

Claremont-UC Undergraduate Research Conference on the European Union

Volume 2014 2014

Article 14

2014

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Recommended Citation

Zahuranec, Andrew J. (2014) "Expectations and Reality: Opinion of the European Union in Ukraine," *Claremont-UC Undergraduate Research Conference on the European Union*: Vol. 2014, Article 14. DOI: 10.5642/urceu.201401.14

Available at: <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/urceu/vol2014/iss1/14>

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Expectations and Reality: Opinion of the European Union in Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

The internet has had a profound impact on how political scientists understand social movements. Using websites like Facebook and Twitter, demonstrators are able to share and organize their ideas, to develop political strategies, and recruit supporters. Activists communicate with one another and these messages can be analyzed to find patterns in how social movements frame themselves in reaction to current events. In short, the internet has an unprecedented capacity to show how political groups form. By examining posts on social media websites, this paper will assess the motivations of demonstrators involved in the Euromaidan protests and determine the movement's ultimate focus. The emphasis was not, as many foreign outlets claimed, on the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement, but on President Yanukovich's general unpopularity. In this paper, I will discuss how an anti-Yanukovich focus came to dominate Euromaidan using social framework theory, as well as the role played by social media sites.

KEYWORDS

Euromaidan, Ukraine, European Union, Public Opinion, Social Media

Euromaidan is unique in how distinct its internal motivations are from external interpretations. While activists identified specific problems in Ukraine and developed a motivational framework to gain supporters, international media gave the movement different connotations. As Western outlets showed videos of young Ukrainian students waving European Union flags, Euromaidan leaders, a diverse group of students, Tymoshenko supporters and nationalists, were working to remove Yanukovich from office. This discrepancy reveals important information on how social movements form. Social movements are not established or aimed toward outside interests, but domestic citizens. To understand why this phenomenon occurred, it is necessary to study previous protest movements and their formation. Using social framework theory and social media, this paper will focus on how social movements form. The internet is essential in tracking the development of political group and is especially relevant in studying Euromaidan.

Social media represents a unique opportunity for researchers to track the development of political groups because it is unprompted, cheap, and constantly updated. When compared to a versatile tool like surveys, several benefits are apparent. Although surveys allow political scientists to gauge public opinion on a wide range of issues, information can be skewed by circumstantial factors like phrasing and tone. A 1942 study conducted by the Public Opinion Quarterly found that the interviewer had a strong impact on survey results. Social media, by contrast, requires no interviewer (Katz, 1942). There is no solicitation and no questionnaire to filter a respondent's answers. Whatever information is reported through social media is unlikely to be inaccurate and better represents the individual's state of mind. The lack of personnel also reduces the total cost of analysis. There is no need for interviewers so the amount of money spent on research is significantly reduced. Social media streamlines the data collection process. Finally, social media is constantly being updated. Rather than being forced to reissue surveys every few months, individuals will continue to post about world events so long as it remains within the public's consciousness. During current events, it is possible for sociologists to track the public's reaction. Information is constantly updated and there is little worry of information becoming outdated.

Social media serves an additional role in helping foment revolt. As discussed later in this paper, social media played an essential role in organizing Arab Spring protestors and the movement's success was largely attributed to websites like Facebook and Twitter. In the Syrian Civil War, both jihadist groups and secular rebel fighters have relied on Youtube to communicate to domestic audiences and undermine the Assad regime's credibility. Even in the United States, social media has been used by political groups like Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party to attack the establishment. Ukraine is no different. Euromaidan protestors have taken to Facebook and blogs to attack the Yanukovich regime and organize resistance. Social media allows individuals with limited resources to connect with like-minded individuals to affect change. Social media is a prominent political tool.

Since the internet's inception, scholars, and policymakers have disagreed about its potential as a political and social tool. Some scholars, such as Manuel Castells, argue that social networking offers great opportunities for political and creative action within society. Such individuals state that "communication is the central power in contemporary society" and that social media is a major influence in modern decision making (Fuchs, 2009). Others remain skeptical about "cyber activism," pointing out that internet activity often fails to produce committed collective action. Social media constrains, rather than enhances, individual creativity and opens the user up to either corporate or government exploitation (Gladwell,

2010). The internet's relationship with thought and action is still not fully understood.

