

DEFENCE AND MILITARY REFORM IN UKRAINE 2014-2022

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AFU	Armed Forces Ukraine
ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CoC	Chain of Command
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration
DNR	Donetsk Peoples Republic
DoD	United States Department of Defense
DRAB	Defence Reform Advisory Board
EOP	Enhanced Opportunities Partnership
EU	European Union
JFO	Joint Forces Operation
JMC	Joint Military Council
LNR	Luhansk People's Republic
MOD	Ministry of Defence *(of Ukraine)
MOI	Ministry of Interior* (of Ukraine)
MND	Minister of National Defence *(of Ukraine)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCM	Non-Commissioned Member
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NGU	National Guard Ukraine
NSS	National Security Strategy
Op	Operation
OUN	Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
RF	Russian Federation
Roto	Rotation
RMA	Revolution of Military Affairs
SDB	Strategic Defence Bulletin
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SSR	Security Sector Reform
Ukrainian SSR	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
TFC	Task Force Commander
Operation Unifier	Op UNIFIER
UAF	Ukrainian Armed Forces
UPA	Ukrainian Insurgent Army
WoG	Whole of Government

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Errors and Omissions are my own!

Preface

My first interaction with Ukraine came while visiting my grandmother who lived in an apartment building named Villa Kiev in Hamilton, Ontario. This building was a proud homage to the great numbers of Ukrainians who immigrated to Canada at various times. My grandmother, unlike most inhabitants, was not of Ukrainian origin. I remember being puzzled by the names appearing on the entrance buzzer, so difficult to pronounce for an English speaker. My grandmother would purchase pierogis from the adjacent church, a food I grew to love. I also had a pen-pal (in the age of pen-pals) from Odessa – my childhood unaware of Cold War antagonism. Later, I remember a family friend of Estonian origin emphatically discussing the coup unfolding in August 1991. I was too young to grasp the significance of the events or recognize that it would form the basis for a new era of global politics. Optimistic perspectives of different theoretical stripes assumed the victory of liberal democratic capitalism and sought to benefit from the peace-dividend. The rise of intra-state wars containing sub-national identity factors, however, soon tempered the optimist zeal of the era. The Cold War was then pushed to the metaphorical backburner, as 9/11 shifted the global zeitgeist to the urgent and dramatic aspects of the Global War on Terror. Yet, the dissolution of the USSR had put into motion long-term effects whose significance was not immediately grasped. One of these events was the formation of the Ukrainian state. I came to learn more about Ukraine through my wife's family, who immigrated to Canada from Poland in 1992. Fascinated by World War II, I would ask my mother and father-in-law about their childhood living through the

war in Wołyn, then part of the Polish Second Republic. In broken English, my father-in-law retold the eastern experience of the war, including the double occupation, then the Polish-Ukrainian inter-ethnic violence, histories I was largely ignorant of. I remember him saying (paraphrasing) “we were afraid of the Germans but were more afraid of the Ukrainian nationalists” and he relayed having recurring nightmares about Stepan Bandera.² My mother-in-law recounted her family’s nighttime escape from their village – tipped off by Ukrainian friends of an imminent attack. I was horrified at the savagery but heartened by the cross-ethnic humanity. I kept learning about Ukraine in indirect ways. I then had the great fortune of visiting Ukraine as an election observer during parliamentary elections in 2012 and 2014. I learned deeply about the political context and societal divisions, thoroughly fascinated at every waking moment in Ukraine. In 2017, I took the opportunity in Dominique Arel’s class at the University of Ottawa to explore the 1943 Wołyn massacres more formally. What I didn’t realize was that the Wołyn massacres, *Akcja Wisła*, and ensuing population transfers of Poles and Ukrainians had never been openly discussed under communism, which inhibited mass awareness of these events. Following Russian aggression and outbreak of the Donbas war in 2014, the continued importance of Bandera to Ukrainian

² Stepan Bandera was the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) during World War II. Although Bandera was himself imprisoned in Krakow, the OUN was responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Poles in 1943, see: (McBride, 2016; Snyder, 2003). Bandera remains relevant today as a controversial hero for Ukrainian nationalists (Marples, 2006), who used World War II era nationalist history as a rallying point against Russian invasion in 2014 and 2022.

nationalism became visible in response. Bandera remains a hero to some Ukrainian nationalists who view his overall legacy positively, as a nationalist fighting to create an autonomous Ukrainian state, from the Second Polish Republic and the USSR. The war in eastern Ukraine began in spring of 2014. While in Lviv in October of that same year, I asked a Polish member of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) electoral observation team what he thought of the infamous Stepan Bandera. His reply, that Bandera could serve as national hero to build on, was puzzling to me, as I thought his legacy too far tainted. This historical element proximate via my wife's family was fascinating and topical to the war. I learned not only that the negative perception of Bandera was also shared widely in Ukraine but that this this historical element had a link to the 2014 Donbas war, which I watched unfold with consuming energy, particularly by Simon Ostrovsky's coverage for Vice (Vice News, 2014 March 3rd). These events culminated in a series of subtle personal connections and coincidences that sparked immense curiosity and desire to research the Donbas war, ultimately leading to this thesis.

Abstract

Despite having inherited a massive military at independence in 1991, the Ukrainian military response to Russian aggression in 2014 was characterized by defeat. Yet, eight years later in 2022 the Ukrainian military's response to a large-scale Russian invasion was dramatically improved. This thesis examines how this surprising improvement occurred, given that similar reform efforts between 1991-2014 had failed. The analysis focuses on three key interrelated elements of military professionalism, namely external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy. The focus on military professionalism places the military at the centre of analysis, while simultaneously permitting visibility of other central actors in the reform story – the Ukrainian government, Ukrainian society, and external actors. Drawing on the concept of path-dependency and previous literature on military reform in Ukraine, the thesis explores how Soviet legacies 'locked in' forms of behaviour and structures, thus preventing significant reform in the period from independence in 1991 to the outbreak of the Donbas war in 2014. The thesis argues that a 'critical juncture' opened with the Maidan Revolution in late 2013 prompting events of early 2014: the fall of Yanukovich regime, annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and outbreak of the Donbas war. The thesis argues that the critical juncture provided the conditions of possibility for reform activities for the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) and that genuine improvement in the three areas of military professionalism occurred as a result, evident in post-2022 battlefield success. Overall, this thesis shows that deeply sedimented military practices resulting from path dependency can be broken by critical junctures, but that this requires a political will that is aligned with the military itself and supported by domestic society and the international community. The analysis relies on

data from documents, interviews, and secondary sources. Op Unifier, the Canadian military assistance mission was a primary source of data using perspectives of the CAF personnel implementing the security assistance and contributes to understanding of military reform processes from the bottom-up.

Chapter 1: Military and defence reform in Ukraine 2014-2022

The rationale for this thesis begins from divergent observations of Ukrainian military performance in two temporal periods, the war episodes of 2014-2015 and post February 24, 2022. The first episode is comprised of several events. In February and March 2014 Ukraine was unable to offer meaningful military resistance to the Crimean annexation by the Russian Federation (RF). Subsequently, the Ukrainian military was completely unprepared for the Donbas war, only mustering approximately 6,000 combat capable troops to counter the separatist challenge in the Spring of 2014 (Facon, 2017, p. 5; Puglisi, 2017, p.49; Kofman et al, 2017, p.40). Major battles of Ilovaisk (August 2014) and Debaltseve (February 2015) featured the direct involvement of the Russian Federation, and in both battles, Ukraine suffered heavy defeats. The Donbas war was then stabilized with the signing of the Minsk II agreement beginning a phase of limited, albeit active war.

In 2021 significant Russian troop buildups along Ukraine's borders hinted at the possibility of a more significant Russian invasion. At this time, much discussion centered on deciphering Russian foreign policy motivations and whether a Russian invasion would manifest.³ However, on questions of military capability, assessments of Ukrainian prospects in conflict were mostly

³ Many security analyses doubted an outright Russian invasion (Yilmaz, 2022, February 9). As per Russian motivation, Oleksandr Sushko argued that Russian invasion would signal to the West to vacate Russia's sphere of influence (Ukraine World 2021, December 14). James Sherr suggested destroying the Ukrainian army massed on the Donbas front would signal to the West that its reform experiment had been in vain (Ukraine World 2021, December 7).

pessimistic (Psaropoulos, 2022 January 27; Boston & Charap 2022, January 21). It appeared a foregone conclusion that Ukraine would quickly succumb to the might of the Russian military should Putin decide to invade.⁴ Pessimists had very strong evidence for their position. The issue of scale differential on paper between the Russian and Ukrainian militaries was vast. Ukrainian leaders, such as General Kyrolo Budanov, head of Ukrainian military intelligence warned that Ukraine would need substantial Western assistance to counter Russia (Schwartz, 2021, December 9). However, the full resolve of Western support to Ukraine was unclear. Further, it was not clear that Soviet legacies that led to military weakness in 2014 had abated. The pessimistic position appeared realistic and historically informed.

