



## **Citizen Preferences, Political Mobilization, Institutional Change, and Regime Stability in Russia and Ukraine**

*Old Building, Room 4.10, Friday, 10 June 2016*

The workshop is funded by the British Academy, the LSE Centre for International Studies, and the LSE Department of International Relations

### **Workshop agenda**

Russia's intervention in the Ukraine and the ongoing conflict between the two states raises important theoretical and policy-relevant questions about the longer-term consequences for political-institutional and regime configurations; for citizen national identities; and for patterns of political and social mobilization in these states. Although a growing number of studies have explored various aspects of the crisis, we have yet to systematically explore how these dynamic events shape not just the future of Ukraine, but also that of Russia. The purpose of this workshop is thus to analyse the mutually-constitutive aspects of the inter-state conflict for politics in both Ukraine and Russia, and, by extension, for the geopolitical configurations in Europe's wider neighbourhood. Specifically, several sets of questions will be explored in the workshop.

One set of questions pertains to the precise strategies and tools that politicians in the two countries have used to influence public opinion on issues related to the crisis, particularly the strategies related to media manipulation. Russia's occupation of the Crimea and intervention in the Donbas has been accompanied by unprecedented levels of media propaganda exploiting historical memories, inflammatory political symbols and images, and nationalist rhetoric. To what extent is the media effective in shaping public opinion related to the crisis, in influencing national identities, and generating support for contending positions on the geopolitical preferences of the two states, rather than simply reinforcing beliefs already held by citizens? And, how effective are these state media manipulative strategies given the citizens' widespread use of online social media independent from state control? Another set of questions relates to the changing nature of warfare, notably the resort to hybrid forms of engagement, including propaganda and use of proxy forces. What precise strategies have the various sides in the conflict employed to consolidate control over disputed territories? And what are the longer-term implications of these dynamics for state building and for public support for both Russia's and Ukraine's regimes? The third set of questions relates to the effects of these interventions and state strategies on popular mobilization and protest in Russia and Ukraine. What are the regional patterns of mobilization in Ukraine? How are citizen preferences and patterns of mobilization shaped by the recent political-institutional reforms in Ukraine, notably those of its local administration? And, how has the crisis

affected Russia's own dynamics of political mobilization and protest considering the human and socio-economic costs of the war for its citizens? To address these questions, the one-day workshop brings together leading scholars of Russia and Ukraine who have conducted rigorous empirical research of relevance to these various aspects of the ongoing crisis.

## **Workshop programme**

### *Panel structure*

Each presenter will have about 30 minutes for paper presentation. The presentations will be followed by the panel discussant comments (approximately 15-20 minutes). The role of the discussant will be to provide succinct comments on the panel papers and to make suggestions for improvement. We will then open the floor for the workshop participants to ask questions and comment on the papers and for the presenters to respond (approximately 30-40 minutes on each panel).

*8:00-8:30 Coffee and welcome remarks*

*Panel 1, 8:30-11:00: Popular Mobilization in Ukraine and Russia*

Dr Olga Onuch, University of Manchester

Dr Bryn Rosenfeld, Nuffield College, University of Oxford

Katerina Tertychnaya, St. Cross College, University of Oxford and Tomila Lankina, LSE

Discussant: Dr Edward Morgan-Jones, Rutherford College, University of Kent

*Coffee break, 11:00-11:15*

*Panel 2, 11:15-13:00: Russian Nationalism in Domestic and Foreign Policy*

Dr Paul Chaisty, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford

Dr Tomila Lankina, LSE and Dr Yulia Netesova, LSE

Discussant: Dr Natasha Kuhrt, Dept. of War Studies, King's College, London

*Lunch break, 13:00-13:30*

*Panel 3, 13:30-16:00: Political Mobilization in Russia and Ukraine: The Role of the Media*

Dr Ilya Yablokov, University of Leeds

Dr Leonid Peisakhin, New York University, Abu Dhabi

Professor Vera Tolz-Zilitinkevic, University of Manchester

Discussant: Gregory Asmolov, LSE

*Coffee break, 16:00-16:15*

*Panel 4, 16:15-18:00: The Donbas*

Dr Elise Giuliano, Columbia University, New York, USA

Professor Andrew Wilson, University College London

Discussant: Dr Olga Onuch, University of Manchester

*Dinner, 19:00-21:00*

## Abstracts

**Olga Onuch** (with Henry Hale, Timothy Colton and Nadiya Kravets)

*The Real Revolution in 2014 Ukraine: Protest Participation and Perceptions across the Regions*

