces, the National Guard or police units (Kuzio 2017, p. 258 and Puglisi 2015, p. 4).

The other group of militias consisted of volunteer battalions in the National Guard under the Ministry of Interior and new battalions under the Ministry of Defence. The troops in these battalions largely consisted of Maidan veterans, but they also contained people who had been forced to flee Crimea after the Russian annexation. These new recruits were motivated and received some training from the Ministry of Interior before they deployed, but alongside their strong motivation, they were also highly politicised, and depoliticising them was not part of their training.

Both types of volunteer battalion have been accused of being ragtag armies of uncontrolled right-wing extremists, and while this may be true of some individuals, it is unfair to condemn all the troops like this (Puglisi 2015, p. 4). Moreover, while the media focused mostly on the extremist and nationalistic elements in the battalions, these represented only a minority of the fifty volunteer battalions that emerged (Kuzio 2017, p. 257).

7.2.2 LNR and DNR forces

The forces on the side of the Peoples’ Republics are even more multifaceted than those on the pro-Ukrainian side. At the beginning of the conflict these forces were mostly local, but sources agree that Russian special forces entered the area later (Wilson 2014, p. 134, Sakwa 2016, p. 150, Kuzio 2017, 263-264). Some observers calculate that in mid-May 2014 Russian volunteers and mercenaries numbered around 4,500 fighters (Wilson 2014, p. 135), and from summer 2014 many sources agree that regular soldiers entered Ukraine from Russia (Wilson 2014, p. 143, Sakwa 2016, p. 155, Kuzio 2017, 264), though there is disagreement on the scale and scope of their activities.
A journalist from time.com met Alexander Mozhaev, who, despite accusations made by the Ukrainian state that he was employed by the Russian government, claims to be in Ukraine completely voluntarily. He says he decided to go to Crimea (and later to Donbas) to seek adventure and flee arrest in Russia for false accusations that he tried to kill someone with a knife (Shuster 2014).

Taras Kuzio (2017) argues that in the winter and spring of 2014, apart from the Russian forces stationed at the Russian naval base in Sevastopol in the Crimea and a unit engaged in long-term infiltration of the Ukrainian SBU, the little green men, actually Russian Special Forces, had continued their work in eastern Ukraine after the official annexation of Crimea (Kuzio 2017, p. 264). These forces were highly skilled and well trained and stayed behind the curtain in the uprising in the east, being the main strategic planners.

Another contested figure who supports Kuzio’s perspective and who was active in the fighting in Ukraine in the winter and spring of 2014 is Igor Strelkov (‘the shooter’) Girkin. He is well known for taking the credit for pulling the trigger in the war in Donbas. In an interview with the Russian newspaper Zavtra (English ‘Tomorrow’) in November 2014, he said:

“But I still pulled the trigger of the war. Had our squad not crossed the border, everything would have ended, as in Kharkov, as in Odessa. There would have been a few dozen killed, burned, arrested. And with that it would be over. And practically the impulse of the war, which is still going on, was launched by our squad. We mixed the cards on the table. Everything! And from the very beginning we began to fight seriously: to destroy the Right Sector sabotage groups. And I bear personal
responsibility for what is happening there. For the fact that Donetsk is
still being shelled – I am responsible."\textsuperscript{24} (Prokhanov 2014)

Girkin is a former colonel in the Russian army, but his connections with it at the
time have been debated: some claim that he is an officer in the main Russian military
intelligence directorate (GRU), while he himself claim to be in Ukraine voluntarily (Sakwa

He came to Ukraine with around 52 men; according to some sources, the men he
brought with him were GRU Special Forces, better known as little green men. By the end
of May he had gathered somewhere between 2,000 and 28,000 locals (depending which
sources one uses) and became the leader of the Donetsk People’s Army (Sakwa 2016, p.

Girkin hoped, and even asked publicly, for Russian forces to enter Ukraine from
across the border, where Russian training camps were starting to emerge. Officially a
Russian invasion never happened, but many Russians joined the war voluntarily, some
helped by recruitment offices in Moscow. The volunteers came from militarised groups,
among them veterans who had fought in the Chechen war, Cossack groups and some from
the old opposition who had fought Yeltsin in 1993. However, Hells Angels and neo-Nazi
groups also volunteered to fight in Ukraine (Sakwa 2016, p. 153 and Kuzio 2017, p. 272).

In August, when the Ukrainian government forces were advancing rapidly,
regular Russian forces were deployed to counter their advance. In addition, artillery fire
started being directed from beyond the Russian border into Ukrainian territory

\textsuperscript{24} Но спусковой крючок войны всё-таки нажал я. Если бы наш отряд не перешёл границу, в итоге всё бы кончилось, как в Харькове, как в Одессе. Было бы несколько десятков убитых, обожжённых, арестованных. И на этом бы кончилось. А практически маховик войны, которая до сих пор идёт, запустил наш отряд. Мы смешали все карты на столе. Все! И с самого начала мы начали воевать всерьёз: уничтожить диверсионные группы “правосеков”. И я несу личную ответственность за то, что там происходит. За то, что до сих пор Донецк обстреливается, — я несу ответственность. My translation.
(Mathiesen 2018, 256, Charap and Colton 2017, p. 140). The government forces were forced back, and the following period until the signing of Minsk I in September was characterised by a very high level of kinetic activity.

In April 2018 the open-source investigation group InformNapalm launched an interactive database containing information of more than 1300 Russian servicemen who, according to InformNapalm, had fought in Donbas while still on active duty with the Russian forces. The database also includes 44 types of Russian military equipment in the hands of the LNR and DNR forces which was never in the Ukrainian army and therefore could not have been captured by the separatists in combat (InformNapalm 2018).

The Vice News journalist Simon Ostrovsky, in a documentary from June 2015 called Selfie Soldiers: Russia Checks into Ukraine, follows the tracks of Russian soldiers’ selfies that are taken in Ukraine and uploaded in social media to prove that these soldiers were in Ukraine at a time when they were officially serving in the Russian Armed Forces (Vice News 2015, Video).

7.3 Veterans, KIA and WIA on both sides

Veterans, people killed in action (KIA) and people wounded in action (WIA) play a large role in this conflict because, as the numbers increase, the focus on justice increases with it.

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Veteran’s Affairs, as of 1 January 2019, 354,977 Ukrainian citizens have been given veteran status after fighting in the east (Ministry of Veteran’s Affairs 2018). According to the Memory Book, the number of soldiers killed in action on the pro-Ukraine side was 4,010 as of October 2018 (Memory Book 2018). However, some claim that the unofficial number is up to three times higher, as Ukrainian soldiers do not wear dog-tags or other form of personal identification, making identification difficult. On top of that, the Ukrainian state has not allocated any
funding at all to searching for and recovering the bodies of its fallen soldiers (Kuzio 2017, p. 280 and 282).

It is harder to determine equivalent numbers on the DNR and LNR side, but the number of casualties in the DNR, both military and civilian, have reached 4,723 according to the ombudsman of the Donetsk Peoples’ Republic (Human Rights Ombudsman DNR 2018). I have not managed to find a figure for casualties in the LNR.

It is very difficult to find figures for Russian casualties because in 2015 the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, declared figures for military casualties in peacetime a state secret by amending a decree of 1995 (Decree no. 273 of 28.05.2015). This makes it illegal and therefore difficult for anyone in Russia to report on Russian casualties in eastern Ukraine.

In 2015 US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland said that she estimated that “hundreds and hundreds” of Russians had been killed in the fighting in Donbas, at least four or five hundred (Sputnik News 2015). A Russian NGO called Gruz 200 (Cargo 200) has completed a list of 2,081 Russian soldiers who they believe have died in Ukraine (Project Gruz 200), and they are continuing to update the list on their Facebook group.

The Russian newspaper Delovaya Zhizn reported compensation being paid to “2,000 families of fallen soldiers and to 3,200 military personnel suffering heavy wounds

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Gruz 200 is the Soviet military code for the transport of fallen soldiers.
and recognized as invalids” (Gregory 2015). This information was later withdrawn, and officials from the Russian government claim that the information is fake. However, many sources have reported the families of fallen soldiers having signed non-disclosure agreement in return for monetary compensation and, if they refuse, being intimidated or threatened into silence (Yashin and Shorina 2015, p. 36, Kuzio 2017, p. 283 and Grove and Tsvetkova 2014).

On both sides of the conflict, the number of veterans, WIA and KIA remains an issue, and these people, along with their families, need as a minimum recognition for the part they have played in the conflict. While it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to list them all, there are a number of NGOs, such as Memorial, Open Russia, Soldiers’ Mothers in Russia and Worriers’ Heart in Ukraine, who are actively working alongside international NGOs with veterans on recovery, training, recognition and so on.

7.4 ECM Layers

While keeping the previous conflict analysis in mind, where I introduced the episode and found the conflict theme at the grassroots level to be justice, I now proceed to analyse the layers of the grassroots level.

7.4.1 Sexual-Family-clan layers

For the civilians who are directly affected, the conflict creates, rather than stems from, a blockage in the family/sexuality/clan layers. Those affected experience how neighbours and relatives suddenly find themselves on the other side of the contact line. One man living along the line of conflict expressed this frustration when he answered suggestions that he ought to serve in the army: “How am I supposed to go kill my neighbours? I’ll never fight my own people” (International Crisis Group 2018, p. 23).

Furthermore, disturbances in these layers can be seen with the increasing number of veterans who needs, but do not receive, treatment for mental illnesses.
Returning home after a deployment is always a challenge, but some Ukrainian soldiers have been deployed on a six-years on six-years off cycle (off meaning training in own garrison), which makes coming home almost impossible.