The second war episode is the Russian invasion of February 24th 2022, which began with full spectrum attacks below the nuclear threshold across Ukraine. The scale of the attack and rapid Russian advances seemed to confirm that the pessimists had been correct. Yet, surprisingly, Ukraine was not defeated militarily early in the conflict, nor at the time of writing (September 2024), 31 months after the invasion's onset. Secondly, battlefield success meant that Russia was unable to achieve key objectives. The defence of Kyiv (February-April 2022), including the re-

⁴However, there were voices who countered the pessimistic consensus. Ukrainian Journalist Illia Ponomarenko remarked that the Ukrainian military had improved substantially since 2014 and warned that invasion would certainly be costly for Russia (The Kyiv Independent Podcasts, 2022, February 9). Similarly, Commander in Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Valery Zaluzhnyi expressed confident resolve about resisting Russian attack expected of his position, "We can and will do it" (Purcell, 2021, January 19).

taking of the Hostomel airport defied a quick Russian victory. Soon after, Ukraine pushed Russian positions back in the Kharkiv and Kherson counterattacks in the summer of 2022. Later, from summer 2022 to the end of May 2023, the conflict centered on the city of Bakhmut where the UAF stalled the Russians and attritional battle drained both sides in a test of resolve. The summer and fall of 2023 then featured a widely anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive. Although the counteroffensive has been widely interpreted as having “stalled” or “failed”, Ukraine has not been defeated and the results of the conflict remain undetermined.⁵ Thirdly, improvement has been demonstrated throughout the period as observed by enormous Russian casualties.⁶ Further, in opposing the Russian federation in 2022 and beyond, Ukrainian military improvement stymied what had been a highly revered military power using nearly the full extent of its capabilities.⁷ In hindsight, Russian military capabilities post-2022 were proven less effective than anticipated (Zabrodsky et al, 2022, November 30). Yet, even with posterior clarity that Russian military strength was over-estimated, Ukrainian military improvement is clear. Ukraine was not defeated militarily, inhibited Russian objectives, matched Russian capability and has inflicted massive casualties. Overwhelmingly, Ukraine’s battlefield performance is far different from the military

⁵ See General Zaluzhny’s article published in *The Economist*, (*The Economist*, 2023 November 1).

⁶ There are widely variant casualty estimates. The estimates of Ukraine MOD are thought to be inflated while official Russian government are also thought to be under-reported. See: Jones, McCabe, & Palmer (2023, February 27, 5-7) and Hodunova (2024, July 7).

⁷ Between December 2021 and February 2022, several authoritative sources estimated that Russia was strong. See Sonne, Khurshudyan & Ilyushina (2022, January 26) as an example. See also Renz (2023) for a fuller assessment of how Russian military capability was overestimated.

experience of 2014-2015. Determining how this improvement was possible, in a relatively short period poses a veritable puzzle forming the research question for this thesis, “*Given the path-dependency of Soviet military culture, what accounts for the rapid success of military reform in Ukraine during the 2014-2022 period?*”

In this chapter, I first introduce the overall argument and components of the thesis. In the second section, I describe the methodology, and the chapter concludes with sections outlining the objectives of the remaining chapters and the main conclusions.

Puzzling Success?

The analysis of this thesis begins from the recognition that Ukrainian military capability improved dramatically in 2022 from what was observed in 2014-2015. This observation of improvement could be regarded as an assumption, and it is important to clarify two limitations to avoid any misinterpretation.

First, the purpose of the thesis is to analyse how the improvement was possible, not to convince the reader that improvement did in fact occur. Battlefield success is demonstrated most clearly by the fact that more than two years after the invasion, Ukraine has not capitulated but continues to fight. Therefore, while improvement of Ukraine’s military capability is a baseline assumption, the ensuing chapters discuss the evidence of this extensively as it helps illuminate how the improvement process occurred.

Second, the assumption of improvement does not imply that Ukraine will ultimately be victorious in the post-2022 war; at the time of writing the war remains active and its ultimate

end-state remains unclear. Regardless of eventual outcome, the starting point assumption of Ukrainian military improvement stands.

The sharp contrast between the Ukrainian military's dismal performance in 2014-2015 and the improvement observed in 2022-2023 screams a need for historically informed analysis. Institutions as complex as modern militaries do not suddenly materialize and constitute themselves on a battlefield, not least after significant defeat. Rather, development of military capability is the product of determined and coordinated effort, sustained over time. To understand how improvement occurred so rapidly, a first argument is needed. This argument is that an analysis of 2014-2022 needs to be understood in historical context. It is of course necessary to directly examine 2014-2022 as the temporal period that substantive reform activities were undertaken.

Yet, an even deeper historical perspective is necessary to address beginning segment of the research question, "*Given the path-dependency of Soviet military culture....*" As will be demonstrated, deep path-dependent legacy factors inherited from the Soviet system remained particularly strong in Ukrainian society after independence in 1991. How therefore, did the reforms occur relatively successfully between 2014-2022, when previous efforts to reform the military in the Independence period (1991-2014) had failed?

To answer this puzzle of Ukrainian military improvement, I turn to the concepts of path-dependence, which offers an understanding of history using two key aspects: 'lock-in' and 'critical juncture'. Within path-dependence, the concept of lock-in explains that constraining factors can be

“locked-in”, meaning the endurance of a situational state where remedial action in the present cannot change the course of the situation’s historical trajectory. Lock-in is used to explain how Soviet legacies remained present during the Independence period (1991-2014) as reforms remained incomplete. While Soviet legacies can be understood as effecting all of society, this thesis argues that Soviet legacies affected military professionalism in three areas – the nature of civil-military relations, military culture, fighting style and command and control, and the military’s relationship with society.

The strength of this state of lock-in derives from the fact that the Ukrainian military was created from the inheritance of the Soviet system. Not only massive quantity of equipment and infrastructure, but also Soviet military personnel, and the cultural traditions of professionalism that had been inscribed. Between 1991 and 2014 a confluence of economic and political factors meant that the military was not adequately reformed. For the administrations of Kravchuk (1991-1994), Kuchma (1994-1999; 1999-2005) incomplete political and economic reforms meant that democratic and market based economic activity remained thinly rooted in this period. For the military this meant a lack of funding to finance the military adequately as lack of threat meant there was no urgency for reform.

In Kuchma’s second term (1999-2005) and under Yushchenko (2005-2010) reform accelerated, including toward a Western path but reforms were hardly effective, nor implemented across the entirety of the military. In the Yushchenko era, reform meant adopting a Western standard more forcefully, but an American model ascribed was inappropriate for Ukraine

(Sanders, 2008; 2017). Lack of progress on military reform developed into in-fighting between President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko (Bugriy, 2013, November 5). Evidence of the poor state of the military comes from former Chief of the British General Staff, General Dannatt who described his personal interaction with the Ukrainian military in 2008-2009 as being: “pretty appalled by what I found....my opposite number was a complete drunk and frankly we had a pretty negative view of them and their capability” (Battleground Ukraine, 2022, September 16). Under, Yanukovich (2010-2014) military reform worsened through defunding and augmented use of the internal Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) (Kuzio, 2012). “In Russia and Ukraine personalized rule and loyalty to an over-powerful president replicated the Soviet political system with an institutionalized hierarchy of power” (Kuzio, 2012, p. 562). Further, the SBU was involved in investigating the General Staff demonstrating distrust in the state security arena (Bugriy, 2013, November 5). A dominant narrative in Ukrainian media charges that Yanukovich deliberately dismantled the military’s capacity, hollowing out capacity prior to Russian invasion and enabling the defeats of 2014-2015 (Butusov, 2014, October 10; Kuzio, 2017). Downsizing of the military did occur under Yanukovich’s tenure reaching its lowest point of the Independence period – see Annex A - Ukrainian Armed Forces Personnel 1991-2022. However, for successive Ukrainian administrations military threat from Russia was not a fear, and certainly not for the pro-Russian Yanukovich regime. Whether through deliberate treason or simply neglect, the Ukrainian military was not prepared for war and unable to respond when the threat environment changed drastically in early 2014.

The second concept of path-dependence is “critical-juncture”, which is a manifested opportunity whereby locked-in conditions are relaxed to permit change. In the recognition of the critical juncture, it is possible to make sense of why reform efforts between 2014-2022 were so influential. The thesis argues that a critical juncture manifested following the destabilizing events of 2014 - the Maidan revolution, annexation of Crimea and the eruption of the Donbas war. These events provided a shock, disturbing the old systems and structures so profoundly that a new era of possibility was opened. In the critical juncture, locked-in Soviet legacies which inhibited previous reform were relaxed, ushering in an era of new possibility. Soviet legacies naturally affected Ukrainian society broadly, but in the military world three specific legacies are apparent. The first is in the composition of the civil-military relations construct. Secondly, in the command and control of the military system and military culture writ large. Thirdly, in the relationship of the military within society.

This thesis therefore argues that the relative success of reform in Ukraine can be understood in the context of the critical juncture. An unprecedented unified political will formed between the state and security apparatus, society and external actors on the nature of the Russian threat and need to defend the state. This meant an honest attempt to move toward Western standards. In this period of the critical juncture, actions of internal and external stakeholders took on heightened significance, permitting substantial reform to occur which permitted genuine learning. Through the years between 2014 and 2022, successive learning in the defence and military sectors compounded and reinforced each other, leading to improvement during the

period post-2022. Recalling that the purpose of the analysis is to explain how the reform process succeeded, it is important to demonstrate that the reform efforts in the critical juncture were meaningful. The reader should recall this nuance; the primary objective is to explain how improvement occurred, not simply that it did occur.

To focus the analysis of military improvement, my analysis concentrates on the concept of military professionalism. While a singular concept, military professionalism contains three interrelated elements - external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy. In this analysis, each element of military professionalism was important to the improvement story, capturing a significant aspect of the process and carrying explanatory power.