The debate over social media's utility, however, has failed to explain why increased internet activity accompanies periods of political change. Suspected election tampering in Iran's 2009 Presidential Election caused a surge in Twitter activity. The spike in activity was so intense that the US State Department requested Twitter delay a scheduled maintenance update which would have temporarily blocked traffic (Pleming, 2009). Khaled Koubaa, President of the Internet Society in Tunisia, reported two million Facebook users on the eve of Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation and attributed new media penetration to the Jasmine Revolution's success. "Social media was absolutely crucial," Koubaa said, "three months before Mohammed Bouazizi burned himself in Sidi Bouzid we had a similar case in Monastir. But no one knew about it because it was not filmed. What made a difference this time is that the images of Bouazizi were put on Facebook and everybody saw it" (Beaumont, 2011). Anti-Mubarak protesters built a sophisticated network of social media sites to support their activities. As one activist tweeted: "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world" (Khondker, 2011) it nevertheless played a critical role especially in light of the absence of an open media and a civil society. The significance of the globalization of the new media is highlighted as it presents an interesting case of horizontal connectivity in social mobilization as well signaling a new trend in the intersection of new media and conventional media such as television, radio, and mobile phone. One of the contradictions of the present phase of globalization is that the state in many contexts facilitated the promotion of new media due to economic compulsion, inadvertently facing the social and political consequences of the new media. Este artículo examina el papel de los nuevos medios en 'la primavera árabe' en la región del Medio Oriente y Norte de África (MENA, por sus siglas en inglés. Social media's role during the Arab Spring convinced millions to become active online. In 2009, there were 800,000 Facebook users in Egypt (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhousseiny, 2011). By 2013, over 16 million Egyptians had Facebook profiles (Farid, 2013).

A similar phenomenon has been recorded in Ukraine. Following Victor Yanukovich's refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement, opposition leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk called for protests in Kyiv's Independence Square through his Twitter account (Yatsenyuk, November 21, 2013b). The following evening 2,000 people converged on the square in protest, and social media registration spiked. The main Euromaidan Facebook page, created November 21, 2013, shows significant activity, including over 2,000 updates in Ukrainian. Their content has been shared over 230,000 times and includes information on avoiding police, maps of places to take shelter, and flyers to distribute around the city (Barberá & Metzger, 2013). Although only 33.7 % of Ukrainian citizens are active internet users, opposition leaders have regularly updated their online profiles with news and political messages, underscoring social media's role as a vehicle for political action (International Telecommunications Union, 2012).

In Ukraine, and the world as a whole, new media has emerged as a multi-purpose tool for political groups and organizations. Although its efficacy in motivating others to action is in dispute, social media is undoubtedly viewed as important by activists. Social media allows groups to communicate large amounts of information instantaneously. As early publishers with total editorial control over their own content, activists can frame political crises in terms that favor their own political ideals. Individuals shift their mindset to sustain the social movement and attract new followers.

Unfortunately, these mindsets do not translate well abroad due to language and cultural barriers. Foreign audiences cannot directly access the same materials that influence a movement's domestic supporters. Instead, the foreign public's perception of the social movement is defined by its elites who have the resources to understand the issues being discussed. The media elite serve as a filter, wittingly or unwittingly promoting their interests to foreign audiences and influencing public perception. Because the media elite's interest often co-align with the country that they represent, the public is then more willing to support the state's actions abroad. Foreign audiences view social movements from a geopolitical standpoint, rather than from the individualistic, self-defined framework created by the domestic audience. In short, the news influences how foreign events are perceived while local social media shows what is actually happening. Euromaidan is a valuable example of this phenomenon and reminds the public that their political ideas are determined as much by exclusion of information as by inclusion. Groups can only know what they are able to access and by cutting off certain information sources, language barriers influence how events are interpreted.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A NEWS SOURCE

Throughout history, information has been a valuable resource controlled and monitored by the state. Improvements to telecommunications have shifted control of these information caches to the general public, affecting how individuals interpret the political system. This exponentially increasing amount of information "induce[s] large numbers... to interpret information in new, more sophisticated ways" (Alterman, 1998). This interaction is furthered by social media, which encourages interaction with the greater international community, open debates on previously taboo topics, support for previously obscure political leaders, and involvement with larger social groups. These forms of information shape how groups interact with political systems.