**Abstract:** The recent crisis in Ukraine has turned our attention to the role of regions and linguistic identity in informing ‘ordinary’ Ukrainians’ political opinions, preferences and behaviour. Moreover, there have been many claims about the ethno-linguistic and nationalist claims and motivations of EuroMaidan protest participants. This paper employs original national electoral survey data collected over three waves in 2014 (Hale et al. 2014) and compares it against survey data collected on the Maidan (Onuch 2014a) in order to assess the role of regional and linguistic identities in influencing not only generalized views of the 2013/2014 protest events, but also actual protest and electoral participation. The paper presents the argument that while most of our attention was focused on Kyiv (and then on the Donbas) we have missed a key phenomenon of support of the Protests across all regions. In fact the paper argues that there was a social and political ‘revolution’ of political engagement in the regions previously unknown in Ukraine. The paper also triangulates elite interview (58) and focus group data (2 [center, east]) to better illuminate the survey findings.

**Bryn Rosenfeld**

*A Case-Control Method for Studying Protest Participation*

**Abstract:** Studies of individual protest participation confront a variety of inferential challenges. Representative surveys capture few protest participants, are biased by respondent recall, and provide only post-hoc measures of other covariates. Surveys of protesters offer a larger sample size, minimize problems of recall, and effectively verify participation. However, they have limited utility for understanding the causes of protest participation, because focusing on protesters introduces selection on the dependent variable. In this paper I show how a variant of the standard case-control design, used in individual-level rare events studies in epidemiology but ignored to date in political science, enables researchers to estimate the probability of protest as a function of individual-level characteristics. In this approach, researchers combine two distinct samples—one where the outcome is measured along with relevant covariates and the other where relevant covariates are measured but the outcome is not. After describing the statistical setup for this design, I use simulation to show that a Bayesian implementation recovers unbiased estimates. I then demonstrate the value of this technique by applying it to data drawn from recent protests in Russia and Ukraine.

**Katerina Tertytchnaya** (with Tomila Lankina)

*Electoral Protests and Political Attitudes under Electoral Authoritarianism: The case of Russia’s 2011-2012 anti-regime rallies*

**Abstract:** Do subnational protests against electoral fraud increase popular opposition to authoritarianism? And, are the cognitive effects of sub-national protests resilient to autocrats’ tactics of police repression and media manipulation? To address these questions, we study the effect of regional electoral protests on public opinion during the 2011-2012 protest wave in Russia. Using data from public opinion surveys and two unique author-assembled protest-

event and media analysis datasets, we examine whether spatial proximity to regional protests is associated with support for the demands of the opposition in general and perceptions of electoral fraud in particular. We find that spatial proximity to street rallies at the regional level increases perceptions of electoral injustice and generates support for the demands of the protesters. Nevertheless, the findings also suggest that the cognitive effects of protests are conditioned by the use of regime-led repression against protesters and the framing of protest in national media.

**Paul Chaisty** (with Stephen Whitefield)

*Dimensions of Nationalism in Putin's Russia and their Attitudinal Correlates*

**Abstract:** While there is widespread agreement about the ‘constructed’ character of nations in the scholarly literature on nationalism, national ideas in practice are constrained both by long-standing divisions in discourses about the national community and by effects of political context – war, the international system, economic performance, and by reactions to political interventions. Given the contingency of its character, we ask in this paper about the nature of nationalism in Russia in the Putin era and about its relationship to political attitudes and political behaviour. Has a coherent idea of the nation emerged in the Putin period? Does this idea have clear social and ideological support and opposition? What are its potential political consequences for regime support and mobilisation? We consider these questions by drawing on surveys conducted in Russia since 2001. Our findings suggest that Russian nationalism is a contested and multi-dimensional phenomenon, and that each dimension has a different connection to broader political attitudes and behaviours. This has implications for how we should see the Putin regime and the dynamics of support and opposition to it.