Using military professionalism as a focus, I explore the improvement process via the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence (MOD) as the central actors in the reform story given their centrality to the war effort. Therefore, the topic of investigation is both military and defence reform of two co-dependent institutions whose stories are intertwined.⁸ The role of other Ukrainian security actors, such as the intelligence services, border and law enforcement agencies are not covered although the National Guard is present tangentially. It is in no way implied that reform success is solely attributable to the military or MOD's efforts;

⁸ Throughout the thesis, the terms 'defence reform' and 'military reform' are used interchangeably. They are undoubtedly precise terms with specific meanings, but in my usage for this thesis an invocation may be used for shorthand to describe one aspect more specifically when applicable, but a singular usage does not imply a lack of consistency in my unit of analysis.

undoubtedly, other state and societal actors are involved in the defence of the Ukrainian state and its improvement. A singular factor of military professionalism may appear to be a narrow framing of the story, but conceptually military professionalism captures the empirical reality that militaries are co-dependent and enmeshed with other actors of the state and society. The next section outlines how the analysis was conducted.

Case Selection

Ukraine was chosen as a single case study due to personal interest and the importance of the case for regional and international security. Using definitions from Levy (2008), my research unfolded in an inductive manner, as I was researching the case of the post-2014 Ukrainian conflict informally prior to the official research of the thesis. I was also guided by a prior interest in complexity theory as an overarching theoretical framework, and as the research progressed, I focused more narrowly on path-dependence, as a sub-concept of complexity theory, and the concepts of 'lock-in' and 'critical juncture'. The research of my case was thus theory-guided in that it aimed "to explain and/or interpret a single historical episode rather than to generalize beyond the data" (Levy, 2008, p. 4). My objective was to interpret the 2014-2022 period using path-dependence, and not to contribute to theory development about military reform processes in a generalizable way. In other words, I did not design the research to test the suitability of a path-dependent explanation of Ukrainian military reforms, in relation to other possible competing theories. This element of comparison between theoretical approaches is a core component of 'congruence analysis' (Blatter & Haveland, 2012, p.144). While not designed explicitly using a

congruence approach, my research can be understood as one form of congruence method in the sense that this approach is often used “to explain specific socially important cases. In this case, the empirical case study is not instrumental for theoretical development and paradigmatic competition, but the theoretical approaches are used to explain the concrete empirical case(s).” (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p.150).

I recognized that the case was significant. Anecdotally, in 2012, I had a conversation with a Russian officer on exchange in Canada in an open and formal activity. However, the events of 2014 ceased official cooperation and Russia-Western relations reverted to Cold War antagonism (Do, 2014, March 7). I understood that the Donbas war exemplified a level of state-on-state conflict not seen since the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, which was much shorter in duration. The 2022 war was also by far the most significant conflict of the 21st century.⁹ Further, the case is unique, in that Ukraine in 2014, was in a far different situation from other former Warsaw Pact countries that had successfully integrated into NATO and EU structures. The variegated trajectories means that the Ukrainian case is without a direct comparison. As of 2014, the Georgian case was the most similar, as both states were core-USSR states that remain NATO and EU aspirants and that have faced Russian hostility, including direct military intervention opposing their integration with the

⁹ I define significant in terms of the highest number of fatalities, the conventional nature, the sophisticated armaments employed, the near peer aspect of military technologies employed and the strategic implications between the principal actors of the West and Russia as well as its broader multifaceted implications and potentialities for destabilization.

West. However, there are very few other directly comparable cases, limiting the value of a comparative analysis.

Much of the writing about military and defence reform in Ukraine appeared sequentially, providing descriptive accounting of the complex reform process as it unfolded in real time. The 2022 invasion serves to close off the period of analysis permitting the time frame to be understood as a defined temporal period, an interregnum between two dramatic chapters of Russian aggression. With a clear beginning and end apparent, my thesis ponders the broader significance of the period. That the period lies between two high-intensity conflicts might give the appearance that it was a peaceful interlude with little of importance for scholarly analysis. These assumptions are false on both accounts. The period of reform beyond March 2015 occurred when the Donbas war was stable but was far from peaceful. The war, while limited, was waged in a nasty test of attrition and resolve claiming over 14,000 lives, (civilian and combatant) between its onset in 2014 and early 2022 (International Crisis Group, n.d.). Further, the case contains a flurry of reform events involving the Ukrainian government, the military and broader society which were supported by a myriad of forms of external assistance. Therefore, the period is of crucial historical importance for an understanding of Ukraine's military reform and the unfolding of Russia's invasion, drawing attention to how critical junctures can disrupt deeply sedimented military cultures and path dependencies.

Several important academic works have taken stock of Ukraine's reform effort covering different aspects of the process (Sanders, 2017; Radin, 2020; Bukkvoll & Solovian, 2020; Dyson & Pashchuk, 2022; Sanders, 2023). Sanders (2017) notes how Ukraine adopted a reintroduction of 'mass' in Force Generation and Force Employment that the transformational reform of the Yushchenko era (2005-2010) model of military organization had deemphasized, societal crowdsourcing of volunteers and fundraising, and capability improvements to Special Operations Forces (SOF). Bukkvoll and Solovian (2020) analyze 'top-down' reforms within SOF, the Navy and the SBU. As an author of the RAND report, Radin focuses on improvement recommendations of supplied by the 2016 RAND report. Dyson and Pashchuk (2022) focus more narrowly on institutional learning during the Donbas war.

The works assess reform progress during the period up to their respective points of publication during the 2014-2022 period. Scholarship published prior to the 2022 invasion indicates mixed results, balancing positive elements of progress while identifying challenges. Sanders (2017) observed "small positive signs" of reform progress (p.47) while warning that the Ukrainian state's ability to finance the development of a professional military system remained a significant future headwind. Bukkvoll and Solovian (2020), observed how Ukrainian military improved from a being "totally inadequate to relatively competent over a fairly short time" (p. 22) but lamented a slow pace of reform challenged by 'vested interests of organizations' and opportunities for 'corruption'. Radin (2020) described reform to the military as one of "relative rapid improvement" (p.202), although reform progress was not uniform. Dyson and Pashchuk

(2022) stress the presence of an older Soviet-educated Officer corps and their domination at higher levels of the MOD and command structure remained a barrier as well as coordination failures; improvements to civil-military control are recommended.

Only Sanders (2023) is published after 2022 and takes stock of post-invasion battlefield success, describing the defence as “little short of a miracle” (Sanders, 2022, p.1). Sanders’ focus remained on the overall military orientation, arguing, the model was a ‘hybrid’ meshing of the transformation model and incorporating greater emphasis on mass. Additionally, Sanders credits the creation of SOF, improvements to command and control, mission command and western assistance as contributory, even briefly mentioning Canadian military training.

In asking how improvement occurred, my thesis positions itself within this nascent literature of the 2014-2022 reform period empirically and conceptually. Empirically, many factors corroborate findings by Sanders (2023). My contribution is novel empirically in providing additional depth about the role of western assistance, using evidence from the Canadian military assistance mission, Operation Unifier (Op UNIFIER)¹⁰ which began in 2015. Op UNIFIER was a primary source of data for this thesis, particularly in the chapter on combat capability and provides an understanding of reform processes from the bottom-up using perspectives of the CAF personnel implementing the security assistance.

¹⁰ Note to the reader. Operation Unifier in this thesis is denoted as Op UNIFIER. “Operation” is abbreviated to “Op”, and the name of the mission – Unifier is represented as UNIFIER following naming standards of the Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

Additionally, my use of military professionalism in this thesis permits a wider lens of the overall reform effort which makes visible the contributions of internal and external elements – domestic Ukrainian society, western assistance, and the military itself. The focus in the argument becomes of interaction between these areas, which is important as these contributions were ongoing simultaneously.

Within the identified literature historical factors are often acknowledged. Sanders (2017) emphasized that Ukraine's battlefield failure of 2014 originated from reform efforts of the Yushchenko era (2005-2010), following an American transformation model ill-suited to Ukraine's reality and hampered by political and economic constraints. My analysis concurs on the importance of political and economic constraints derailing reform but traces them to the path-dependence of Soviet legacy. Radin (2020) invokes path-dependence noting that "structures and practices from Ukraine's past, especially Soviet-era models, reappeared in its improved institutions" (p. 184) and Dyson and Pashchuk (2022) observe Soviet thinking patterns in older generations of the Officer corps. My analysis concurs with Radin (2020) and Dyson and Pashchuk (2022) with respect to the relevance of Soviet historical factors and path-dependence. My study elaborates the use of path-dependence to demonstrate specifically how it was operant by using a sub-concept of path-dependence "lock-in", leading to battlefield defeat of 2014-2015. Radin (2020), however notes that path-dependence had "difficulty accounting for the rapid improvement in the Ukrainian military that occurred following 2014" (p.202). Here, my thesis suggests that another concept of path-dependence, "critical juncture" provides a compelling

answer to rapid improvement. The critical juncture makes it possible to see how some empirical aspects become much more important. Here, the specific contribution of Op UNIFIER is visible in that previous constraints were lifted and permitted genuine learning. It is important to clarify that the empirical focus on Op. UNIFIER does not imply that Op. UNIFIER activities were solely, or predominantly responsible for improvement. Instead, it serves as an instructive lens on one of several expressions of international support to Ukraine in the period. The two main thrusts of the argument are that united will between internal and external stakeholders permitted genuine learning, greatly assisting the improvement visible post-2022. Op. UNIFIER should be understood as a significant, although not singular factor within the broader category of external stakeholders.

Methodology

The thesis relies on three data sources – qualitative document analysis, interviews, and secondary literature. Due to the nature of operational security evident in research about the military, particularly in times of war, some information that theoretically exists was unavailable to be included in the analysis. For example, classified intelligence reports about Ukrainian progress in the period exist but were not accessible to me. Further, it is possible that interview respondents possessed awareness of classified information which they would be unable to legally divulge.¹¹ Further, it is possible that some information that although not classified was not revealed.

¹¹ In keeping with a condition of CAF sponsorship and ethics approval, interview participants were cautioned during the consent process and outset of interviews to not reveal classified information.