The Arab Spring is the most prominent social movement that showcased social media's role as a source for news information. In countries where free press was not available, Arab youth used the Internet as a tool for exchanging political ideas. Social media is very difficult to censor because the state's capabilities depend on the speed and ability of government officials to track down subversive materials. Tunisians used Facebook to spread video of Bouazizi's self-immolation when the country's media refused to cover the incident (Harb, 2011). During a media blackout, Libyans used social media to provide minute-by-minute accounts of violence to domestic and international audiences. "I can call Benghazi or Tripoli and obtain accurate information from people on the ground and then report it straight on Twitter to thousands of people," claimed the UK head of the Libyan Youth Movement (Channel 4 News, 2012). After the Mubarak regime realized how its own protestors were using social media to coordinate, exchange political ideas, and provide updates to outside interest groups, it blocked Twitter, then Facebook, and disrupted mobile phone text-messaging services (Associated Press, 2011). Even though most Arabs did not have access to social media, those with access spread its contents with flyers and word of mouth. Social media was an effective tool for sharing real world information to large domestic audiences and communicating that widespread dissatisfaction to other relevant parties.

Prior to the Euromaidan protests, public satisfaction in Ukraine was at an all-time low. A poll conducted in September by the Gallup Organization and the International Republican Institute reported that 67 % of Ukrainians thought their country was heading in a nega-

tive direction. An additional 88 % said their household's financial situation had worsened over the last twelve months (International Republican Institute & The Gallup Organization, 2013). In early 2013, a US State Department poll showed 75 % of citizens were dissatisfied with their country's economic situation, with only 25 % believing that Ukraine was a real democracy (Sharma & Serpe, 2013). This dissatisfaction seeped into online communities, with anti-Yanukovych groups appearing on Facebook throughout 2011 and 2012. Following Yanukovych's refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement, opposition leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk created a Facebook group to coordinate protests against the government. 11.5 thousand people indicated that they would attend the event, with several hundred posting to the page within the first week of its creation (Yatsenyuk, December 13, 2013). There was actual debate on how to best address Ukraine's problems through social media. Facebook proved to be an effective means for Ukrainians to discuss and debate modern political events.

Since the beginning of the protests, social media has been used as a forum for protestors across the country. Euromaidan's main Facebook group has attracted 17,000 registered visitors and over 280,000 likes. There are posts with maps of places to get free tea and access to warm space, advice on how to avoid provoking government forces, and general information on gathering spaces. Over 50,000 comments were recorded between November 22, 2013 and December 4, 2013 (Barberá & Metzger, 2013). All of this content was posted in Ukrainian, which suggests that the information is intended for a local audience. Demonstrators are interacting with this information through debate and real world action. Flyers posted online have appeared on Kyiv's city streets, parliamentary figures have responded to the demands of the online community, and every Euromaidan post is shared hundreds of times. Much like during the Arab Spring, social media sites have become a political platform for individuals to spread their message and ideals to a large domestic audience. It has played an instrumental role in defining and framing the Euromaidan movement.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A FRAMING TOOL

Framing theory is a collective term that refers to the relationship between perception and action. People always strive to make the most rational choices possible. Thus, if individuals act based on self-interest, then they should react to the same data in the same way (Kernochan, 2004). However, this behavior does not occur. People alter their decision making based on circumstantial data. Individuals are more likely to support decisions framed in positive terms than ones based in negative terms. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman demonstrated this principle in psychology through their 1981 "Asian Disease" study. Participants were more willing to "save 200 lives" of 600 than allow "400 people to die" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Context matters.

Recent developments in social sciences have focused on the media's use as a framing tool in societies and political systems. How a political issue is presented affects the degree of support it will have (Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012) independent and social media using a unique dataset of Arabic language content from newspapers and key social media posts collected during the peak of protests. Semiofficial (governmental. If an issue can be articulated in an easily understood framework, then it is more likely to gain support. Entman explains that framing is essential in political problem solving because, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make [it] more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or

treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993). Audiences often do not have direct experience with the event and rely on the media’s account to make rational decisions (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). The public relies on informed groups to highlight important issues and then make decisions based upon those concerns.

The democratic nature of social media allows it to act as an effective framing tool for domestic audiences. Each user acts as both a reporter and consumer, providing information to their immediate followers and feedback to others. This information can then be shared if it has social value, or ignored if it does not. The most frequently shared topics become part of the global conversation. Important information is determined by the online community, which then contributes to political socialization. Unlike most other political tools, however, social media feeds directly into itself. The public produces reports, which influences public perception, which produces future reports. In modern political conflicts, such as Euro-maidan, social media framing allows users to identify their problem, identify an adversary, and motivate others to pursue change.