**Vera Tolz-Zilitinkevic**

*Projecting the Nation: Media Events and Changing Narratives of Nationhood in Putin's Russia*

**Abstract:** This paper is concerned with the distinctive role played by television in the construction and dissemination of narratives of nationhood in Putin's Russia. The following questions are addressed: Who are the key actors in the construction of official discourse in Putin's Russia? What role do Media Events play in Russian identity politics? How and why has the discourse of the nation change in the course of the last ten years? Three political campaigns, which have been turned by state-controlled television into Media Events, will be analysed: the Pussy Riot Affair; the 2012-13 anti-migration campaign; and the annexation of the Crimea.

In response to the above questions, the paper develops four interconnected points: (1) The Kremlin should not be perceived as the main actor in the construction of narratives of nationhood, even though it should be acknowledged that in the context of the Ukraine crisis its role in framing official discourse has increased significantly compared to earlier periods. (2) Public intellectuals and media personalities, with ties to the Kremlin, play a central role in the construction of official discourse. Russian state-aligned television channels, in particular, effectively use a new global format of the Media Event, which broadcasters everywhere utilise for the same purpose of clarifying membership of national communities in the face of

the challenges of globalisation. Overall, imaginings of Russia as a national community on state-aligned television follow a global trend of clarifying community membership through narratives about preventing and managing risks. (3) Public prejudices and preferences have a significant impact on official discourse. Official discourse is thus developed via a complex interaction between the Kremlin, the state-aligned media and, to some extent, the public. Paradoxically, at times of political crisis the input of public intellectuals and media personalities can increase, while the regime also becomes more concerned about the public mood. (4) The growing ethnicisation of the official discourse of the nation is encouraged by this three-way interaction.

### **Ilya Yablokov, University of Leeds**

*Screening the Enemy Within: Conspiracy Theories and the Media Construction of the Russian Opposition in 2013-2015*

**Abstract:** The conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 have become a crucial watershed in the post-Soviet Russian history. Within a few months the society became discursively divided between the ‘majority’ which allegedly supported the Kremlin’s handling of the Ukrainian crisis and the ‘minority’ which criticized Russia’s involvement into the conflict and Crimea’s annexation. The major role in this discursive divide has been played by the media, which often interpreted the internal and external criticism of authorities as a part of the Western plan to destroy Russia. The news broadcasts on federal channels have been framing the opposition to the Kremlin as the ‘fifth column’, whose ‘subversive’ actions aim at undermining the regime and promoting chaos in the country.

Based on Mark Fenster’s reading of conspiracy theories as a powerful tool for redistribution of power among different political centres (Fenster, 2008), this paper argues that the significant rise of anti-Western conspiracy theories in the media had been used to undermine the image of the Russian opposition. These theories became a quick boost for public support of Vladimir Putin amidst gradually falling ratings of approval of his policies. Through the study of several cases of anti-Western conspiracy theories broadcast by major television channels, the paper will explore the peculiarities of Russian conspiracy theories as compared to European and American conspiracy theories and will analyse the functions which conspiracy theories currently have in Russian media and Russian politics.

### **Leonid Peisakhin (with Arturas Rozenas)**

*Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine*

**Abstract:** We use exogenous variation in the availability of analog Russian television signal in Ukraine to study how a media source with an explicit political agenda affects electoral outcomes. Using highly granular geographic data on presidential and parliamentary elections and an original survey, we estimate the effect of availability and consumption of Russian television on the support for Ukrainian political parties with a pro-Russian agenda. We find that Russian television substantially increased electoral support for pro-Russian parties in the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. In total, about 6 to 8% of votes received by pro-Russian parties can be attributed to the spillover of Russian analog television signal into Ukraine. Crucially, however, the effectiveness of Russian television varies in a politically consequential way: Russian television has the biggest impact on voters with strong pro-

Russian priors but is significantly less likely to sway those with pro-Western priors. In fact, voters with strongly pro-Western priors are less likely to support pro-Russian parties if exposed to Russian television. Hence, our results suggest that exposing an already polarized society to a biased media leads to even deeper polarization. These findings have important implications for ongoing policy debates in light of the growing international presence of Russian state-controlled media.