Document Analysis

Open-source internet searches represented the overwhelming majority of how document sources were found. Document sources were found via internet research methods, using the Google search engine, Google scholar website and academic repositories. Searches were carried out at various times throughout the period of the thesis 2020-2024 and using a multitude of combinations of search terms, in English, Ukrainian and Russian. Sources were found via a snowball method using references within consulted documents, algorithm suggestions that appeared in academic repositories and via suggested articles on internet sites. I also had access to unclassified documents of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Department of National Defence (DND), via the Defence Wide Area Network (DWAN), although these represent a very small number of sources. A Ukrainian research assistant was hired in January/February 2022 to find approximately 100 web-based sources.

The searches yielded documents that originated from a range of stakeholders directly involved with the reform process, internal (any source originating within Ukraine), or external (any source originating outside of Ukraine). Naturally, any element of the Ukrainian government was a significant internal source of data, including: the Ministry of Defence, Office of the President, the Defence Reforms Office, the Parliament, National Library, National Security and Defence Council, or individual Ukrainian military elements or commands. Documents published by external stakeholders supporting reform activities in Ukraine were abundant, including: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU), Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs), International Organizations (IO) and individual states. Another primary source of documents was the Ukrainian and international press who reported on the reform process.

Searches yielded a multitude of document types: including, media article, analytical report, op-ed, podcast, video, social media post, official government publication, government policy document, government strategy document, Ukrainian legislation, or forms of public statements of organizations or public figures. The process to include or exclude a document into the sample was made on the basis of whether the document contained relevant data about one or multiple aspects of military professionalism: external legitimacy, combat capability or internal legitimacy. In consequence, sources were selected based on relevance, irrespective of source type.

By not excluding documents based on publisher, or document type, a mixed sample resulted naturally. Documents could originate from direct participants or observers, of the reform process from within or outside of Ukraine. Inference therefore required a critical interpretation of multiple factors including proximity to the reform process, known or potential biases, and the document's intended audience. More importantly, inference required continual assessment to seek validation from multiple sources and perspectives. Overall, over 597 documents (primary and secondary sources) were formally recorded and analyzed. Some documents were useful for details of the historical record while others were valued for their analytical elements, for example in stakeholder opinions. Reoccurring themes were sought, and reliability was identified through triangulation deriving from different document sources. Singular occurrences were not discounted

but were treated with more caution. For additional information about inference from different source types see Annex B – Inference from Different Document Sources.

The process of analysis followed a systematic process. Firstly, the source was read, including with the assistance of the online translation service DeepL, and hardcover/online dictionaries. Secondly, a reference was generated and notes were taken regarding the document’s content, points to follow-up on, or to record key quotations. The information relative to each source was coded in Excel in various categories: source type; purpose; main message; themes; facts; opinions, as noted in figure 1, Categories for document tracking and analysis.

Figure 1 - Categories for document tracking and analysis	
Source:	Details about the author; Ideological Positionality of the Source:
Purpose:	Stated or Assumed purpose of the document. Who is the audience?
Main Message:	What is said about the reform – challenges – opportunities – progress?
Themes:	Assignment: External Legitimacy; Combat Capability or Internal Legitimacy?
Facts:	What details can be incorporated into the historical record?
Opinions:	What is the opinion expressed about defence reform?

The Excel tracking process did not require all fields to be filled out and could be left blank when not applicable. In my research, the assigning of the “theme” and “main message” categories became the most populated and important as they were the primary locations where I assigned the document to one of the categories of military professionalism – external legitimacy, combat

capability and internal legitimacy. However, documents often addressed multiple themes simultaneously. These notes could be re-consulted quickly prior to returning to the original text.

Interviews

In addition to documents, interviews accessed information from participants who had in-depth, unique or intimate knowledge of Ukraine during the period. In total, 31 formal semi-structured interviews occurred, with the bulk occurring between January 2022 and September 2023.¹² All interviews were conducted on conditions of anonymity. To identify specific interviews within the text, an in-text citation is provided noting the Participant number and date of the interview, appearing as (Anonymous Participant (AP), X, Date of Interview), appearing in the text as (AP X, Date). The full reference of the interview in the reference list includes the rank and position of the interviewee and whether the participant participated in Op UNIFIER. Note that the military rank provided is the rank that the CAF member held at the time of the interview which may not equate to the rank held during, or after their participation or participation(s) on the Op UNIFIER mission.

The primary source of interviews was Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel who deployed on various rotations of Op UNIFIER. In total, 19 interviews were conducted with CAF members who participated on Op UNIFIER, with representation in the sample of participation in

¹² Two participants were interviewed twice.

rotations 0,1,2,5,6,7,8,10,12. Interviewing CAF members from across rotations provided an understanding of evolution within the mission over time.

Ranks of interview participants from Op UNIFIER include the ranks of Lieutenant-Colonel, Major, Captain, Chief Warrant Officer, Master Warrant Officer, Warrant Officer, Sergeant. The sample included Task Force Commanders. However, due to the singular nature of the position, the specific rotations are not specified to maximize anonymity. Op UNIFIER Commanders held leadership responsibilities for the aggregate mission and to coordinate with partners: Ukrainian authorities, the Canadian Embassy, the Defence Reform Advisory Board, (DRAB), and various international partners. Commanders possessed deep knowledge of the entirety of the mission's lines of effort and acquired strategic understanding of how the Op UNIFIER mission was linked to the broader defence reform process. Other positions in Op UNIFIER engaged with Ukrainian counterparts delivering tactical training and mentorship, acquiring deep understanding of specific Lines of Effort (LOE) where they contributed. Within the participant sample, a variety of ranks, positions and trades materialized naturally through participant volunteerism and snow-ball connections. This variety provides a broad understanding of Op UNIFIER training activities although it is acknowledged that interviews conducted did not cover all of Op UNIFIER's efforts. For additional information about the interview process see Annex C – Interview Process. For additional information about the interview scripts see Annex D – Interview Scripts.

Formal interviews also included: CAF members who had worked with Ukrainians in other capacities, such as UN deployment, NATO tasking, training in Canada, Canadian military defence

attachés, a senior Ukrainian Officer, a Georgian Chief Warrant Officer (CWO), Defence Reform Advisory Board (DRAB) members, and from the Canadian NGO community working in Ukraine. Further to the formal interviews, I undertook informal chats with several members of the Georgian Armed Forces while in Georgia in June 2023, with members of the Polish Armed Forces in January 2024, and held an ongoing correspondence with a former Ukrainian Officer throughout the research period.

Interpreting interview data was challenging. First, the semi-structured interviews generated a great deal of information. Secondly, the variety and uniqueness of roles, meant highly technical and nuanced data. Recordings of the interviews occurred in most cases and transcripts could be auto generated. Subsequent analysis of the interviews permitted me to conduct qualitative of the transcripts and organize the data into themes.

Figure 2 - Categories for Interview Data	
Source:	Details about the interviewee.
Answers to questions:	Responses of the interviewee about experiences with Op UNIFIER or reform effort, including Soviet legacy and reform progress.
Themes:	Assignment of data points into: External Legitimacy; Combat Capability or Internal Legitimacy.
Facts:	What details can be incorporated into the historical record?

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis consists of 8 chapters. To situate the thesis within existing debates on military reform, **Chapter 2** provides a review of the relevant literature, stretching from the classic text of Samuel Huntington (1957) to contemporary discussions on civil military relations within political science and sociology. To facilitate the ensuing analysis, the chapter focuses on military professionalism and identifies three distinct elements of relevance to the success of military reform: external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy. The chapter demonstrates how military professionalism unites internal and external elements of the reform story which when combined reveal important insights necessary to understand the 2014-2022 reforms.

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of path dependency, which provides part of the thesis's conceptual framework and argues that a historical approach is required to understand military reform. Path-dependence, as a sub-concept of complexity theory, emphasises the importance of antecedent historical factors to outcomes in the present. Although definitional variance exists, in most cases path-dependence is understood to mean that deeply sedimented cultures and behaviours can prevent institutions and societies from transforming, setting them on a pre-determined path. To illustrate the power of path-dependency within the Ukrainian military, it is necessary first to assess the Soviet military and the standards of military professionalism that existed within it. Focusing on the three elements of internal legitimacy, combat capability and external legitimacy, this analysis establishes the baseline understanding of military professionalism inherited by Ukraine at independence. Then, the chapter moves to demonstrate that Soviet era understandings of the military were influential to future outcomes and carried over

into the 1991-2014 period via path-dependence. Core elements of military professionalism were locked-in and attempts to reform them failed. This thesis follows Polyakov (2018) and treats 1991-2014 as one period¹³ and covers political, economic, social and security factors of the Independence period and administrations of Kravchuk (1991-1994); Kuchma (1994-1999; 1999-2004); Yushchenko (2005-2010) and Yanukovych (2010-2014). Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates that Ukrainian military reforms, like other broader societal reforms were inhibited by Soviet legacies which explain why the Ukrainian military was dismally unprepared and incapable of adequately defending the state in 2014-2015.