Problem Identification

When creating a social movement, the first step is identifying a problem. Gamson terms this element as an “injustice frame,” because in this step a problematic condition ceases to be misfortune, but a malevolent act by the authorities. When the public perceives an act by the government as unjust, both the government and its action lose legitimacy. The political system ceases to be an immutable element and instead becomes susceptible to change. Meanwhile, the victim of the unjust act is identified and the public amplifies their victimization (Snow et al., 1986). People like to sympathize with unfortunate circumstances. If a problem can be conceptualized, with both a hostile aggressor and innocent victim, then people can be motivated into action. Public unhappiness is no longer an intangible force.

The Arab Spring protestors excelled at applying their problems to a larger political context. Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya all experienced high inflation and unemployment in throughout the early noughties. In Tunisia, unemployment jumped over 5 % in two years, with social mobility becoming almost non-existent (Haouas, Sayre, & Yagoubi, 2012). These factors made it difficult for low skill workers to function and aggregated society to its breaking point. Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation had a political component, but he had endured abuse by the police over several decades without threatening action. His main grievance were high prices and he justified his burning on economic downturn. Police brutality was just the trigger. “How do you expect me to make a living?” Bouazizi asked, before dousing himself in gasoline and setting himself on fire (Simon, 2011). When social media activists received footage of his death, it was not framed as a single act of suicide, but the horrific consequence of governmental tyranny. As this paper has mentioned previously, a similar self-immolation was ignored by the public because it was not filmed and could not be framed in a greater political context. Social media exploited the video of Bouazizi’s death to shift discussion. Bouazizi became a symbol, an icon for political reform in Tunisia. The economic downturn was no longer an abstract concept, but the direct consequence of the regime’s abuses of power. The government needed to be removed.

When Yanukovych refused to sign the EU Association Agreement, roughly the same phenomenon occurred. In the midst of severe economic downturn, Ukrainian media identified the EU Association Agreement as the best way to address the country’s economic problems (Eurofax-Ukraine, 2013). The deal intended to allow easier travel for Ukrainians

into Europe and for free trade. This framework was accepted by a significant portion of the public, as indicated by polls and social media postings conducted in the weeks leading up to November. The problems were unemployment and poverty, which could be solved through closer ties with the European Union. Yanukovich's refusal to sign the agreement seemed dangerous, if not outright criminal, when viewed from this framework. The All-Ukrainian Union Party advocated immediate impeachment proceedings against the President (Yatsenyuk, November 21, 2013a). Protests began shortly thereafter.

The framework of the protests shifted gradually from closer ties with the European Union to a larger domestic context, which attracted greater support. An attack on protestors in December was characterized as a symptom of Yanukovich's corruption and desire for power. Economic issues were coupled with corruption, with protestors using social media to take pictures of the president's lavish personal residence, a subject that had previously been ignored by Ukraine's media. Confidential government documents, which exposed rampant corruption, were posted to social network sites by anonymous individuals (Lokot, 2014). Support for the Euromaidan protests grew beyond its original base. Only 48 % believed the Agreement would benefit Ukraine, but 86 % of the country opposed Yanukovich's policies before the protests ("Ukraine, poll: Do you support the activity of Viktor Yanukovich?," 2013). With the opportunity to remove a corrupt unpopular leader, the focus of Euromaidan changed. Ukraine's problems could no longer be solved by just the EU Association Agreement, but by the President's impeachment (Kyiv Post, 2013). The protests grew in size, attracting not just European-minded liberals who wanted closer ties with Europe, but all of Yanukovich's opposition. Liberals, Conservatives, New Right, and Socialists appeared on the streets. Yanukovich was even forced to deal with dissent from within his own party (BBC News, 2014). A shift in framing allowed the protests to gain momentum.

Meanwhile, international observers characterize the protests differently to better fit their interests, which changed the protest's framework abroad. Every culture has assumptions about the world that influence how its citizens rationalize and interpret events. These concepts tend not to translate well to foreign audiences. What appeals to a Ukrainian is different than what appeals to a German or Russian. Further complicating the situation are language barriers. Very few people can consume primary sources, like social media and government documents, to help form public opinion in their country. Instead, people rely on their government and press to interpret and conceptualize events. These elites have vested interests and often skew the framework to support these goals. An issue that undermines the country's position is portrayed negatively. The elite want to rally the public to support their government's action should the state choose to become involved. Consequently, Euromaidan's purpose and meaning was interpreted differently by domestic audiences than in the West and Russia.