The families of soldiers who are KIA and WIA experience a painful change in the family layer. Their lives will be heavily affected by this, but therein, painful though it is for them, lies a strong potential for transformation. The dissonances created in the family and clan layers, if used to bring about constructive change, may make possible identification with families who have lost on the ‘other’ side because they can somehow find a new common identity as victims of the war. This new common identity may help to break the ‘us’ and ‘them’ feeling, removing the unbalanced focus on justice as a theme. This will again foster communication in a step towards transformation.

In the episode, we see that some soldiers find motivation in the clan layer to fight in the east. The community that was built around the self-defence units on the Maidan resembles a clan structure whose members become like family members to each other.

In Matilde Kimer’s book we meet a young man first called Bogdan, though later in the book he goes only by the nickname given to him by his comrades, Grizlo. Bogdan is a law student in Kyiv when the demonstrations on the Maidan start. In the book, we follow him on his journey from being a student to becoming an active part of the core team in the Maidan self-defence unit and his restlessness, which can almost be described as a longing, when the Maidan revolution ends and he returns to his law studies. Therefore it is also obvious that, when his old clan of friends from the self-defence unit decides to join the Azov battalion, receive training and go off to the fighting in the east, Grizlo is with
them. Grizlo and his comrades, in their own words, are fighting against “armed men, who are trying to destroy my country. Because they hate”\textsuperscript{26} (Kimer 2017, p. 270).

7.4.2 Socioemotional-Communal-Tribal layers

Tribes are organisations of clans based on mythology; I argue that the volunteer battalions represent a form of social organisation equivalent to a tribe. The tribe in this case is fighting against separatists whom they believe they are destroying their country, but their loyalty is not to the government in Kyiv, and therefore it is not the (Ukrainian) nation state they are fighting for. At the beginning of the conflict, the politicisation of the volunteer battalions was seen as a problem because it was feared that they would turn against the government in Kyiv if they started to believe that the government were also destroying their country. In this layer, the tribe represent a strong motivation for the soldiers to fight. The motivation to fight for one’s (imagined) country is a dissonance in the nation-state layer.

Further, for some volunteer soldiers, the desire for adventure is described as the motivational factor for going to war. Reflecting further on that statement and looking at it in terms of layers, I would argue that the socioemotional layer is in play here. In this layer we find a need for social belonging, the ego and willpower, but also a need for recognition.

The volunteers who are motivated by the adventure of war may have already experienced what war does to you, and while I would never argue that war is only a positive experience, I do maintain that for many it tends also to be a positive experience. In war, things become simple and friendships deep. The bond that is created between soldiers who fight together in war has acquired an almost mythical reputation, and we have probably all see a fair share of Hollywood movies about the soldier who becomes

\textsuperscript{26} In Danish: “...bevæbnede mænd, der prøver at ødelegge mit land. Fordi de hader”. My translation.
addicted to deployments and war. Hence, my argument is that some volunteers are motivated by the sense of social belonging and deep connections with their comrades that occur in war.

For the protesters first in Kyiv and later in Luhansk and Donetsk, a sense of exclusion from the decision-making that was taking place in Kyiv created a dissonance in the socioemotional layer that made them react. The conflict in this layer is about recognition and a feeling of being included. At the communal layer the same feeling may manifest itself in a need to react, to try to improve the situation for one’s community.

At the corresponding layer of the tribe, this may result in a clear distinction between inclusion in and exclusion from the tribe, while the dissonance in the socioemotional and communal layer may show itself as an amplification of this feeling in terms of a need to categorise others as either in or out.

7.4.3 Mental-Societal-Nation-state layers

Society, and in particular the nation state, are too big to be perceived sensually and hence must be imagined. Imagining a nation state gives a lot of power to the intrapersonally generated impulses of reason, since each individual perceives the wider society (or state) in his or her own way (Dietrich 2018, p. 69). Alternatively, and what causes a dissonance in the nation-state layer in this case, is that each clan or tribe rationally creates an image of society or state together, since there is no way of sensing it.

The mind plays an important role in this layer because it allows us to store learned experiences and feelings, but it also has a destructive power, as it “stores and uses stories belonging to the past that have an obstructive impact on dynamic equilibrium in the mental-social layer of the here and now” (Dietrich 2018, p. 69). Furthermore, the rational mind is capable of self-awareness and therefore of constructing meaning-bearing stories about the self, identity and belonging.
Ukraine never successfully managed to build a nation state after its independence in 1991. The state is a large entity of social organisation, and people in neither the east nor the west have managed to imagine the state in similar ways. On the contrary, people seem to hold on to old stories of differences and identities that obstruct the state-building process. Hence, the blockage found in the mental-societal-nation state layers is linked with nation-state building and the feeling of belonging to the state.

The dissonances in this layer comes from the labels of identity that people in the conflict continue to put on themselves and each other. Ethnic identities are one such label, which, although actually created for the communal layer, creates dissonance in the societal or nation-state layer, as the identity of the self automatically also creates an identity of the other, with whom a common state cannot be imagined.

Just as civilians are affected by the failure to build a well-functioning nation state, so are soldiers. However, where dissonance in belonging lies for civilians in an imagined nation state, belonging for some soldiers involves a much more tangible understanding of a tribe (as discussed above).

Another group of soldiers, those who were either already part of the armed forces or who were mobilised in this period, are from my perspective much more motivated by the societal layer. They, like Grizlo and his tribe, wanted to fight against someone whom they believed was destroying their country. In this fight, moreover, they allowed themselves to become the very picture of the nation state, as they became the nation state’s monopoly on violence, the modern state’s rationally justified exercise of violence.

Some Russian soldiers and soldiers on the DNR and LNR side may be motivated by an understanding that Ukraine and Russia are basically the same and should reunite again, either in the historical Soviet format or in another nation state-like format. These
fighters are motivated by the societal layer and use history as a rational argument for their participation in the war.

7.4.4 Spiritual-Political-Global government layers

The intrapersonal part of this level is barely a concern for the grassroots level in this episode. Spirituality is not a concern either, and none of the fighting parties seems to have much in the way of global spatio-temporal awareness or be guided by global intelligence, aesthetics, vision and intuitions about the all-connectedness of the human species.

However, some are motivated by an east-west divide and see their participation in the war as a defence against American imperialist expansion to the east. This motivation, which may be found in the global government layer, represents a deep mistrust of the current world order and the institutions in it, such as the United Nations (UN), the OSCE, the IMF, USA and so forth, because they are seen as being governed, run and managed by the west and working only in its favour.

In the summer 2016, while traveling in Russia, I used the opportunity of a taxi ride to ask about attitudes towards the two candidates in the American election – Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. My taxi-driver was from Sankt Petersburg (where the drive was also taking place). He was relatively critical of the current Russian government and President Putin, as he was planning to vote for Yabloko. When asked about the two candidates in the American election, he answered “Of course, the Americans should decide for themselves, but I am not a fan of Clinton, she doesn’t like Russians. So, I am more interested in seeing what happens if Trump wins.”

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27 Yabloko means Apple – one of the parties in Russia, often described as a true opposition to United Russia, Putin’s party, in contrast to the parties in the Russian political system, sometimes described as a pseudo opposition, who pose as an opposition to United Russia to make the system look democratic.
8 Middle-range leadership

In this category, I have gone beyond Lederach’s category a little and categorised the leadership of the two People’s Republics, LNR and DNR, as middle range. Although they are well-connected to both the top level and the grassroots level, they would not fit into either of those categories.

Lederach argues that middle-range leaders should be non-political actors who are known for their role in civil society (Lederach 1997, p. 41). However, the conflict in Ukraine is special in the way in that there are two levels of prominent political leaders who enjoy power and recognition at each of their levels and who are also responsible for the decision-making at each their level.

Therefore, in this section I have chosen to look at the political leadership of the two People’s Republics, LNR and NDR, as they have more power and generally better living conditions than civilians, but do not fit into the category of top-level leadership, as their power and influence are clearly locally anchored. Also in this section I look at the oligarchs, as they enjoy significant influence because of their status in society.

8.1 DNR leadership

After a bumpy start, the uprising of the People’s Republic of Donetsk in Donbas got going in mid-April. The leadership of the DNR was unstable in the beginning, changing first from the local population that had started the uprising to non-local Russian leadership in the summer of 2014 before going back to local leadership during the fall of 2014, after the leadership structure and personnel had been settled.

Denis Pushilin emerged early in the process as one of the leaders of the new DNR state. Pushilin was born in Donbas and is a graduate in engineering according to news agency Reuters, though he has never worked as an engineer, but as security guard, ad
manager and candy salesman. However, he is best known for his role as the organiser, together with Sergei Mavrodi, of the MMM pyramid-selling scheme, which ruined thousands of Russians and Ukrainians who lost their savings in the 1990s (De Carbonnel and Vasovic 2014). He is often mentioned as an example of the small-time frauds with questionable morals who took part of the uprising (Sakwa 2016, p. 151 and Wilson 2014, p. 128).

Two years before the uprising in eastern Ukraine he ran for parliament but failed to secure a seat, as he received too few votes (De Carbonnel and Vasovic 2014). In 2014 he was blacklisted by the EU for his role in the uprising (Baczynska and Blenkinsop 2018), but that did not stop him, and he later became the DNR representative in the contact group negotiations that led to the Minsk agreements (Makhovsky et al. 2015) after he was succeeded by Alexandr Borodai as the leader of the DNR.

At some point during the spring of 2014 Alexandr Borodai, a Russian citizen from Moscow, became the first official prime minister of the DNR. Before his appearance in the DNR he had been a political advisor and helped Russian with its annexation of Crimea (Emmott 2014).