Chapter 4 introduces the concept of ‘critical juncture, which forms the second part of the thesis’s analytical framework. Critical juncture is a sub-concept of path dependence and permits deviation from historical trajectory to be understood. The chapter argues that events beginning with the Maidan revolution in late 2013, Annexation of Crimean and outbreak of the Donbas war in early 2014, combined to provide a ‘critical juncture’ where entrenched constraints were relaxed, permitting reform opportunities which had previously been impossible. This chapter plays a key

¹³ Various periodizations of post-independence defence reform have existed. Sherr (2005) periodizes defence reform related to events, as (post-independence 1991-1999). Sanders (n.d.) in the early 2000s saw more specific periodizations related to events and the distinctiveness of Presidential administrations and notes three eras of reform: independence to 1996; 1996-2003; 2003-. Sanders (2008; 2017) also notes the importance of the Orange Revolution that was an opening permitting additional reforms. At a later time, Polyakov (2018) makes the war the dividing point - 1991-2013 as a time of peace and 2014 onward as a time of war (Polyakov, 2018). D’Anieri (2020a) notes Ukraine as a series of Republics, (Independence to the 1996 Constitution, the 1996 Constitution to the Orange Revolution, the Orange Revolution to the Yanukovych Presidency in 2010, and the post-Euromaidan Republic).

role in the argument to establish that in the critical juncture, reform efforts could enact meaningful change. Finally, the chapter introduces Op UNIFIER, Canada's capacity building mission to Ukraine which provides essential context necessary for understanding the empirical chapters focused on the 2014-2022 period, chapters 5, 6, 7.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 form the substantive contribution of the thesis by providing empirical description and analysis of Ukraine's military and defence reforms in the 2014-2022 period. Each chapter represents one element of military professionalism – external influence (chapter 5), combat capability (chapter 6) and internal influence (chapter 7). While the reforms themselves occurred within the political, legislative and bureaucratic elements of the Ukrainian national system, their impacts were not necessarily confined to Ukraine. Following this logic, the chapters progress in a sequence of where reform impacts were influential, from the global to the local.

Chapter 5 covers reforms connected to external legitimacy and their impacts in the reputational assessments of key Western allies. The chapter examines reforms that moved Ukrainian civil-military relations toward improved democratic governance. The chapter covers fundamental issues of civil military relations – changes to organizational structures, and understandings of civilian control in practice, transparency and accountability. It is demonstrated that there was a genuine attempt to break from the Soviet conceptions of civil-military relations leading to progress in the adoption of democratic norms of security governance. This esteem of key Western allies was critical for the continuance of moral and material support needed for the post-2022 invasion.

Chapter 6 covers the combat capability element of military professionalism - the heart of a military's purpose. It deals with issues of the functional imperative – the requirement of the professional military to defend the state, examining how reforms occurred. It examines the enactment of updated defence / national security policies and training received from Western allies, and how battlefield experience on the Donbas Front were operationalized into concrete military improvement of Force Employment and Force Generation. Data from this section comes from interviews with Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members who implemented capacity building and Security Force Assistance (SFA) on Op UNIFIER, as well as the writings of Ukrainian military personnel and external observers. The location of where reform effects manifested exits the ideational and enters a more tangible site of the battlefield results. The chapter also moves from the global to a more regional location of where the war occurred - the sites of Ukraine's military confrontation with Russia, the Donbas front between 2014-2022, then more widely in Ukraine beyond 2022. The findings indicate that significant improvement to Ukrainian combat capability occurred, in the training system, military culture and skill development.

Chapter 7 covers the internal legitimacy element of military professionalism – how legitimate the military is within the esteem of the Ukrainian domestic population. The chapter examines the reforms aimed at the welfare of troops, notably issues of housing, pay and morale and how these aspects affected the reputation of the Ukrainian military within Ukrainian society and broader issues such as recruitment and moral support. This chapter returns to the ideational as the location of reform effects occurred within the internal legitimacy of the Ukrainian military to

broader society. This chapter moves inward further, from the regional to the internal local domestic Ukrainian society. The argument is that reform progress on these aspects were significant and improved the military's relationship vis-à-vis Ukrainian society after its 2014 defeats. The supportive societal embrace permitted the military to be increasingly effective in the post-2022 invasion.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by analyzing the broader implications of the study. Though the war in 2014 was undesired by Ukraine and was tragic in terms of lives lost, suffering and the opportunity cost to human development, it provided a critical juncture to permit the Ukrainian state to undergo a radical departure from the status quo of Soviet legacy. Despite reticence from both domestic and external actors within the reform processes and significant challenges, overall, military professionalism appears to have been significantly improved. A concluding argument is developed from reflection on the significance of Op UNIFIER and my interpretation of its relative success. It argues that Op UNIFIER provides a successful example of military capacity building, one that will likely be attempted for the strategic value it provides. It then elaborates how the thesis contributes several points to literature SSR and SFA literatures. Specifically, it calls attention to critical junctures and their importance to understanding historical context and particularities of local context, which ultimately, determine what is possible, frame limitations and inform expectations. Further, that unity of will between multiple internal elements and external elements are necessary for SSR/SFA success. Finally, that military assistance missions, although seemingly benign matter greatly for geopolitical strategy.

Chapter 2: Military Reform

This chapter reviews the relevant literature to locate the overall contribution of my study. My argument overall in this thesis is that the critical juncture permitted the Ukrainian military to overcome locked-in Soviet legacies and to improve within three distinct elements of military professionalism: external legitimacy, internal legitimacy, and combat capability. These distinct aspects of military professionalism represent a clear articulation of objectives of the reform processes in Ukraine. The core meanings of these elements are derived from key literature and informed by my understanding of military professionalism from the Canadian context.¹⁴ A first section of the chapter identifies how military reform can carry different objectives, including internal and external aspects. This is important because the 2014-2022 Ukrainian reform, did not occur in a hermetically sealed domestic environment but were sponsored and financed by Western actors. The concept of military professionalism permits both internal and external elements to be seen. A second section explores their implications through three elements of military professionalism in different literatures.

Objectives of Military Reform

¹⁴ These three elements are chosen due to my career familiarity with military professionalism in the Canadian context. The institutional publication *Duty with Honour* first published in 2003 as a public document articulates the purpose of the military to the public and provides ideological mooring for the military profession in Canada (National Defence, 2009).

Militaries are central actors of international and domestic politics. Specific objectives of military reform can be manifold and depend on contextual factors, such as the source of reform instigation and the rationale of the actors involved. In other words, why militaries undergo reform can be quite different. Military sociology examines militaries as domestic actors within their parent societies, considering their compositions and relationship with society (Siebold, 2001). The discipline of sociology examined militaries as professions in the early part of the twentieth century (Schiff, 2009). The military conceived as ‘profession’ captures how militaries are not simply instruments of the state, nor of the political ruling class, but can be conceived of as a ‘corporate’¹⁵ group, that is recognized as a profession.

Conceptual development of professionalism is widely attributed to Samuel Huntington’s (1957) landmark work, *The Soldier and the State*. Using a historical perspective of the American military’s evolution, Huntington argues that the military is a profession, exhibiting corporateness, responsibility and expertise (pp.7-18). A congruent view of professionalism comes from Morris Janowitz’s (1960) *The Professional Soldier*, another discipline defining text, describing the professional military as a “pressure group” in society. Membership occurs through admission, and develops specific knowledge and skill acquired through “prolonged training” which cannot be easily replicated (Janowitz, 1960, p.5). However, a military is a “very special pressure group

¹⁵ I use the word corporate in this instance to refer to a group, united by membership or purpose, not in the sense of what is commonly understood as the profit-making ventures of a “corporation”.

because of its immense resources, and because of its grave problems of national security”

(Janowitz, 1960, lvii).

The military also has other attributes of a professional group: “a sense of group identity and a system of internal administration” (Janowitz, 1960, p.6). Further, the professional military develops a distinct culture stemming from physical separation from society by living in barracks of remote areas of the national territory, and cultural separation, consisting of “values, attitudes, and perspectives inherent in the performance of the professional military function” (Huntington, 1957, p.61). Physical and cultural separation manifests into a military ethos, that is different from civilian attitudes of citizenship. Huntington outlines responsibilities the professional military has toward the state: representation, advisory and executive. This means to represent the interests of the military to the civilian government, advise the civilian authority about options and risks of using military force and to fulfill the orders of the civilian authority even if in disagreement (Huntington, 1957, p.72). Thus, militaries are distinct from the state and civil society but simultaneously intertwined within them.

For some sub-disciplines of Political Science, such as comparative politics, militaries matter domestically, as actors who can potentially influence domestic politics. Militaries can act as domestic power brokers, and resist or support the constitutional order. At the most dramatic militaries can usurp political power identified in the coup literature. The ‘transitology’ literature identifies how military reform transitions militaries from authoritarian governance to a democratic posture, particularly in Latin America. O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986) discuss the

possible necessity for social and economic pacts to avoid coups when transitions from authoritarianism move too quickly or threaten sacred interests of the military or other power wielders (pp. 37-47). Reform can also arise from internal political actors who recognize the need for additional military capability to defend the state, or sub-state political project.

In International Relations (IR), militaries matter greatly at the international level. Realist theories of IR carry a preference for the state as central actor of global politics. For realists, a state's ability to act is dependent on its sum capability. While there are economic, cultural and other elements of state capability, military power is one of the sources of a state's overall power, and one that can be quite variant (Waltz, 1979). Securitization theory explains how political actors come to identify threats. While critical security studies brought awareness of non-military threat, the military capabilities (offensive and defensive) remain the most obvious form of threat political actors can recognize. Potentially adversarial states can influence perceptions of threat: "heavily armed neighbours with a history of aggression are more easily construed as threats than are lightly armed, pacifist ones" (Buzan et al., 1998, p.57). Perceptions of the other's military capability can lead to security dilemmas between states (p.51).

Connected to IR and particularly the realist perspective, the field of Strategic Studies is centrally focused on the military component of state power (Walt, 1991). From this realist and Strategic Studies perspective, military reform originating from an external direction become apparent. In rare cases the international community has imposed military reform after a state's military defeat. This occurred when World War II victors placed strict limitations on the militaries

of Japan and Germany to limit military capability and recidivism of aggressive war behaviour. Postwar, the United States and the Soviet Union in their rivalry for global leadership sponsored military reform for strategic reasons. Most often this involved the provision of material and technical assistance to strengthen a partner, or proxy-force in the Third World, to further respective American or Soviet interests.