**Tomila Lankina** (with Kohei Watanabe and Yulia Netesova)

*The Media as a Mirror of Putin's Evolving Strategy of Managing Popular Discontent: Russia and Ukraine*

**Abstract:** The paper analyses how state media in authoritarian states control and manipulate information on popular protest. We develop a new content analysis dictionary and technique that allow us to identify periods during which the media are more likely to portray protests as contributing to public disorder, or, alternatively, to employ a frame that highlights the citizens' democratic right to freedom of assembly. We apply our method to analyze the framing of protest in Russia's state-controlled media. Our analysis suggests that rather than simply suppressing information on protest, Russia's regime resorts to subtle strategies of manipulating its portrayal in state media. While anti-regime protests were covered favorably during the Winter 2011-2012 mass rallies, following the re-election of Vladimir Putin to his third presidential term in March 2012, we observe a significant shift towards the *disorder* framing of anti-regime street activism. This trend contrasts sharply with coverage of the October 2013 Russian nationalist rallies in Moscow's suburb of Biryulyovo, which targeted migrants. Although these protests degenerated into right-wing extremists-fueled violence, vandalism, and arrests of hundreds of rioters, we do not observe a significant tendency of state media to resort to the *disorder* framing of those events.

When we apply our semantic toolkit to analyse Russian media's manipulation of information on the Ukraine protests, we find that around the time of Crimea's annexation, the Kremlin-controlled media projected media narratives of protests as chaos and disorder, with legalistic jargon about the status of ethnic Russians and federalisation, only to abandon this strategy by the end of April 2014. In fact, we find that prior to February 2014, before Yanukovich flees the country, and after May 2014, Russian state-controlled media narratives on protest are not much dissimilar in tone to those of the independent Russian and Ukrainian media sources that we also analysed. Our findings have important implications for theorizing on how autocrats manipulate protest and strategically leverage some forms of grass-roots discontent.

**Elise Giuliano**

*Popular Support for Separatism in Donetsk and Luhansk*

**Abstract:** Why did a significant, albeit minority, portion of the Donbas population back separatism? A sizeable minority backed separatist goals: 27.4% of respondents in Donetsk and 30.3% in Luhansk reported that their region should secede from Ukraine and join Russia; while another 17.3% and 12.4% prevaricated, answering, "difficult to say, partly yes, partly no." By spring and early summer, popular support for the Peoples' Republic of Donetsk

(DNR) and the Peoples' Republic of Luhansk (LNR) reached approximately one-third of the population.

I identify a range of reasons why ordinary people began supporting separatism by examining grievances in Donetsk and Luhansk in late 2013 and early 2014, before the ATO began in earnest. I find that many of the preferences among the politically mobilized population there were locally-rooted, complex, and diverse. More specifically, I find that many of the grievances were motivated by various forms of material interest, and others by a sense of betrayal by Kyiv and the rest of the country in response to the EuroMaidan events. My analysis suggests that Ukrainian citizens in Donbas should not be viewed as unproblematically pro-Russian. Rather, like rapidly evolving social movements in other contexts, people projected their own interests, concerns, and grievances--some longstanding, some more recent--onto the DNR and LNR. The findings challenge the dominant understanding of DNR/LNR supporters as pro-Russian, i.e. as motivated solely by an enduring orientation to Russia that has not changed over time, whether due to ethnic or linguistic identity, or political loyalty.

Evidence in support of these arguments is based on analysis of an original database of demonstrations held in Donbas—the so-called anti-Maidan and pro-Russian rallies. I created the database using a combination of western and local (Russian and Ukrainian) media reports and videos, and analyzed statements and themes articulated by rally participants and by ordinary people in interviews.

### **Andrew Wilson**

#### *The Donbas in 2014: Explaining Civil Conflict Perhaps, but not Civil War*

**Abstract:** This article argues that historical and identity factors were only part of the reason for the rise of the separatist movement in the Donbas, Ukraine, in the spring of 2014. They set a baseline, but one not high enough to account for the creation of two mini-‘Republics’ and a prolonged war, without considering the effect of Russian sponsorship and the role of local elites, mainly from the literal and metaphorical ‘Family’ of former President Viktor Yanukovich.

The key triggers that transformed a situation of local conflict into violence and war—namely, the appearance of first paramilitary and then military forces, huge amounts of arms as well as financial and organisational resources—were all externally sourced.