In an interview by BBC Newsnight, he says he came to Donetsk to help the local separatists and that fate made him prime minister (BBC Newsnight 2014). Others have seen his citizenship as an indicator that he is cooperating with the political leadership in Russia and taking orders from it (Baczynska and Vasovic 2014). In the interview with BBC Newsnight he also rejects allegations that he is connected to the Russian federal security service (FSB), admitting that he knows people in the Russian political elite, including people in FSB, but stating that this does not affect his decisions as the prime minister of the DNR (BBC Newsnight).
Among his good old friends from Moscow (and from the FSB) is Igor ‘Strelkov’ Girkin, already discussed above. He was the Minister of Defence in the DNR and together with Vladimir Antyufeyev, who replaced a local as deputy prime minister, the three of them represented a strong core of Russian leadership in the DNR in the spring and summer of 2014. They all know each other from earlier fighting in Chechnya and Transdniestria28 (Baczynska and Vasovic 2014).

However, in August Borodai was succeeded as prime minister by local commander Alexander Zakharchenko. In an interview in 2017 Borodai told Reuters that “Moscow wanted them (him and Igor, ed.) replaced by a local to try to show the West that the uprising was a grassroots phenomenon” (Zverve 2017), and in the fall of 2014 the three of them disappeared and gave way to local Ukrainians in the DNR leadership.

Since the conflict started, Alexander Zakharchenko had been the leader of a heavily armed unit fighting on the side of the DNR. He was among the first to occupy regional government buildings in Donetsk and according to Borodai was “a real commander, a clever person, a great manager” (Zverev and Karpukhin 2014).

Zakharchenko held the position of head of the DNR (being elected president in November 2014) until he was killed by a bomb in central Donetsk in August 2018. After the bombing, rather unsurprisingly, Moscow blamed Kyiv, while Kyiv blamed Moscow and the leadership in DNR (Vasina 2018).

In September 2018 Pushilin entered the scene again as acting Head of the Republic, succeeding President Alexander. In the election in November Pushilin was elected the new Head of the People’s Republic with 60.85% of the vote (Williams 2018 and Denis Pushilin biography).

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28 The breakaway region of Moldova, where a now frozen conflict started in the early 1990s in much the same way as the conflict in Ukraine began.
8.2 LNR leadership

The leadership of the LNR, as the DNR, had a bumpy start, the difference between the two People’s Republics being that the leadership of the DNR was settled in August 2014 and established a relatively permanent structure, while the leadership of the LNR seems to be experiencing violent changes still every so often.

Right after the uprisings happened in April 2014, Valery Bolotov became the first governor (head of state) of the newly formed LNR. Bolotov was a retired officer from the AFU and leader of the LNR army group called the Army of the South-East. He was on the EU’s list of sanctioned persons at the end of April 2014 for his role as the leader of the group that had occupied local government buildings in Luhansk (Lewis 2014).

In August 2014, almost at the same time that Borodai was being replaced in the DNR, Bolotov also resigned his post. As he had been injured he could not fulfil his role as head of state of the LNR and therefore handed over his post to the defence minister, Igor Plotnitsky (Lowe 2014).

Plotnitsky was born in Luhansk in 1964 and served in the Soviet army reserve from 1982 to 1991, where he achieved the rank of major. In 2008 he finished a Master’s degree program in Government Service at a university in Ukraine. He became the defence minister of the LNR in May 2014 and in August took over from Bolotov as the prime minister (RIA News 2014).

In November 2017 tensions rose in Luhansk, as supporters of the recently fired chief of police, Igor Kornet, blocked the city centre in what was rumoured to be a violent overthrow of the head of state, Plotnitsky. The latter, however, got the situation under control and promised to neutralise everyone behind the destabilization. Only a few days after the coup attempt the LNR’s security minister, Leonid Pasechnik, publicly announced that he was the new head of state and that Plotnitsky had resigned for health reasons.
Pasechnik also claimed that he had taken over the post of the small state’s leader at Plotnitsky’s orders (Pinchuk and Lowe 2017 and Solovyov and Zinets 2017).

In November 2018 Pasechnik won the elections in LNR with 68% of the vote and therefore remained in position as head of state (Williams 2018).

The LNR and the DNR have had very different forms of leadership and different levels of organisation. The government in the DNR has a webpage in both Russian and English, there is a functioning system of an ombuds(wo)man in place, and information has been a lot easier to obtain. In Luhansk, on the other hand, I have not been able to find any official information from the government other than what could be found in the news. This, together with the relatively frequent changes of leadership in the republic, points to a more unstable system than in the DNR.

8.3 Oligarchs

What role and how big a role the oligarchs played in Ukraine in the Revolution and the conflict that ensued in the east are both matters that have been widely discussed.

The oligarchs are a small group of super-rich who are able to use their wealth to affect political decisions in Ukraine. The Ukrainian oligarchs accumulated their wealth during the chaotic 1990s and started investing in politics to defend and protect their assets. Oligarchies vary across the world, but in Ukraine they are reluctant to occupy public positions, preferring instead to lobby for their interests or to support political parties in return for loyalty (Kononczuk et al. 2017, pp. 1-2).

Before he became Ukraine’s president, Petro Poroschenko was a second-rank oligarch in terms of wealth who built his fortune from chocolate manufacture. Other well-known and influential oligarchs are Rinat Akhmetov, Ihor Kolomyskyi and Dmytro Firtash, all of whom show political flexibility, support the political parties they find
suitable for protecting their empires and have therefore remained wealthy and powerful even as governments have changed in Ukraine (Kononczuk et al. 2017, p. 2).

Akshmetov is from east Ukraine and got most of his wealth from energy and coal, as well as companies in agriculture, gas production and telecommunications (Kononczuk et al. 2017, p. 4). He set up a partnership with then Governor Yanukovych, which was maintained as Yanukovych advanced in positions of power. The partnership, which gave Yanukovych up to 50% of Akhmetov’s earnings in return for political decisions in favour of Akhmetov’s businesses, earned Akhmetov the rank of the 38th wealthiest person in the world in 2014 (Kuzio 2017, p. 153-159), though by 2019 he is ranked only 267 (Bloomberg BBI). Not only did Akhmetov’s ranking in Bloomberg experience a fall after the conflict erupted, so did his public image. Akhmetov declined the offer to become governor of Donetsk and did not support the formation of the Ukrainian volunteer battalions, but publicly called for calm and compromise and advocated the maintenance of Ukrainian territorial integrity. However, Denis Pushilin and other separatists in the DNR received funding from Akhmetov in the shadows, allegedly because he wanted to create a puppet government in Donetsk to give him increased bargaining power over Kyiv (Kuzio 2017, p. 187-189 and Wilson 2014, p. 126).

Another oligarch, who took rather different approach to the separatists, is Ihor Kolomoysky. Just after the revolution in Kyiv he was elected governor of Dnipro, from where he took a very active stance against the DNR and LNR. He founded a volunteer battalion, *Dnipro-1*, and is recognised as having successfully contributed to “stopping the Russian aggression from spreading to Dnipropetrovsk oblast” (Bonner 2016).

The Yanukovych family also played an active part at the beginning of the conflict. With the head of the family in exile, his oldest son Oleksandr is said to have directed things on the home front – that is, Donbass. The family had built its network there over many
years, meaning that almost the entire local political and law and order system owed its loyalty to the family. Those who did not feel the loyalty could feel the pressure of the kompromat (compromising material) the family had gathered on practically everybody.

Some reports place all the responsibility for the uprising on the family, claiming that it directed everything from behind the scenes and arguing that, “Without the influence of the ‘Family’, the reality was that in just a week after the uprising in Kyiv, local elites had made their peace with the new authorities” (Wilson 2014, p. 128). I will comment on this more at a later point in the thesis.

8.4 Layers

8.4.1 Sexual-Family-Clan layers

The Family is a known institution in Russian politics. It is often used to describe the closest circle around a powerful person (often, if not always, a man). This understanding of family implies that there is a reciprocal relationship of protection and enrichment between all the members of the family, and especially between each member and the family head. However, despite having a level of protection, the understanding of family is somewhat double, as at times of changes in power, being a member of the family becomes increasingly insecure and often dangerous.29

When the very first people with local commitments to the cause started to be replaced, the leaders who replaced them saw an opportunity created by the chaotic environment and the unstable situation, to enrich and empower their own circles of

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29 One of the best-known families was the Yeltsin family, the group of people around Yeltsin, who had become extremely rich and powerful from their positions as family members. As Yeltsin, due to age, illness (and perhaps, as rumour has it, excessive alcohol consumption), became increasingly unable to hold the office as President of Russia, there was great concern over who his successor might be and whether he was going to continue to protect the family. His successor Vladimir Putin at first seemed as the right man to protect the family, but over time he started replacing the inner circle with his own men. For more information, see the documentary “Putin’s Way”: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/putins-way/ by Neil Docherty, one of the many documentaries about him.
associates, that is, their families. These people are motivated by the family or clan layer, with the potential for explosion and creativity this layer holds.

The changing leadership in the LNR in particular points to ongoing clan conflicts affecting not only the republic’s top leadership, as seats in government have also been changing relatively often, with big (and often violent) rotations in the fall of 2014 (Lowe 2014), fall of 2016 (Losh 2016) and fall of 2017 (Solovyov and Zinets 2017).

8.4.2 Socioemotional-Community-Tribe layers

For the first self-proclaimed leaders, those who led the uprising in April and May 2014, there was dissonance in the community layer, as they wanted to demonstrate that the actions in Kyiv did not promise a satisfactory future for them and their community. In the socioemotional layer a conflict of identity and recognition made them protest to show that they had a different position than the Maidan revolution.