The end of the Cold War was a moment of great change. As the primary inheritor of the post-Soviet project, Russia's overall power declined including in military terms. In contrast, the United States remained a superpower whose military power extended. This military power is foundational to American capability (Bacevich, 2006; Buzan et. al, 1998, p. 63). As a variant capability, very few states can come close to matching American military power, let alone have the capability to project it globally.

With the end of the Cold War, a new form of intervention became prominent, Security Sector Reform (SSR). SSR projects became tools of the international community to re-orient security apparatuses of post-authoritarian and post-conflict states (Busterud, 2015; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 1994; Robinson, 2019). SSR carries different meanings depending on situations.¹⁶ It encompasses all actors in a state's security apparatus, including intelligence, law-enforcement, border security and judicial

¹⁶ The "R" in SSR can mean "Reconstruction" or "Reform" carrying different meanings (Brzoska, 2006).

organs (United Nations Security Council 2014). A sub-set of SSR is defence reform (Le Roy 2011, June 27; Busterud, 2015), which refers to a set of more narrow actors: the military, ministries of defence, and civilian oversight mechanisms such as parliament. With an even more narrow focus, military reform can be considered a sub-component of defence reform. For the Ukrainian military, the story of defence reform and military reform will commence at independence in 1991 while taking stock of its historical antecedents. The next section introduces three elements of military professionalism that are important to Ukraine's military reform modified through SSR in 2014-2022.

Three Elements of Military Professionalism

The literature on military reform is vast and spans several historical periods and geographical regions. A central focus of this body of research centres on military professionalism, with Huntington's seminal work *The Soldier and the State* (1957) still defining and informing key debates. Huntington demonstrated that military professionalism matters not merely in terms of a military's hard power, but that it also influences its relationship with society and its reputation on the world stage. It is from Huntington's key concepts that three dimensions of military professionalism are derived to form the basis of my analysis of the reform process in Ukraine. A focused discussion of these three elements capture important aspects of the reform story, but it

needs to be clarified that they do not represent the entirety of all possible domains of the study of military professionalism, or intertwined subfields such as Civil-Military relations.¹⁷

Given, that my thesis question analyses how Ukraine successfully reformed its military, the concept of ‘change’ found implicitly and explicitly in scholarship pertaining to military professionalism is relevant. Attention to change is discussed within the subsequent discussions of the three elements of military professionalism and it will suffice to introduce the concept with a few remarks here.

Change is a constant presence within the literature, even when not explicitly focused on. Implicitly change is present due to the ever-changing nature of military organizations and the societies in which they are nested as dynamic systems, constantly in flux.

As will be seen, much scholarship has investigated the nature of the military as a profession and its difference from the societies they serve, present in Huntington’s (1957) conceptions of professionalism and the subsequent literature that employed his categories. With the passing of time, literature has examined the degree and nature of military/societal difference (Segal & Segal, 1983; Boëne, 1990). Caforio (1988) identifies how Moskos’ Institutional/Occupational model spawned an important trend in the literature about Western militaries confronting rapidly modernizing societies of the post-WWII period. Societal change is an

¹⁷ See Segal & Segal (1983), Shields & Travis (2024) and Brooks (2019) as examples that illustrate the breadth of the field.

external dynamic. However, Caforio (1998) also brings to attention internal change through heterogenous internal elements of militaries (Caforio, 1988).

Militaries also respond to the security environment in the course of fulfilling their responsibilities to defend the state. Much literature has been focused on specific periods: World War II, the Cold War, post-Cold War era, Global War on Terror, and contemporary wars of the 21st century. These events have challenged militaries in relation to the type of threats they face, and the changing means and strategies of war. Bar-Yam's (2003) claim that "war is a complex encounter between complex systems in complex environments" illustrates the implicit relevance of change to the field (p.1). As will be seen, change is also present explicitly in literature about militaries that employ case studies of specific events.

External Legitimacy

Conceptions of democratic legitimacy are fluid and can vary in place and time but have largely focused on the degree to which militaries are adequately restrained by a civilian authority. Huntington traces the concept of civilian control to Clausewitz who stresses the need for the political level to control war (Huntington, 1957, p.58; Clausewitz & Heuser, 2008, pp. 28-29). Huntington defines civilian control as "proper subordination of an autonomous profession to the ends of policy" (p.72). The professional military is thus circumscribed to exclusively fulfill the desire of the sovereign rather than its own corporate desire. The military's right to be professional and autonomous over internal military matters requires it to demonstrate unyielding loyalty to the

civil authority which Huntington stresses in several ways. Only in exceptional cases does Huntington suggest that military disobedience of the sovereign could be justified.¹⁸

The unequivocal necessity for civilian control means the professional military has a “loyalty to the ideal of professional competence” which is judged by the “promptness and efficiency” of how it executes the direction of the sovereign, rather than an ephemeral political or corporate cause (Huntington, 1957, p.74). Huntington’s apriori position was to emphasize the need of civilian control and then identifies two mechanisms of how civilian control can occur in practice - ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ control. Under objective control the military is afforded maximum opportunity to be culturally autonomous and practice self-governance while remaining strictly apolitical. Under subjective control, civilian political leaders desire to have the military reflect society and desire to restrict the military’s autonomy. In subjective control Huntington saw societal ideologies as distracting the military from its core duties of war fighting especially by drawing officers into politics. The military would thus run the risk of dealing with factions representing partisan societal groups rather than the state as a universal entity.

While Huntington noted variances of civil military relations in context and practice, he advocated for strict ‘objective control’, which he conceived as an apolitical form of civilian control, optimal for the state and military. Under objective control, the military has a space to focus

¹⁸ Huntington discusses a few examples of when disobedience could be justified – when critical information unknown to the superior is acted upon (p.75). Other possible ways to disobey exist only when, there are two dueling political authorities, or involve orders of illegality, such as committing war crimes.

exclusively on warfighting and does not encroach into civilian governance where it lacks requisite expertise. Conversely, the state can rely on a class of experts, who have expertise that the state does not have. Huntington's argument for strict objective control is known as 'separationist' – meaning to emphasize and laud the separateness of the military from society (Schiff, 2009). Janowitz (1960) remarks that civil control is crucial to a professional military's self-understanding, and this in turn differentiates the professional military from simply being a group of armed mercenaries. Relatedly, Bacevich (1990) notes how Western militaries hold internalized beliefs about their self-identity of what is meant in being 'professional':

in Western armies, the concept of professionalism incorporates the belief that the use of force to achieve political ends is exclusively the province of regular military establishments. Professional soldiers have a stake in preserving the tradition of war as a gladiatorial contest – a conflict between opposing regular forces, governed by rules and customs and directed by an officer elite (p. 15).

This quote illuminates that militaries have expectations about their responsibilities, not only internally in terms of obedience to the state's authority, but also their outward professional responsibilities in defence of the state.

From Janowitz's perspective the military professional takes pride in serving the state or nation as part of a greater calling of public service and remuneration is not the primary motivation of membership (pp. lii-liii). This military identity based on pride in national service,

rewarded by prestige conferred on the military by society is important to military identity and acts as a guarantor of civilian control.

Brooks (2021) argues separationism has become entrenched through long-standing norms of socialization for the American military profession which “provide a baseline appreciation for the importance of staying out of domestic politics and debates” (p.69). Dominant self-understandings of objective control have remained entrenched in Western militaries more broadly, including Canada (Kasurak, 2022; Brooks, 2021; Schiff, 2009). The inculcated respect of the civilian authority is undoubtedly a positive element as the profession self-limits itself from taking political power by force and shuns political interference generally (Brooks, 2021). This point needs to be stressed as military intervention into politics studied under the coup literature demonstrates how damaging military coups are, not least for a state’s external legitimacy (Bennett, Bjørnskov & Gohmann, 2021).

Additional theorizing about military professionalism comes from Charles Moskos (1977; 1986) who developed the institutional/occupational model of military service. Moskos’ model helps understand why citizens end up in the military. In the institutional perspective a civilian voluntarily joins the Profession of Arms (POA) and its traditions as a pre-existing ‘institution’, desiring to fulfill a career of public service. In the institutional model, the military is highly autonomous and controls membership standards and organizational culture. Huntingtonian Separateness is found in Moskos’ institutional model whereby the military appreciates itself as a calling; motivation is geared toward sacrificial service to the state developing into a separate

cultural ethos – tradition, autonomy and self-governance are promoted. In contrast, the occupational conception recognizes that most modern militaries have support and bureaucratic functions that are identical to civilian trades and professions. Under an occupational conception, motivation for service is personal, often economic and institutional desires of separateness are muted. Caforio (1988) argues “that the armed forces, as a whole, are still an institution – within which there are professional and occupational positions” (p.59). This observation is useful to recognize the inherent heterogeneity of militaries that aggregate focuses risk losing sight of.

Critics of the separationist position exist. In the Canadian case, Kasurak (2022) argues that despite the military having a self-understanding of and preference for objective control, the operant mode of civilian control has been subjective control. Kasurak (1982, 2022) demonstrates how state-imposed changes were interpreted as threatening the military’s right to manage its own affairs - civilianization - the inclusion of civilian governance mechanisms and management techniques, and requirements to fulfill norms of diversity forced on the military. These impositions exemplify how liberal societies desire the military reflect society as Huntington spoke of. However, in contrast to Huntington’s warnings of subjective control leading to poor outcomes, Kasurak argues “there has been no failure of morale and expeditionary operations have continued as before” (Kasurak, 2022, p.339). The separationist (objective control) position is also criticized for creating barriers and potential conflict between the military and civilian elements of the state. Burk (2001) argues that separationism does not represent modern national security issues whereby militaries work with and rely on civilian expertise. Similarly, Brooks (2021) argues that

contemporary state affairs inevitably involve both military and civilian security organizations, and ideals of strict separationism can lead to unhealthy relations between military members and civilians, particularly attitudes of superiority and disdain (pp. 70-76).