Western media cling to the framework of the protests being a consequence of European Union expansion and Russian interference. Citing early demonstrations, European media views the protests as an attempt by Ukrainians to increase ties with the West. Even though polling shows Ukraine divided on whether to focus on Brussels, Russia is seen as the instigator of the protest movement, with Yanukovich taking direct orders from Moscow (Fishwick, 2014). Even before the Russian invasion of Crimea, observers accused Putin of destabilizing Ukraine and personally encouraging the Ukrainian government's response to the protest movement (Kaylan, 2013). These attitudes allow European and American of-

ficials to condemn Russia as a weak state trying to increase its power potential. From this framework, European involvement is wholly justified as a counterbalance to Russian encroachment. Vladimir Putin is placed at the center of the injustice frame and held personally responsible for Ukraine's economic instability. Only by increasing ties with the West and shunning Russia can Ukraine save itself. Western officials have the obligation to support the protestors (euronews, 2013).

In contrast, Russian audiences view Euromaidan as the product of European interference. Russia does not want to lose its influence in Ukraine and has portrayed any event that threatens the Federation's dominance as malicious. Thus, when the EU Association Agreement was proposed, the Russian press demonized the treaty as an attempt to exploit Ukraine's fragile economic situation by powerful Western interests (Shestakov, 2013). Yanukovich's refusal to sign the treaty was then framed as a legitimate foreign policy decision (Shestakov, 2013). The Ukrainian President had rebuffed an obviously imperialistic agreement in favor of closer ties with Russia. From this perspective, Euromaidan does not seem logical, except as aggression against Russia's interests. The protests broke out against a Russian ally, whose election was supported primarily by ethnic Russian-Ukrainians. The Russian media, acting in concert with the government, portrayed Euromaidan as an attack against themselves by the West. The European Union was the problem, destabilizing the country and interfering with Ukraine's plans for economic recovery. The protestors were deluded puppets or outright fascists who wanted to use the guise of European expansion as a way to attack Russians in Ukraine. President Putin cultivated these images and used them to justify intervention. By invading Crimea, Russia could solve the problem of possible oppression against ethnic Russians.

Motivational Framing

Although problem identification is required for a social movement to form, organizations can accomplish very little without the public's support. The movement must resonate with the public to encourage collective action and sustained participation. In her study of the American Animal Rights Movement, Rachel Einwohner identified four major ways in which social movements sustain themselves: Seeing the positive, thinking cumulatively, celebrating victories, and claiming credit (Einwohner, 2002b). Despite obstacles, groups cannot think they failed completely in achieving their goals. Instead, social movements must see their progress as incremental. Any outcome is evidence of progress that should be appreciated and claimed, no matter how small. Activists must be able to attribute their own actions to improvements in public satisfaction (Klitschko, 2013). From the earliest days of the Euromaidan protests, there is evidence of activists pursuing all of these goals.

Even though many activists express pessimism about the likelihood of success, none see their role as completely pointless. Instead, activists are able to see some positive aspect of their actions even if they are not immediately successful. Lowering expectations makes the group more hopeful about their cause's future and less susceptible to criticism. A negative response is better than no response at all. Activists know that their concerns are at least being heard, which prevents the group from being demoralized.

Beginning on November 30, 2013 and continuing until Yanukovich's removal on February 22, 2014, the police used brutal tactics to suppress Euromaidan. These efforts were universally condemned, but some activists were proud of their wounds. "The price of freedom of the press in Ukraine now thx to the system put in place by our current govern-

ment,” tweeted opposition leader Vitali Klitschko about attacks on journalists, arguing that the attacks had diminished the government’s legitimacy (Tyahnybok, 2013). On the forced dispersal from the Maidan on January 3, 2013, another leader wrote, “An hour ago over thousands of... internal troops ousted our checkpoint... More than ten protesters injured (mostly rassecheny). Left there [to] picket. Not giving up! Together to victory!” (Spivak, 2013). Even though the protesters were suffering and dying due to government action, Euromaidan activists remained hopeful. Every attack gave the group a platform from which they could spread their message. By resorting to violence, the activists said, the government damaged its own credibility.

Throughout protest movements, there is an idea that no action is completely useless and with continued advocacy activists shift the discourse. Even if they receive a negative response from demonstrating, there is a sense by activists that at least “people are thinking about the issues.” Societal problems are viewed as a multidimensional, multistep process. A negative response is just the first step in achieving change. Every advance is a step closer toward the group’s ultimate goals. If only one person is swayed by activists that is still one more supporter who will help the group achieve their cause. Being able to identify progress helps people stay involved.