At the socioemotional level, some leadership representatives are highly likely to be driven by their own need for acknowledgement. Denis Pushilin is an example of such a character who tried to acquire influence earlier through the national election, but not succeeding he created and exploited another opportunity after the revolution.

8.4.3 Mental-Societal-Nation-State layers

The leadership of both the LNR and DNR mostly belong to a different social class than their counterparts in Kyiv or the local administration in government-controlled Donetsk. The locals at the DNR and LNR leadership level have no experience of politics, being local workers, not bureaucrats or politicians. I have already touched upon the consequences, namely the feeling of alienation resulting from the class differences between the decision-makers in Kyiv and the locals in the DNR and LNR.

The local leaders are modernists and were trying to play by modern rules when they first declared the two People’s Republics independent. An example of this is that the
DNR assembly decided to have their independence recognised by the UN and other countries.

They are guided by the modernist notions of the securitization of peace, driven by justice, although from the very beginning their whole uprising took the form of a barricade of government buildings, with weapons and barricades as protection. They often mention their fear that Kyiv will attack them at night, but also mention how they see their own uprising as equally justified as a reaction to the Maidan revolution in Kyiv.

8.5 Local level conflict discussion

Before moving on with the top-level leadership, I want to discuss the conflict at the grassroots and middle-range levels. I discuss these together because I believe that the conflict at these levels differs from the conflict between the top-level actors. The conflict at the local level has a different theme, and if we return to the assumption that the war in Ukraine can be meaningfully described as everything from a local civil war to a proxy war between the USA and Russia, then only the first two levels are relevant for looking at the conflict as a local civil war. I will use Mary Kaldor’s theory of new wars and Edward Azar’s notion of Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC) as a kind of theoretical sounding board to illuminate the conflict from different perspectives and discuss the differences in findings.

8.5.1 Globalisation and identity

Many scholars, soldiers, military academics etc. have noticed a shift in warfare from wars being fought between state actors by a fixed set of rules to today’s conflicts, where a state often finds its opponents in groups that are prone to fight for ideological or religious reasons. These new conflicts have been conceptualised with theories about asymmetrical warfare, fourth-generation warfare, protracted social conflicts and new wars. Already in this thesis I have also commented on hybrid warfare as a new concept and mentioned the
discussion over whether hybrid warfare is a new form of warfare or simply old techniques under a new heading.

Mary Kaldor has written about *new wars* as a contrast to the *old wars* in which the monopoly of violence was held by the state and state interests were the only legitimate causes of war. She argues that, while the old wars such as the two world wars, were recognised as such because they involved conflicts between states, many conflicts were never recognised as wars because this did not fit our conception of war. However, she continues to argue that “the actors, techniques and counter-techniques which emerged out of the cracks of modern warfare were to provide the basis for new ways of socially organizing violence” (Kaldor 2006, p. 32).

Kaldor claims that the politics of the new wars are about the “claim to power on the basis of seemingly traditional identities – nation, tribe, relation” (Kaldor 2006, p. 69). However, the new wars can only be understood through the lenses of cosmopolitanism and particularism, as well as, in particular, through globalisation. She argues that globalisation has affected social structures; in advanced industrial countries, the traditional working class is declining as territorially based mass production falls. Furthermore, globalisation is creating a new culture arising out of new transnational networks, often based on the use of the English language. This in the end, in Kaldor’s argument, creates a new global class that stands in opposition to those who are territorially rooted (Kaldor 2006, pp. 70-75).

Kaldor’s link between the new wars, the global class and identity politics provides a framework with which to test whether the recent episodes of the conflict in Ukraine can be said to be a *new war* based on the inequalities created by globalisation.

The LNR and the DNR were areas of large territorially based mass production, areas that stood in contrast to the modern, fast-moving city life of the bigger cities in
central Ukraine. The people in eastern Ukraine, due to their orientation towards Russia, by and large missed out on the new transnational networks primarily due to their territorially tied industries and their inability to communicate in English.

Moreover, the DNR and LNR mobilised around an ethnic identity as Russian for the purposes of claiming state power. The question of ethnicity is mostly addressed in a backward-looking manner, basing your Russian or Ukrainian ethnicity on whether your parents were one or the other. This creates an exclusive political identity that is, to a high degree, seen as a birth right.

Kaldor describes how political groupings based on an exclusive identity tend to be movements of nostalgia. This holds true for LNR and DNR, as their nostalgia centres around either Soviet times or even further back, around the notion of Novorossyya.

However, people in the eastern Ukraine are not the only groups subscribing to particularism in Ukraine. The Ukrainian nationalists in western Ukraine have an exclusive a view of identity as those in the east. Their identity politics also centres around nostalgia and has a backward gaze. In building their political identity they simply focus on parts of Ukrainian history when Ukraine was either self-governed or in a struggle to win its sovereignty.

The Ukrainian globalised class is found primarily in the larger cities. This globalised class, whose members belong to new transnational networks, speaks English and travels, is small in Ukraine, but well represented on the Maidan, where the revolution started.

This class also has a lot of power, in part due to the social status tied to this lifestyle and in part due to the external evaluations of right and wrong that globalised (or regionalised) institutions place upon them. Institutions such as the EU, UN, OSCE, WTO etc. all produce this globalised class (what Kaldor calls cosmopolitanism from above (2006,
p. 88)), and while working on more international cooperation they also associate positive developments with this new global class.

This idea of particularism as bad and cosmopolitanism (or globalisation) as good is alienating to territorially tied groups, who, because they do not speak the new international language of power – English – cannot understand globalisation. They are also unlikely to benefit from it in the short run, since mass production is their source of income, and that will be moved elsewhere. In the case of (east) Ukraine's coal industry, it will most likely be replaced by other sustainable energy sources, an industrial development led by other countries in Europe.

While Kaldor argues that these conflicts should be understood through the lenses of particularism and cosmopolitanism and sees groups of identity as movements of nostalgia with a backward gaze at identity, in contrast to the cosmopolitan attitudes produced by globalisation, Edward Azar, with his theory of Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC), changes the focus to problematises the relationship between states and these groups and the state's ability to fulfil the basic needs of such identity groups (Azar 1990, pp. 6-8).

Following Azar, we understand that the lack of recognition of identity groups and their needs can cause conflict, since the formation and acceptance of identity is seen as a basic developmental need. In the modern world, the state is responsible for the satisfaction of basic needs, including the recognition and acceptance of identity. Identity groups can be racial, religious, ethnic, cultural or other, and perceive themselves as sharing an identity. Azar follows Burton in his focus on human needs as ontological and non-negotiable (Azar 1990, pp. 6-12 and Ramsbotham 2005, pp. 114-116).

Looking at the current conflict in Ukraine, there is no doubt that the state has failed to recognise the needs of the groups in eastern Ukraine. The young government in
Kyiv launched the ATO shortly after the uprising started, consequently ending all possibilities of communication with the DNR and LNR, since they were now officially labelled terrorists.

However, it is not enough to look only at the current violent conflict, as the state has long had a problematic relationship with its identity groups because the two largest ethnic groups, the Ukrainian and the Russian, have battled for power and legitimacy, and there has been little willingness to recognise the needs of the other group.

PSC also lists economic dependence as a precondition for conflict. In Ukraine its economic dependence on Russia, especially in relation to natural gas, has limited its room for manoeuvre, both nationally and internationally, as Russia has shown a willingness to use the gas supply as a political tool (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 118 and Azar 1990, p. 11).

Another point to note is the corruption of the political system in Ukraine. Azar notes that most states that experience PSOs are governed by incompetent governments, and while I am not sure of the competence of Ukrainian politicians, the system as a whole and the basic functions of the state can be said to be highly ineffective, due to the amount of corruption and because the richest oligarchs influence who gets political power when they choose to support a candidate, both financially and by providing air-time on television.

The two perspectives on the new type of conflict reminds us that it is important to keep an eye on the “growing dissonance between those who participate in transnational networks … and those who are excluded from global processes and are tied to localities even though their lives may be profoundly shaped by those same processes” (Kaldor 2006, p. 70). It is also important to be mindful of the state’s role in recognising and respecting identity groups and their human needs. These perspectives allow us to see the people in eastern Ukraine as reacting to the changing circumstances and insecurities
in their lives and not as deliberate trouble-makers. Furthermore, the focus on the recognition of identity groups leads us to understand that problems with the need for recognition go further back in time than just this current conflict.

In my position as Chief Linguist one of my tasks was to hire new local, Ukrainian linguists to always keep a pool available. At a job interview with two potential new linguists I presented myself and said that I was a linguist in Russian, English and Danish. One of the two linguists presented himself first; he was from Odessa and therefore spoke Russian. The second linguist presented herself with her name and right after that said that she was completely unable to understand why any Russian linguists were needed in Ukraine, because in Ukraine we speak Ukrainian. At the time I was just a bit surprised, but later I really wondered about her need for positioning – to the extent that she would say something like that, at job interview, to the person responsible for hiring her or not. I ended up not hiring her because we worked with a lot of Ukrainian soldiers who did not speak Ukrainian. I could not have her saying something like that to them.

The episode made me aware how politicised language is in Ukraine, a strong marker of identity for some and a way of showing political belonging. But for others, for example for the minorities who have a different mother tongue and still see themselves as Ukrainian citizens, to them language may just be what they grew up speaking.
9 ECM and Conflict transformation

Based on the previous chapters of this thesis, I will now look at the conflict through the four guiding principles of conflict transformation and map the epicentre, following ECM.

In the chapters leading up to this one, I first outlined Ukraine’s pre-conflict history, then I introduced the episodes and found the themes to be justice and truth, depending on the level of conflict. Thereafter I introduced the main actors and analysed their blockages and motivations in the conflict layers. In the previous section I used Mary Kaldor and Edward Azar’s theories as academic sounding boards to obtain more perspectives on the conflict. Building on this process, I continue with conflict transformation and ECM.