Another form of conflict comes from the separationist position. In the US context, Feaver (1998) uses Principal-Agent theory to explain how the relationship between the military and government is one of dynamic power struggle. The military, as the agent of the government can 'comply' or 'shirk' (resist) civilian authority in subtle ways. The government as the principal must weigh costs of overseeing the military – higher oversight incurs greater cost. Feaver's (1998) agency theory focuses on the United States but notes that Principal-Agent theory is exportable to other countries but may not be applicable in non-democracies.

In recent times Security Sector Reform (SSR) has taken norms of professionalism to mean effective civilian control, a principle that informs how the international community defines the legitimacy of civil military relations. In the 1990s, actors enacting SSR published institutional guidance documents. These guidelines represent the agreement of key signatory states, permitting to understand them as ideal-state configurations for security sectors. Critical academic literature of SSR widely notes that first generation SSR was highly normative and defined legitimacy to mean attainment of democratic norms of the liberal peace agenda (Chandler, 2015; Sedra, 2017; Jackson, 2018; Robinson, 2019; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). This echoed traditional Western conceptions of civil-military relations literature, including civilian control of a Weberian state.

I argue that these variables can be summarized into three key aspects: structure (institutional, organizational and legislative infrastructure), practice (how the management and governance occur in practice) and conduct (the nature of the military's conduct exercising its responsibilities). The structural aspects include the existence, or lack of, of adequate legislation and functional positions for the state to exercise responsibilities of democratic civil military relations (Edmunds, 2013, p. 51). The responsibility to ensure the structural framework placing the military within legitimate civilian control is not the military's responsibility, but rather the charge of state officials. The most identifiable and emblematic feature of external legitimacy in this structural sense is civilian control over the security forces. This implies the presence of a civilian position as representative of the state - head of state or civilian minister of defence or equivalent who is functionally in control of directing the military (OSCE, 1994, art.25).

Further, that relevant authorities are enshrined in national legislation - that the military is legally subordinate to the civilian leadership and that responsibilities are clearly defined and not overlapping. This concept is related to the state's monopoly of the use of force, such that only the state's legitimate security organs exercise force on the state territory. Another legal aspect is the presence of legislation requiring political neutrality of state militaries (OSCE, 1994, art.23). SSR documents articulate the need for accounting for society and the "needs and aspirations of the population" (United Nations Security Council (UNSC), 2014). This includes the ability for parliament and/or society to exercise oversight or seek to influence military activity and policy, for example, over the transparency of military expenditure (OSCE, 1994, art.22). It is a necessary first

step for civil-military structure to be based in legislation and formal organizations, institutions and mechanisms.

However, literature also identifies a gap between official structures on paper and practical realities. There is therefore a need to assess the underlying culture and effectiveness of civilian oversight mechanisms to determine the quality of the rule of law (Mychajlyszyn, 2002). Structure, practice and conduct carry reputational impacts for states. First, democratic conceptions of civil-military relation outlined in institutional SSR literature carry high-stakes. Legitimacy in these areas is linked to societal stability and propensity for conflict, statal security with neighboring countries (OSCE, 1994) and to the successful progress of peace-building processes, post-conflict recovery, conflict prevention and protection of domestic populations (UNSC, 2014). Reputational impact can affect stakeholder decisions to limit or augment support whether, financial, technical or political. There is a strong preference for donor countries to fund regimes deemed legitimate. From this we can see that external legitimacy matters because the Western donor states want to support legitimate authorities.

However, Schiff (2009) notes that “civil military relations standards are defined and implemented by those policy makers who provide a hegemonic determination of what the suitable civil-military relationship should be according to what Western and US standards are” (p.29). This includes Huntingtonian conceptual dominance of the field and its reification in military self-understandings, including separationism as the normative gold standard. For Schiff, this is problematic since Western norms of civil military relations rarely apply to the non-western world.

However, Western conceptions of civil military relations underpinned SSR projects that have mostly occurred in the non-Western world (UNSC, 2022). Critical SSR literature have noted that Western norms privileged in SSR processes did not account for local context and were premised on “the hierarchical assumption of the superior knowledge and resources of the policy-interveners” (Chandler 2015, p.72). Further, the assumption that a state’s society-security sector relationship could be reconfigured universally in a linear fashion was “hubristic and reductionist” (Chandler 2015, p.78). Sedra (2017) continues in the same vein, critiquing that SSR’s “liberalism-in-a-box mindset” is unrealistic (p.31).

As an alternative to simply applying Western norms to variant global situations, Schiff (2009) proposes concordance theory. As a non-normative theory, concordance doesn’t specify an ideal-type of civil-military organization but examines variables situated within culture, context and history. Legitimacy comes not from fulfilling a pre-determined set of criteria but from agreement on how civil military relations should be organized between the military, political elites and society. Ostensibly, should a particular civil-military composition be desired, it could very well function and be legitimate. Agreement is the basis of legitimacy, not that it fits to pre-determined Western norms. Concordance predicts that - agreement between the armed forces, political leadership and citizenry on 3 of 4 variables – “(1) the social composition of the officer corps; (2) the political decision-making process; (3) the military recruitment method; and (4) the military style” leads to an absence of coups (p.44). Although, coups are not the focus of this thesis,

concordance draws attention to the need for more embedded theories of civil-military relations which my project contributes to.

Another location where external legitimacy appears in political science is in the 'transitology' literature covering the transformation of authoritarian regimes to democracy. In this literature, legitimacy is understood in terms of a state's turn from authoritarian governance to democracy. In the case of military dictatorship, the governing military needs to be removed from a dominant position in the state and firmly restrained under civilian mechanisms of control. As coup recidivism demonstrates, this is no easy task. For Narcís Serra (2010), a former Spanish Minister of Defence who led Spain's democratic transition, the absence of coups does not indicate achievement of democratization. Rather, "the process of democratization cannot be considered finished if it does not produce a change in the principles and beliefs of the military and make them loyal to the democratic regime" (Serra, 2010, p. 26). It is not enough for organizational elements of civilian control to exist on a surface level, but there needs to be genuine control in that civilians end up taking meaningful decisions over the military.

Serra identifies institutional weakness as causal to the failure of democratic civil-military relations, including a lack of political will to "carry through a process of democratization on all fronts", as well as instability in key positions of authority, especially the position of defence minister (Serra, 2010, p. 41; 33). However, when militaries are being reformed, resistance can be expected (p.41). How the military views and replicates itself is important. For Serra, the military's

self-understanding of its societal role makes transitioning militaries to democratic norms “practically impossible” (p.59).

While Serra is right to note the danger of strong institutional identities found in severe cases of military interference, military reform is not impossible. The experience of Warsaw Pact countries transforming to NATO models in the post-Soviet era provide examples of relatively successful military reform. Warsaw Pact militaries needed to adopt to NATO standards which had only very recently geopolitical rivals they had been preparing to fight. These militaries themselves did not resist the transformation to a point of fatality, otherwise their NATO ascension would not have been possible. These processes of transition involved mentorship from NATO troops modelling externally legitimate and internally legitimate military behaviour (Gheciu, 2005). Gheciu argues that NATO took on a role as ‘educator’ to teach a fundamentally different conception of societal organization. This involved exposing younger generations to Western ideas and values and a conception of alliance politics (Gheciu, 2005). Generational learning is also present in the practice of Western sponsored activities designed to professionalize military officers from developing countries. In many cases, junior officers are educated at Western military academies, premised to be inculcated in standards of Western professionalism through education and training, and return to play leadership roles in their home countries (Soeters & Van Ouytsel, 2014). Early career military education plays a significant role in socialization processes for military officers as to what professionalism means (Brooks, et.al, 2022). Data from Brooks et al., (2022) provides a glimpse into Officer Cadet beliefs in relation to Huntingtonian norms of

professionalization and find possibility for future change. This aspect of generational change, also present in the Soviet World War II cohort and the first post-Soviet generation speaks to the temporal aspect of reforming militaries.

When applying the above-mentioned elements to the Ukrainian case, several points bear mentioning. First, despite the criticisms that the SSR blueprint is ill-fitted for non-Western locations, they remain important to understandings of legitimacy.¹⁹ I carry forth Schiff's (2009) recognition that "professionalism can be different depending on national culture" (p.38) which is a critical departure point for understanding Ukrainian civil military relations via the Soviet historical legacy. Further, concordance brings in the society and the government as important actors, something that is analyzed in this thesis. What is also valuable is how concordance does not presume that competition, such as a Principal-Agent conception between the military and government is a foregone conclusion. Rather, cooperation between military, political elites and society is possible focusing on "dialogue, accommodation, and shared values or objectives among the military, the political elites, and society" (Schiff, 2009, p.44).

¹⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, I consider that Soviet identity was different from Western identity. This consideration comes from the cultural rivalry between the West and the USSR evident in popular culture and state relations throughout the Cold War, which defined beliefs about in-group membership and threats the respective other posed. However, this is not a binary observation as Ukraine is not entirely, non-Western, sharing geographic proximity to Europe and a Christian heritage. Ukraine also has significant societal elements who self-identify as Western, or European, simultaneous to other identities (Eurasian, or other). In the independence period, Western cultural elements were encouraged, such as the desire to move to a democratic political system.