These attitudes are common throughout the Euromaidan protests, but can be seen especially well during its early phase. Activists accepted that their views were in the minority and that most Ukrainians viewed them as dangerous radicals. However, by assembling peacefully and spreading their message, they could at least convince the world that they had Ukraine’s best interests at heart. In response to a photos of Euromaidan activists carrying brightly coloured signs and meeting with local journalists, one internet commenter posted:

“I can only say bravo to the participants of this action. Compassion and love will save us. Anti-maidanists (incidentally also the majority of Ukrainians, albeit brainwashed) think that we are evil... eager to let blood flow. You can see the relief when they began to look at us [for what we are]. Once again, bravo. The simple smile can achieve more than any weapon” (Spivak, 2013).

The group identified a minor goal, improving Euromaidan’s public perception, and felt its actions made progress made toward it. If their fellow Ukrainians could be convinced of the movement’s peaceful nature, then they might also be convinced that Yanukovych was corrupt. The group hoped to shift the discourse through small but purposeful steps. Every Ukrainian recruited was one more person turned against Yanukovych and his regime. The movement’s ability to identify sub-goals helped Euromaidan achieve success.

In addition, protest movements tend to celebrate any positive progress as a reward, keeping participants relaxed and happy. Not every moment of every day is a struggle. Instead, groups find ways break the monotony of protests, demonstrations, and advocacy. The exact reward depends on the context and group. For some, the reward can be a gift, like food or clothing. For others, the reward can be much more abstract. Mere recognition is powerful. In her paper on the American Animal Rights Movement, Rachel Einwohner describes an incident in which a letter to the organization, lauding their cause, was publicized to the entire office. The reading was meant with a huge round of applause and the activists reported high satisfaction, even though their campaigns had not been successful (Einwohner, 2002a). Celebratory events help groups reinforce their cause’s positive improvements.

The distant, less hectic nature of social media has allowed Euromaidan supporters to

celebrate each and every victory. As has already been stated, the group's main Facebook page has thousands of supporters from across Ukraine who maintain the site with progress reports and news updates. All these submissions are very popular, but the page receives the most activity when a public official or group extends their solidarity to those in the streets. On December 13, 2013 Yanukovich broadcast a round table debate with himself and student leaders to show that he was concerned with the public's demands. When it was revealed that the students were actually members of the youth wing of Yanukovich's party, young people were outraged. Students and faculty at Ukraine's largest university, the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, released a statement on Facebook the following afternoon, announcing their support for the movement, citing both the movement's bravery and Yanukovich's atrocities. The post went viral almost immediately, with over 2,500 likes and nearly 700 shares (Euromaidan, 2013). Unlike other items on the page, which focus on organizing and tactical maneuvers, the comments below this page are jubilant. Supporters have posted "You Rock!" and "Here's to you as student leaders!" (Euromaidan, 2013). The post shows that, after large accomplishments, Euromaidan is more excited than focused on how it will use these new supporters. Maintaining morale is just as important as protest strategies.

Last, the group sees itself as responsible for major improvements. Unlike seeing the positive and viewing goals as incremental, the group will claim that their activities led to real objective improvements. Activists understand that other factors were involved, but see themselves as playing a major role in their cause's success. No matter how small their actual influence is, they claim credit. Internal attribution is important.

Unlike other social movements, it is difficult to determine what improvements Euromaidan will claim. The movement is still ongoing and current events, such as the Russian invasion into Crimea, have forced the group to re-evaluate its priorities. Although most of the social changes in Ukraine can be attributed to Euromaidan, whether these changes are long lasting remain to be seen. Group leaders have not claimed to achieve long term goals and there is no evidence to suggest that they will do so yet.

CONCLUSION

Both views about Euromaidan, that it is a pro-West or anti-Russian movement, are incorrect. Although international media sources frame the conflict to fit their state's foreign policy interests, most Ukrainians view Euromaidan as an issue of domestic policy. Yanukovich is a much more powerful motivator than European Union expansion. People are dissatisfied with the system as a whole and the refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement was just the trigger that allowed people to express their discontent. These attitudes are reflected by social media outlets, which have allowed protestors to organize and define themselves. As a news source and framing tool, the internet is almost unmatched in its capabilities.

Euromaidan is just the latest example of the complicated relationship between social movements and social media. In 2009 Iran and 2011 Tunisia, social media played an instrumental role in spreading information to large domestic audiences. Although internet activity does not necessarily translate into physical action, the technology does allow groups to express their views without being constrained by professional media sources. They can organize, debate, and influence others outside the realm of mainstream politics. The state and business no longer have a monopoly on information. The politicization process is be-

coming much more democratic. The internet represents new potential for the field of political science.

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