9.1.1 Look through the window

When seeking to look through the window, to see the epicentre, I invite the reader on a mental excursion back to the chapter on Ukraine’s pre-conflict history to see the long string of episodes that have now come to form the epicentre.

Looking through the window, it becomes clear that the violent episodes in the conflict outlined in this thesis simply represent the immediate situation in a much more complex and much older conflict. The conceptual framework that connects the immediate situation to the pattern of relationship is Ukrainian national identity. The patterns of relationships evolve around Ukrainians as stuck in the middle, between their historical overlords – Russians on one side of the country and other European overlords on the other side.

9.1.2 Listen for identity

The voices of identity are very present and strong in this conflict. The epicentre of the conflict involves the millennia-long history of push-and-pull attempts to officially hold a
Ukrainian identity, but also the possibility to have a different identity, for example, as an ethnic Russia, Hungarian or Romanian, and still enjoy the same rights as ethnic Ukrainians.

Identity in this conflict is closely linked to power because the parties add different meanings of power to each other’s identities. The Ukrainians see themselves as historically suppressed by the many overlords that have ruled Ukraine over time. This perspective justifies a comment like the one my teacher made about how the Russians took everything from Ukrainians, even their name, and it also justifies the language law.

Furthermore, in the periods of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, Russians occupied positions of power, mostly in the cities and in industrial hot-spots where Ukrainians were farmers and had other occupations that had less power.

Hence, Ukrainians view Ukrainian identity as historically stripped of power and the other minority identities as being more powerful, especially the Russian identity, because of the long history of being under the Russian Empire and because of the positive discrimination that the Russian identity received under the Soviet Union.

Russians see the Ukrainian identity as the powerful identity. Since the fall of the Soviet Union Ukraine has been a sovereign country, with a focus on building a nation state from the beginning. For example, in the 1996 constitution the state language is Ukrainian and, despite having grown a lot since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, Ukrainian nationalism has been strong since 1991 (and long before that).

In addition, globalisation adds an additional power struggle over identity to the conflict, as the protesters in the east, in the LNR and DNR, mostly belong to the territorially rooted who, in terms of identity, are losing power to the globalised in the larger cities.
9.1.3 Allow complexity

Allowing for complexity means keeping in mind the fact that most Ukrainians do not have a clear idea of how a Ukrainian identity should be created or what a Ukrainian nation state should look. Ukraine has been under the influence of many other nationalities, and there are a lot of non-Ukrainian minorities in the country. The complexity that this creates allows more possibilities for transformation.

9.1.4 Pose dilemmas

In relation to this epicentre, what dilemmas will help transform the current episode?

Among my ideas are:

- How can Ukraine build a national political identity while at the same time caring for its ethnic minorities?
- How can Ukraine write a national history while at the same time embracing the diverse and different histories of the different regions?
- How can Ukraine give power to minorities while at the same time recognising the historical suppression of the Ukrainian identity?

9.1.5 Mapping the epicentre

Looking through the window of conflict transformation allows us to see the epicentre of the conflict that at this level centres around justice as the primary theme. When applying the layers of ECM, I have found that the conflict in the episode develops out of a spiritual-political-global-governance deep mistrust in the international political system and in globalisation into a mental-societal-nation-state ethnical-bound divide that causes a deep-rooted feeling of alienation from the other into a socio-economic-communal-tribe focus on frozen categories of exclusion and inclusion and a sense of dualism into sexual-family-clan self-enrichment of oneself and one's family and a lack of empathy with victims.
of the war and finally a material continuation of the (at this level, civil) war and an unwillingness to communicate.

The primary theme is justice, which is materialised in the different layers, with its focus on retaliation and a demand for concessions from the other side, without being willing to give any.

Following the ECM principle of homeostasis, the healing of the system will happen as the system approaches its dynamic equilibrium, guided by a counter movement through all layers. Hence, the over-emphasised focus on justice calls for a rediscovery of harmony and, in more practice-near terms, maybe of forgiveness and understanding. The lack of unity in the different layers creates an empty space that is ready to be filled with stories of the other, and in order to understand that the other is not a homogeneous group of evil-doers, honest and sincere dialogue is needed above all.

As Chief Linguist in OP UNIFIER I was responsible for all our linguists. At the time we were doing training at the Military Academy in Odessa, a mainly Russian-speaking part of Ukraine. The Military Academy is an institution of higher education and therefore covered by the law on education mentioned earlier, meaning that the language of instruction there should be Ukrainian. The question of what language to use caused some tension in the Academy, which also spilled over to us as their international cooperation partners. Therefore, while I was at a meeting, being informed that we should only use Ukrainian-speaking linguists at the Academy in the future (as opposed to Russian-speaking ones), my colleague was at another meeting (held in Russian, by the way) getting the message that Russian was the preferred language for linguists at the Academy.

The tension was caused by the fact that on the one hand Ukrainian was the language that should be used by law and is used by many in the military to position themselves in the conflict, as they do not want to speak the language of the enemy, on the other hand, many cadets from the south (Odessa area) of Ukraine speak Russian as their first language. Their passive understanding of Ukrainian may allow them to understand teachings in class, but they are unable to ask questions or do papers and presentations in Ukrainian.
10 Top leadership

Some will also argue that the dissonance between the globalised and the territorially rooted in Ukraine was not large enough to start a war on this scale and that identity politics, however strong, does not sustain a conventional war for almost five years. For this, one needs more money and power and a different motivation for conflict. Hence, another level of leadership will be examined in this section.

The top leadership consists of the key political and military figures in a conflict. Lederach argues that certain key figures are common to this level of leadership. First, these leaders are highly visible, being those who receive press coverage and get to give their version of peace-building (conflict transformation) processes to the wider public. Secondly, these leaders are often locked into positions taken with regard to the perspectives and issues of the conflict. They are under pressure to maintain their positions, and acceptance of anything less than their stated positions may be seen as weakness. Finally, at this level the leaders have significant power and influence (Lederach 1997, pp. 39-40).

In this section I will first go through the conflict again, but this time only by looking at the actions of Ukraine’s, Russia’s, the USA’s, and EU’s political leadership. Thereafter I will analyse each party’s stakes in the conflict and possible blockings.

10.1 The international climate leading up to the conflict

While it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to include the entire process leading up to the conflict, a few things in the years before the conflict can be highlighted as important.

Ukraine was simultaneously negotiating with the EU over the association agreement (AA) and with Russia to be part of the Customs Union. Both Russia and the EU
rejected Ukraine’s request to be somehow part of both and therefore not have to choose (at this time, Ukraine’s exports to Russia and the EU were almost the same).

Both the EU and Russia kept pushing Ukraine to sign an agreement with them and reject the agreement with the opposing party (Charap and Colton 2017, pp. 114-118). In particular Poland was eager to have Ukraine sign the AA, arguing that if it did not Russia would take control of the country. The Polish president made it clear that “Never again do we want to have a common border with Russia” (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 120).

For its part, Russia pressured Ukraine to join its Custom Union by squeezing the economy. In 2013 Russia imposed trade sanctions on Ukraine, first on some types of food, later on steel, and extensive customs checks de facto put a full stop to Ukrainian exports to Russia for some time (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 118).

For its part the United States changed its approach to Europe after Barack Obama came into office. He pushed back on the NATO expansion with Ukraine and Georgia and generally on the competitive dynamic in the region (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 106). Russia-USA relations had a symbolic “reset” in 2009, when the American Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, presented her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov with a red “reset” button to symbolise a fresh start to the relationship (Associated Press 2009, Video).

The reset between the USA and Russia went well in the beginning, but Russia’s clear view of the ‘near abroad’ as a region in which it has ‘privileged interests’ and the USA’s inability to acknowledge that it too considers parts of the world regions of ‘privileged interests’ slowly started to damage the relationship. President Medvedev said that “for Russia, as for other countries, there are regions in which it has privileged

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30 The symbolic reset was actually a source of some amusement. The American side got the writing on the button wrong, so instead of перезагрузка (ENG: reset) it had перегрузка, which means overcharge or overload, an interesting mistake looking back at the Russia-America relationship now, after the war in Ukraine, the war in Syria and Trump’s mysterious (anticipated) relationship to Putin. Perhaps ‘overload’ describes better then ‘reset’ what has happened since then.
interests” (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 109). However, after Russia’s war with Georgia the sirens sounded in the EU and USA, and Vice President Joe Biden, referring to Medvedev’s speech, said that “We will not recognize any nation having a sphere of influence” (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 109). Relations between Russia and USA were not particularly good by this stage, despite having been better in the years after the reset.

The positive climate started to wear off when Putin was re-elected despite massive protests in Russia in 2012, and when in 2013 Russia decided to give asylum to Edward Snowden the tensions further intensified, so when the annexation of Crimea happened in 2014, the climate of cooperation was already on a downward slope.

In Ukraine, Yanukovych was trying to go as far as possible without having to choose. Despite Russia’s trade sanctions he went along with the AA negotiations, and despite EU pressure not to do so he continued to negotiate with Russia over the Custom Union membership. Yanokovych’s dilemma was a product of the zero-sum jousting between Russia and the EU, which led them to pose a binary choice to his country. More than once he made it plain that he did not want to choose, but was ignored (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 122).

10.2 The conflict

There has been much speculation over the role of the EU and USA in the Orange Revolution on the Maidan. When the Revolution started, the three countries continued to apply pressure on Yanukovych to go in their direction. There were rumours of the USA’s deeper involvement in creating the revolution, especially after the leak of a recorded phone call between USA ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, where the two discuss which politicians should be in which positions in the future in Ukraine (BBC Europe 2014). Some have argued that the recording was most likely made and leaked by Russia to try give the revolution a *geo-politics as usual* stamp
(Charap and Colton 2017, p. 123), at least in Russia, where USA is believed to be behind all the more recent major regime changes.

For its part the EU continued to pressure Yanukovych to sign the AA, now with the large crowd on the Maidan as another good argument.

In February 2014 Yanukovych, together with three leaders from the opposition, made an agreement mediated by the French, Polish and German foreign ministers and a representative from Russia. The agreement was signed on 21 February, and in what looked like a temporary truce Putin and Obama agreed on the phone that night on the need to implement the agreement in full and without delay (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 124).

The agreement was never implemented as the day after, as previously noted, Yanukovych fled to Russia. The new power in Kyiv had support from the USA and EU, and European leaders never sought to replace the 21 February agreement, which EU foreign-policy chief Catherine Ashton said could be disregarded since events had moved on (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 124). Unlike the USA and EU, however, Russia insisted that the 21 February agreement should be implemented, declared the new government illegitimate and called the events leading to the changeover of power a violent coup d’État.

10.2.1 Crimea

Some have argued that Russia’s military-strategic situation, with its largest naval base located in Sevastopol in the Crimea, should have seen Russia plan an armed invasion of the peninsula during the Orange Revolution in 2004 in case access to Crimea should ever be prevented by, for example, Ukraine joining NATO (Mathiesen 2018, p. 261). This could be an explanation for the speed at which things moved in Crimea.

On the eve of the referendum in Crimea Sergei Lavrov gave Secretary of State John Kerry a ‘Friends of Ukraine’ international action plan. The plan included clear demands
from Russia’s side. The core objective was Ukraine’s neutrality, undisturbed economic ties with Russia and federalisation in Ukraine to ensure that each region could veto decision-making in Kyiv (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 124). Seemingly undisturbed by the ideological point that Ukraine should have the right to choose these things for themselves, Russia presented this take it or leave it list of demands at the crisis talks.

While the new Ukrainian government seemed paralyzed by the Russian annexation of Crimea, the EU, USA and NATO stepped up their support for the new government in Kyiv and stated that their strategic goal was to create a “reformed, secure and Western-integrated Ukraine” (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 133), in other words, both the West and Russia took a more-of-the-same approach to Ukraine.

10.2.2 Sanctions

Then the sanctions war started between the West and Russia. The day after the Crimea referendum, the EU and USA launched the first in a series of economic sanctions directed at individuals and corporations. Apart from sanctions, Russia faced international isolation and was kicked out of the G8, practical work in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council was shut down, and EU-Russia summits were suspended. From the Russian perspective the sanctions constituted an attack in an economic war started by the West to destabilise the country (Charap and Colton 2017, p. 134). Others have noted that Western sanctions can be seen as an example of the use of hybrid (economic) warfare methods against Russia (Mathiesen 2018, 255).

In the following months, and as the conflict in eastern Ukraine increased, the USA and EU continuously intensified their sanctions regime, and economic ties between Russia and the West were torn apart in almost no time. In August Russia answered with an import ban on agricultural and food products from the USA and EU.
10.2.3 A downward slope

From then on, the relationship just got worse and worse. The USA started sending military trainers to Ukraine to train the Ukrainian army, as did Canada, Britain, Poland and Lithuania, and later Denmark and Germany followed with military advisors and military linguists. Some countries insisted and still insist that they are teaching the Ukrainian army NATO standards to help them reach their declared goal of NATO interoperability by 2020, but many have questioned the timing and noted that the military training looks more like giving a helping hand to Ukraine’s soldiers who are facing separatist and Russian forces in the east.

Later NATO’s presence in eastern Europe was further expanded, with NATO operation Enhanced Forward Presence in the three Baltic States and Poland (NATO 2019). The three Baltic States have been very concerned that Russia would reproduce the Crimean scenario within their countries. The Lithuanian defence ministry has, among other things, issued a manual advising citizens what to do in case of a Russian invasion and has placed copies of this manual, with tips on civil disobedience, in schools and libraries (East 2016).

For its part Russia has expressed concern about the presence of NATO forces in a neighbouring country and has called the NATO build-up in Europe one of the most significant threats to Russian security. “We take these actions as another example of provocative military activities close to the Russian borders in the frameworks of the infamous policy of Russian containment,” Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said of the build-up of NATO forces in eastern Europe (Russia Today 2017).

10.3 Proxy war

In most news of the more analytical kind, there is no doubt about Russia’s involvement in the conflict. As already mentioned, more journalists have tracked down soldiers to
actually be in Ukraine when they were officially on active service in Russia. Organisations such as Cargo200, mentioned before, have collected the names of Russians who have been killed or wounded in Ukraine and also pieces of Russian military equipment that were never in the Ukrainian army, and therefore cannot be trophy pieces, but have been found by it, some of which are now at display in Kyiv, near the historical museum.

Russia, of course, denies any involvement in the conflict, and on many occasions, Putin has stated “that there are no Russian troops in Ukraine” (Gregory 2016).

NATO, on the other hand, does not deny the presence of quite a large number of NATO forces in Ukraine, though the explanation is that these forces are there as a part of the Ukrainian army’s reform process. Thus officially, for example, the Canadian contingent sees its presence in Ukraine as completely independent of the conflict in the east and believes that the ongoing professionalisation of the Ukrainian army would have happened anyway (Vice News 2016, Video). In 2017, however, the USA took a decision to send lethal, defensive weapons to Ukraine, acknowledging that this was in support of Ukraine, “a sovereign country [that] has a right to defend itself,” according to State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert (Lederman 2017).

The two sides’ obvious involvement and respective denials thereof have led many to call the war a proxy war, that is, “a war fought between groups or smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these” (Cambridge English Dictionary) between Russia and the USA and its allies.

31 Military equipment captured from the enemy in battle.
32 At minute 3:22 in the video: On the Frontlines of Ukraine’s Proxy War Between the West and Russia.
10.4 Searching for the epicentre in the proxy war

The current conflict in Ukraine is in obvious ways the immediate situation in what is a longer conflict between the USA and Russia, where the patterns of relationship between the conflicting parties is continually being negotiated with reference to power, culture, influence and the world order.

Many scholars have dealt with this conflict as an international conflict and a continuation of the Cold War: one need only read section 3.1 of this thesis on the state of the art in the conflict in Ukraine to receive confirmation of this. The relationship between the main actors at the top level of leadership are affected by the conflict theme, namely truth. The EU and USA have never been particularly good at listening to and acknowledging world views that differed too much from their own: the reluctance naturally only grows every time an oppositional truth is proved to be manipulated. Russia for its part feels misunderstood, and its scholars argue that it is the West that has provoked the conflict through its expansionist policy of inclusion that is embedded in a liberal-democratic world view and by failing to understand that Russia sees the world through realist zero-sum lenses.

In relation to identity, at this level the conflicting parties are holding on to structures that were created long before this conflict. Russia holds on to the identity of being a global power, with privileged interests in the near abroad. In relation to this conflict, it has become clear that Russia takes identity as the warden of the post-Soviet countries seriously and thus still holds on to an identity that is traced back to the time of the Russian Empire.

The USA's voices of identity in this conflict also recall former times, and despite being toned down under Barack Obama, the country's involvement in the Maidan is a way to portray the USA as a protector of freedom. Senator John McCain spoke to the protestors
on the Maidan in December 2013, and his message was clear “‘We are here to support your just cause, the sovereign right of Ukraine to determine its own destiny freely and independently’ (The Guardian 2013). When he was asked about Russia, John McCain stated that he knew how important Ukraine is to Russia but still explicitly supported Ukraine’s turn turned towards the EU instead of Russia (The Guardian 2013).

The EU, while much less bombastic, also continued to position itself as an alternative to Russia by continuing to push for the signing of the AA.

Allowing complexity at this level will allow the future of Ukraine to be non-dual, but it will also permit a focus on seeing both parties as more than just each other’s opposites in order to see through each of their international positionings. The reset of relations was, in theory at least, a good idea and a way of recognising that the relationship between the two players did carry a history with it that was not beneficial to either party.

The dilemmas at this level are equally about presenting greater complexity in opportunities for change. Such dilemmas might be expressed as follows:

- How can Ukraine increase cooperation with the EU and at the same time keep its ties with Russia?
- How can the EU and USA promote liberal ideas in eastern Europe while Russia maintains its self-declared status as a regional guardian of the post-Soviet countries?
- How can Ukraine have full sovereignty in decision-making and at the same time form a bridge between the EU and Russia?
11 Discussion

In this chapter I will start the discussion by looking at the concept of power, violence and the need to have a truth on one's side in order to create legitimacy for oneself. Thereafter I will discuss how I see the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), working as a consequence of the difference conflict-theme focus at the local and top levels.

11.1 Power and truth

Scholars have argued that the worsening relationship between Russia on the one hand and the EU and USA on the other comes down to different world views (see, for example, Kissinger 2014, Mearsheimer 2014, Cook 2015). The West sees the world through an idealist or liberalist perspective and “tend[s] to believe that the logic of realism holds little relevance in the twenty-first century” (Mearsheimer 2014). This is a faulty belief according to this argument, as it is exactly a realist world view that colours Russia’s actions. The two sides therefore misunderstand each other’s actions, and the EU especially has been blind to the provocative nature of NATO and EU expansion into eastern Europe that from Russia’s realist perspective constitutes a direct threat to its safety and in the end legitimizes its actions in Ukraine.

From my perspective, rather than different world-views, what is at play in this conflict is a struggle for power and legitimacy. Hannah Arendt defines power relationally: “Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together” (Arendt 1970, p. 44). Following this understanding of power, it is “the people’s support that leads power to the institutions of a country, and its support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to begin with” (Arendt 1970, p. 41). Hence, “power is consensual; it needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does
need is legitimacy” (Arendt 1970, p. 52). Following this argument, the USA, the EU and Russia are all trying to create legitimacy around their positions of power.

In a violent conflict truth matters to states because, to return once again to Hannah Arendt: “Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power’s disappearance” (Arendt 1970, p. 56). Thus violence is an instrument, a means to an end, but it can never be legitimate.

At first glance this argument stands in contrast to modern peace’s basis for solving conflicts – legitimised state violence. However, digging deeper, once again the contrast may not be so great. The Clausewitzian understanding of war as “an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will” (Clausewitz 1997, p. 5) is an outdated view of war according to Kaldor, who argues that: “Nowadays, it does seem to have become widely accepted that the use of force is only justifiable either in self-defence or if it is sanctioned by the international community – in particular, the UN Security Council” (Kaldor 2006, pp. 29-30).

Taken together, Arendt, Clausewitz and Kaldor give us an idea of how the postmodern, post-truth trend became so strong in this conflict: if violence is seen as illegitimate unless it is done in self-defence or by sanction of the UN Security Council, and if the use of force puts power in jeopardy, while states still use violence as a means to an end, then narratives about self-defence become the legitimising factor of violence that allows the state to use it (for example, in new wars) and still uphold power. The narratives then (because everyone has a lot to lose if they were changed) becomes truths. Hence, in an attempt to create legitimacy, power becomes a matter of truth, which creates the need to disseminate one’s understanding of truth.
In this conflict, an overemphasis on truth as the conflict theme tipped the balance towards postmodern peace and allowed the parties to become blind towards the other conflict themes, namely harmony, security and justice.

The biggest fault of the West was that, in its focus on legitimacy, it failed to see that the conflict would also cause a security problem, that is, it failed to see what human suffering its liberalist expansion would cause; and when human losses started occurring, the West looked the other way, arguing that Ukraine was not one of its core strategic interests (Mearsheimer 2014). When it could not look the other way anymore, it started attributing blame, once again seeing the conflict as a matter of truth – but what does blame (and truth) matter? Mary Kaldor asks a similar question in relation to the conflict in Bosnia:

“This was a war of ethnic cleansing and genocide. What did it matter whether the crime was committed by Serbs from Belgrade or by Serbs from Bosnia? What did it matter, in practical terms, whether Yugoslavia or Bosnia was the internationally recognized state?” She continues: “Something had to be done to protect the victims and to uphold respect for international humanitarian norms. In effect, the debate about whether the conflict was an international or a civil war treated it as an old war between the fighting sides, in which violence against civilians is merely a side-effect of the war” (Kaldor 2006, p. 125).

What Kaldor is hinting at here is in essence what is also happening in eastern Ukraine. There is a large focus on placing blame, understanding who is responsible and if any states are involved while the war continues.

11.2 Truth, justice and the OSCE

As I have argued earlier, there are two primary themes in this conflict, depending on what level we are looking at. At the grassroots and middle-range levels the main theme and main concern is justice, while at the top-leader level, as just elaborated, that theme follows the social focus on post-truth, and the theme centres around truth.
Among the implications of this are, for example, the fact that the international attempt to control or restrain the conflict, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), set up by states, works with truth as its main theme. The mission “will gather information and report on the security situation, establish and report facts in response to specific incidents, including those concerning alleged violations of fundamental OSCE principles” (OSCE SMM Mandate). It is, as its name also indicates, a monitoring mission, and it reports on factual events in a daily report, such as how many ceasefire violations there have been, what weapons were used, and in what direction the violation was committed (not to assign responsibility to one side or the other).

In Ukraine, the OSCE does not have a good reputation. Anywhere we asked about the OSCE, people would give answers like: “OSCE who?” indicating that they would never see them in the area, or “OSCE? They are in their office”, “they don’t know what’s going on”. Other, more serious stories about the OSCE came from the beginning of the war, when the Ukrainian side observed that often, not long after an OSCE patrol had visited a firing position or stronghold, incoming fire would start. Russia deploys 37 monitors to the mission (fourth behind the USA, UK and Poland) and the Ukrainians we spoke to, had no doubt about why the number was so high – so they could pass information on to the LNR and DNR.

A representative in the city administration in Donetsk also commented on the unpopularity of OSCE and she thought it had to do with the fact, that OSCE never actually saw what was going on.

The OECE mandate only allows its monitors to patrol during the day, and since an American paramedic was killed when the car he was in drove over a mine, they have only been allowed to move along paved roads (OSCE SMM Palamar 2017). For anyone who has ever been in a conflict area, it is already clear that not much can be monitored from a paved road: for example, it is not possible for the OSCE to monitor any heavy equipment in withdrawal areas, a major provision under Minsk II, as they are mostly if

33 OSCE status report, 11 February.
not entirely in forest areas, so as to stay hidden from enemy surveillance UAVs. The OSEC regional office, the city administration and servicemen in the Ukrainian army all commented on this when I was there in September 2018.

But the OSCE does actually see what is going on. They monitor at night with cameras and they monitor the LoC with UAVs, which allows them to gather information about the conflict even when they cannot physically go there. This has turned the SMM into an information-gathering-monster, with daily updates, weekly reports, status reports every second week, thematic reports and declarations from the member states. The conflict in Ukraine is probably the best documented conflict in the world at the moment.

Hence, from my perspective the unpopularity of the OSCE really has nothing to do with information collection, which they manage quite well. The problem is that at the grassroots and mid-range levels truth is not so much of a theme as justice, and the OSCE and its member states categorically refuse to talk about responsibility (for example, for the ceasefire violations they report). Naturally, without assigning responsibility there can be no external recognition for the parties to the conflict of right and wrong, good and bad, and therefore no talk about justice.

11.3 The state of things

In the introduction to this thesis, I commented on the situation in eastern Ukraine as relatively stable, given the instability that usually comes with war. The defensive positions have been fixed, and the battle rhythm of the conflict has become steady and repetitive. However, before moving to the conclusion of this thesis, I wish to comment briefly on the current state of things at the international level, where there has been some development in the relationships involved.

Russia has still not been invited back into the (now) G7 group and the EU-Russia summit is still suspended, as are the negotiations over Russia joining the Organisation for
Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). However, in the case of NATO, the diplomatic dialogue in the NATO-Russia Council has continued since 2014.

In the recent election in the USA many Russians were hoping that Trump would be elected the new president\(^\text{34}\) because they believed that he would be willing to work on improving the relationship between Russia and the USA (Sheftalovich 2017). While he did not entirely live up to this expectation, he has met President Putin and expressed himself to be positive about him many times, for example, at the Helsinki meeting, where the two discussed initial steps in improving their bilateral relationship.

The two also discussed the implementation and maintenance of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty of 1987. The treaty regulates missiles with ranges of from 500 to 5,500 kilometres. At the Helsinki meeting the two parties discussed the maintenance and implementation of the treaty, but in 2014 the USA had already started making allegations that Russia was not sticking to the agreement, which continued until 2018. Therefore, on 2 February 2019 the Trump administration suspended its obligations under the INF treaty, and shortly afterwards President Putin announced that Russia was also officially suspending its treaty obligations (Arms Control 2019). This meant that the two countries were continuing a trend that started in 2007, when Russia suspended its obligations under the Conventional Forces Europe Treaty, which regulated the movement of conventional military equipment and personnel in Europe (Arms Control 2012).

The breakdown of the INF treaty is an example of how the relationship between Russia and the USA continues to slope downward, despite the two presidents’ positive comments about each other.

\(^{34}\) A list of eight American intelligence and national security agencies say that Russia not only hoped for Trump, but also interfered in the election to make it happen (Yourish and Griggs 2018).
Despite the mutual sanctions between the EU and Russia, one industry that seems almost untouched by the political conflict is gas. The EU imports gas from Russia, and since both parties benefit from that arrangement, no one has dared to touch it. Gas imports and exports require a complex infrastructure because of the pipelines that carry the gas. Sanctions would mean changing the export routes (from the Russian side) and the import routes (from the EU side) – a slow and costly process. At the time of writing, the latest development is that the EU looks as if it is going to approve the new *North Stream 2* underwater gas pipeline that will link Russia and Germany directly through the Baltic Sea (Vaughan 2019).

The voices opposing the project have pointed to the increase in the EU's dependence on Russian gas, which, as noted previously in this thesis, Russia has shown itself to be willing to use for reasons of political coercion, and which already accounts for about 40% of European gas consumption, but it is also significant for Ukraine's loss of income and political position as transfer country, another concern regarding the new pipeline (Vaughan 2019).

The project, of course, also increases Russia's dependence on the European gas market. Bearing in mind the idea that created the EU long ago, namely that countries that trade with one another and become economically interdependent will not fight one another, this increase in cooperation with Russia may be a good idea. It is still too early to say anything certain about North Stream 2, as the final agreement has not yet been signed, but the project is worth keeping an eye on.
12 Conclusion

I started this thesis by introducing my own perspective on the conflict in Ukraine, a perspective I acquired from working with the AFU and the Danish Defence. Throughout the thesis, I have tried to make my experiences available to the reader whenever I felt that they would add value to the thesis. Despite having experience of only one side in the conflict, it has been a pleasure not to have to pick sides while writing this thesis. My work in Ukraine does not as such demand that I pick sides in the conflict, and I feel I have been fortunate enough to understand the complexity of the conflict by meeting people in and outside Ukraine who hold very different opinions and experiences.

In the introduction to the thesis I wrote that the conflict can be seen as everything from a pure civil war to a pure proxy war, depending on the perspective from which one is looking at the conflict. I have tested this statement in this thesis and found that the conflict is not a matter of either/or, but of both/and – that is, both a civil war and a proxy war.

At the top level, the conflict looks different than at the local levels. I have therefore argued that the two levels of the conflicts have different primary themes and found them to have different epicentres based in different conflict histories, despite sharing episodes.

The conflict at the local levels (grassroots and middle range) obtain their energy from the epicentre, where Ukrainian national identity is suppressed by different overlords and only allowed when it benefits these powerholders. The historical understanding of Ukrainian identity as powerless stands in contrast to the period after the fall of the Soviet Union, when Ukraine became an independent country and nation-building started. In that period Ukrainian national identity became strong and powerful compared to its minorities, especially the large Russian minority. The latter feel the
change strongly because, during the Soviet period, having Russian ethnicity and language continued to be a marker of power, as it had been in the Russian Empire.

This focus on the earlier suppression of Ukrainian identity and the Russian minority’ fear of future oppression, together with both the protestors’ and the separatists’ vectoral understandings that they are fighting for a better future, made me argue that the primary theme at the local level is justice.

Moral peace promises peace in the future by providing justice for earlier wrongdoings. The problem with an unbalanced focus on justice is that it justifies violence as a tool with which to move from injustice to justice and hence gives way to the claim to be fighting a morally just war, provided you are fighting on the right side.

The disturbances in the layers of the local-level actors also have to do with the history of having always picked a side. In the global government layer, there is a feeling of mistrust in a system that underlined the conflicts in Ukraine – for example, by not allowing the Ukrainians a nation state after World War I, but giving the western part to Poland – as well as in a system that, in modern times, created the hardest period in the memory of many, namely the liberalisation in the 1990s, which was too slow in delivering on its promises of economic prosperity. The blockage in the next layer is linked to the east-west division in Ukraine and the failed attempt by the new state to create a nation state in which the contract between the state and its citizens would be upheld regardless of citizens’ ethnicity. This developed into a socioemotional focus on dualism and on tribal exclusion or inclusion. In the family and clan layer, this, along with the high level of corruption in Ukraine, manifested itself as a focus of self-enrichment and the protection of one’s family.

At the top level the same episodes take us to a different epicentre. The conflict history is linked to the Cold War, with its dual-power division of the world, in which each
of the Cold War powers, the USA and Russia, fought to keep their power and influence in the world. Although the Cold War ended, the conflict between the two opposing parties was never transformed, which is why we are seeing a new episode now.

The primary theme of the conflict at the top level is truth. Even factual truths are challenged in this conflict, when both Russia and USA deny their involvement. In the discussion I elaborate on how truth has become so important for the two parties, arguing that power needs legitimacy and that legitimacy is dependent on doing the right thing, or on people believing that their state is doing the right thing.

All parties need to convince their side that they are doing the right things. Given the access today to never-ending sources of information and technology that allows everyone to both produce and publish information, I have argued that we are close to a situation where propaganda has again become effective because people are faced with information-overload. They therefore chose to use the information sources they already know and believe the news that does not challenge their current world view.

The conflict in Ukraine is not either a local civil war or a proxy war between the old Cold War opponents because the two levels of course affect each other. The OSCE is a good example of this. Created at the state level, where the conflict theme is truth, but working at the local level, where people are concerned with justice, the organisation has a negative reputation for not doing anything. As I personally tend to agree with the local level actors that the OSCE SMM represents a toothless attempt by the international community to do something, criticism of it cannot be pointed at how they fulfil their mission: it has to be directed at the mandate that set it up if anything.

There are, of course, many examples of how the top-level actors and local-level actors and the conflict at each level affect each other: Russian propaganda-like news in
the east creating a movement around the Novorossiya identity, or the American decision to sell weapons to Ukraine, to mention just a few.

It is important to see both levels of conflict, as well as the conflict itself, as lying somewhere in between a civil war and a proxy war. If we focus only on the conflict as a proxy war and see everything that happens in eastern Ukraine as the actions of either Russia or the USA (and EU), then we fail to recognise that at the local level there is a conflict of identity (Ukrainian, Russian and other minority identities), as well as a struggle to obtain recognition for that identity and feel a sense of belonging. If we only see the conflict as a local-level civil war, then we fail to see that at the top level a conflict over power and positioning is being played out. The failure to work at both conflict levels and to transform both conflicts at the epicentre will just lead to the eruption of a new conflict episode somewhere else, either somewhere in Ukraine or in one of the other post-Soviet countries.

12.1 Concluding the method

Conflict transformation and ECM have proved to be two interesting methods of producing a conflict map of this sort. Guided by my own experiences, I wanted to make a conflict map that would be a kind of introduction to the conflict for future conflict workers. This led me to focus on the main events and actors that conflict workers in Ukraine will need to know about.

Presenting the conflict episode, conflict transformation and ECM and their common focus on finding the conflict epicentre proved to be especially beneficial for the conflict in Ukraine, because it guides one to an understanding of the episodes as an immediate situation in a much longer conflict history. This again led to the discovery that, under the surface of separatism and unity, the conflict is about identity and recognition.
The themes of ECM are another tool that I found highly beneficial for this type of conflict. The investigation of the primary theme throughout the conflict works as an excellent tool for analysis, as it invites one to look beyond the actions of people to understand why the conflict is played out as it does. On top of that, the themes, together with the principles of homeostasis, hint at the need to pay special attention to local organisations or programs working with the three other themes.

When applying the four themes to the conflict episode, I decided to analyse each of the highlighted episodes in terms of their main theme. I did this because from the beginning I had an idea that the conflict themes would vary and change as the conflict changed from revolution to war. Surprisingly, as it turned out, the conflict themes did not vary a lot, despite the different levels of violence. However, analysing all the highlighted episodes showed that the theme varied at different actor levels. Hence, applying the theory differently can help discover patterns that would might otherwise have stayed hidden.

The layers in ECM was the hardest part of the model to apply to the conflict. It is hard to look for dissonances without having a relationship to the conflicting parties unless the dissonances of the conflict are obviously in one layer. From my current understanding of ECM, the layers will be much more beneficial in practical peace work. In practical peace work, the parties will reveal much more about themselves than in my case, where ECM was applied behind a computer far from the conflict.

Josefina Echavarría Alvarez gives an excellent example of how to use ECM in her analysis of Cologne’s Sylversternacht (Echavarría 2018). However, I found it hard to apply this inspiration to the conflict map of Ukraine, as the dissonance is not as clear and the conflict episode is much longer.
In analysing the layers, I used Frederiksen's reading of ECM, where he added a second interpersonal layer, the corresponding levels of social organisation. This allowed me to focus on the conflict and dig into the dissonances at the social level. The levels of clan, tribe, state and global government became starting points for the layer analysis.

The four points I took from conflict transformation helped to guide the analysis in the right direction. Looking through the window at the episodes once lived that had now become the epicentre resonated with the Ukrainian case, as the conflict has had a long build-up or latent phase, with many previous episodes. Furthermore, the point of listening for identity, applied together with the layers of ECM that have been created, is from my perspective the most interesting analysis, because for me listening for identity represented open encouragement, in contrast to the intrapersonal sexual, socioeconomic, mental and spiritual layers that seemed to be a closed rather than open frame when applied to the conflict.

In the introduction I said that using ECM meant using a complex model in a complex conflict. Having now been through the process, this aspect completely lived up to my expectations. Of course, a map is a simplification of reality, and it would be impossible to draw a conflict map without simplifying. However, the Art of the Possible when using ECM to map an international political conflict has been not to simplify the depth of the conflict, but to see the strength in complexity because that allows us to see beneath the surface of the conflict.

12.2 Outlook

One aspect of the conflict that I did not consider in this thesis is the understanding of the war in Ukraine as being driven by domestic politics in Russia. Often, I am presented with the argument that the annexation of Crimea was a planned move by President Putin to gain popularity and that the war in Donbass is part of a domestic narrative claiming that
Russia is surrounded by enemies, a narrative created to take the focus away from the declining economic and human rights situation in Russia.

Putin’s ratings did skyrocket after the annexation of Crimea, and there is no doubt that Russia is becoming more and more authoritarian, but in relation to Crimea, I am not convinced about the reverse causality of the argument that Putin annexed Crimea to increase popularity. Much more I believe this move was a matter of securing access to the important port of Sevastopol, and the Russian state new media took care of the rest.

Another interesting take on the war in Ukraine as a tool in Russian domestic policy is that the protesters of the Revolution of Dignity presented a threat to the Russian government, as their pro-European, anti-corruption desires and dreams might spread to young people in Russia, and therefore had to be stopped before Ukraine’s pro-Western orientation became contagious.

As a tool in domestic Russian politics, the conflict in Ukraine is definitely an interesting field of study, which could also be linked to Russia’s efforts in Syria, and perhaps with Russian (alleged) interference in the presidential election in the USA.

Another interesting and more direct way to proceed from here would be to focus on local civil society in eastern Ukraine. I have tried to find NGOs working in the conflict area on both sides of the line of control, but without any luck. I suspect that there are few such organisations and that they do not post about their work online. A next step could be to dig deeper into that work and map what, if any, communication is happening across the conflict. This information is interesting from a conflict transformation perspective because the key to change lies in such communication, and the ideology is about using what is already present.

Another place to start from here could be to focus on organisations that are working with harmony, security or even truth at the local level. Following the principle of
homeostasis, the conflict theme of justice needs to be balanced with a focus on the other themes if the situation is to reach a dynamic equilibrium.
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