Further, Ukraine's military reform situation in 2014 was not a transition from military dictatorship to democracy in which the military had to give up power. The 1991-2014 period had already begun a process of democratization from single-party authoritarianism. As will be elaborated on in chapter 4, Ukraine had begun developing the organizational elements of democratic civil-military relations in the independence period. Civil military relations in Ukraine were in contact with definitions of external legitimacy of sponsors, notably membership requirements of NATO and the EU. Like SSR, the Ukrainian case carried exposure to a Western standard, however, reform remained incomplete, stymied by locked-in Soviet legacies. Overcoming these legacies was the challenge of the 2014-2022 period, during which adaptation to democratic standards of civil military relations became even more important.

Combat Capability

From Huntington (1957), professionalism is crucial to external legitimacy for providing adequate civilian control over military power. However, Huntingtonian professionalism also includes the notion of effectiveness in war. The relationship between the military and the state is defined by a tacit agreement; the 'functional imperative' means that in exchange for the military's right of self-governance, not only is unbending obedience to the political authority required, but so too is success in assigned combat functions. The functional imperative is the requirement for the professional military to be ready, and to succeed in war functions whenever tasked by the state's political governance. Self-governance via civilian control, but optimally objective control, therefore, permits a mutually beneficial economy of effort. It benefits the state by having a permanent group of professionals solely devoted to expertise in the conduct of war. In turn, the

military can devote itself wholly to preparation for war, free from the meddling of politicization and interference of civilians who lack requisite military knowledge (Huntington, 1957). In democratic norms of civil-military relations, the responsibility of the functional imperative involves the military exclusively: militaries are beholden to act only when directed by the civilian authority and are limited by budget and legislative constraints from the political level. However, cooperation between the political level and the military is often needed for the creation and maintenance of military doctrine. Military doctrine is a term that carries many meanings as it covers multiple levels of conflict, and variances of meaning exist in different jurisdictions. Sloan (2012) illuminates the following:

At the strategic level, doctrine provides direction and understanding; at the operational level, doctrine provides understanding and instruction; and at the tactical level, doctrine provides instruction and training. Doctrine should also be regarded as a seamless web: it should define how an armed force trains in peace, the weapon systems that it procures and the way it fights in war (Sloan, 2012, p.245).

Maintenance of doctrine is therefore mostly a military responsibility, but which also requires political level initiation and strategic direction. In the function of preparing for war, professional militaries need to correct combat errors of the past. Huntington (1957) traces the roots of professionalization specifically to Prussian reforms in response to defeat to Napoleon (p.48-49). Of note are Prussian changes to promote systematization and officer promotion based on professional merit. This emphasis replaced social standing, as aristocratic ideas of military

genius became seen as “superfluous” (Huntington, 1957, p.51). Toronto (2018) identifies that battlefield defeat enables internal reflection through a ‘system of military reflection’ which is a “pattern of addressing military problems with strategic questioning and decentralized execution” (p.xiv). Besides internal military debates about how to change, Toronto notes that this process is dependent on the external factors of political will and access to capital.

For militaries, consultation of external expertise is a long-standing tradition. Clausewitz for example suggests that foreign officers with relevant combat experience be consulted for improvement (Clausewitz & Heuser, 2008, p.69). Militaries can thus learn from the success of more advanced militaries and emulate them. Huntington notes the use of French, Prussian and British models within the development of American military; for example, the inclusion of Clausewitz’ writings into US military curriculum in the 1870s. In the modern era, Sanders (2008) argues that the most capable militaries of an era become ‘paradigm armies’, which set the gold standard for other militaries to emulate. These concepts are important to the Ukrainian reform period, given the occurrence of a significant defeat in 2014-2015 and the subsequent desire for Western military expertise. This sets up the analysis for understanding Canada’s military assistance mission to Ukraine, Op UNIFIER and its objectives.

However, even after defeat military culture is hard to change. Huntington (1957) argues that military culture is imbued with a particular mindset called the ‘military mind’, which carries a natural conservatism and is “decidedly pessimistic” developed through experience with combat (p.63). This mindset according to Huntington is inflexible “concrete, permanent and universal”

(p.89) and is valuable in relaying sober analysis, urging politicians to take threats seriously and advocate for military preparedness (p.64-5). However, the nature of the 'military mind' can have negative effects for combat capability. Huntington writes:

Rigid and inflexible obedience may well stifle new ideas and become slave to an unprogressive routine. It is not infrequent that a high command has had its thinking frozen in the past and has used its control of the military hierarchy to suppress uncomfortable new developments in tactics and technology (Huntington, 1957, p.75).

Bacevich (1990) cautions that military nostalgia and preservation of the memory of past battlefield success inhibits adaptation to a new security reality. At the twilight of the Cold War, Bacevich criticizes military doctrine of the era "Future AirLand Battle is a sterile manifestation of nostalgia – a self-indulgence the military can ill afford" (p.15). Winslow and Schwerzel (2004) corroborate that military culture is a very strong factor that can influence not only the conduct of operations, but also reform efforts. Huntington's 'military mind' describes particularities of why military culture can be so resistant to change as it is wary of political overcommitments (p.68) and provides "a cautious, conservative, restraining voice to the formulation of state policy" (p.69). For Huntington the military mindset "always favors preparedness, but he [military professional] never feels prepared" (p.69) and is thus always desiring of more capabilities. In fact, the professional military, feels to be a "perennial victim of civilian warmongering" (p.69-70) who "court popular favor by curbing the arms budget and simultaneously pursuing an adventurous foreign policy" (p.70). Huntington emphasises that the conservative military mindset is often

misunderstood as “bellicosity” or a desire for aggressivity, violence and war. In the American case, during World War II, the military operated quite independently but there was great alignment with political leaders on how to conduct the war (Huntington, 1957). However, the clash of perspectives can cause competition, rivalry or conflict between the military and civil authority. Brooks (2021) notes the possibility of military feelings of superiority or disdain toward the broader society or civilian authority which could disrupt cooperation and strategic development, necessary for effective combat capability. This lends a connection of the military form of power being disconnected, or not optimally aligned with political power and Brooks (2021) notes this phenomenon in the contemporary United States. Combat capability may be affected here as, while combat is largely a military function, its overall effectiveness also depends on civilian government decision-making, as when to authorize force, provide funding for equipment procurement, align other in-theater state actors and for lending moral support within the domestic population. Loyalty within the military’s chain of command to the state’s political level is an assumed baseline and necessary condition for the functional imperative. However, Command and Control theoretically starts at the political level with elected, and non-military officials making decisions on when to use military force and when to reorient doctrine.

The normative objectives of Security Sector Reform (SSR) have been to reorient unaccountable security institutions toward democratic practice. However, combat capability is also a core component of the reforms, often referred to as ‘operational effectiveness’ (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2008). Combat capability is required in SSR for

the ‘stabilization’ of the security situation prior to the implementation of higher order reforms to progress (Brzoska, 2006; Sedra, 2017). The critical literature on SSR has widely argued that SSR practices became too overly focused on combat capability (Chandler, 2015; Sedra, 2017; Jackson, 2018; Abrahamsen, 2019). This occurred for strategic reasons, such as securing so-called ungoverned spaces in the Global War on Terror (Sedra, 2017) or simply that the enormity of SSR objectives “would pose immense challenge to most Western states, let alone developing countries emerging from conflict” (Sedra, 2017, p.70). The SSR literature sheds light on a myriad of these challenges such as: “politicization, ethnicization, and corruption of the security services; excessive military spending; lack of professionalism; poor oversight and inefficient allocation of resources” (Brzoska, 2006, p. 1). Despite great intentions SSR processes often revert back to ‘train and equip’ missions due to familiarity or futility. As Sedra (2017) writes about Afghanistan:

A familiar pattern emerges in many SSR contexts: SSR concepts are constructed under the façade of the Orthodox SSR model, but as the complex and difficult realities of the local context, and the model’s inability to adapt them become apparent, donors revert to their train-and-equip comfort zone (p.68).

Sedra’s mention of ‘train-and-equip’ identifies another form of external assistance – Security Force Assistance (SFA). SFAs are also known as ‘train and equip’ missions designed to improve “tactical level requirements” of security force personnel (Schultz, 2013, p.53). Unlike SSR’s desire of moving states toward democratic organization and practice, SFA involves military assistance for purely strategic reasons. SFAs as formal agreements are generally housed in the language of

bilateral assistance and developing partner capability in which multiple strategic benefits can be present. Paterson (2019) discusses the importance of building military professionalism of partner forces in American security assistance programs, which technically involve elements of human rights training and education about the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). However, professionalism according to Paterson is hard to define let alone operationalize and lacks definitional clarity (Paterson, 2019). It is fair to suggest that when urgent, tactical proficiency trumps the softer and kinder aspects of military professionalism. It follows that military assistance missions can carry multiple foreign policy ambitions of their sponsors whether general or specific. SFAs were used during the Cold War with American and Soviet use of military assistance in the Third World to build up allies, or proxies to further or deny expansion of the communist revolution. After post-Cold War idealism of the peace dividend era proved short lived, SFAs became prominently used after 9/11 to stabilize fragile states. The objectives of SFAs are nakedly strategic – that host-nation forces be trained to be sufficient “to do the bulk of front-line fighting” (Knowles & Matissek, p.10) and become “more lethal” (Knowles & Matissek, p.12). SFAs can provide capable forces, meaning more lethal, useful for stabilizing, controlling territory or defending territory. This can benefit a recipient state, but also the sponsor. For the US, the strategic benefit is to “reduce the need for US troops by improving an ally’s ability to do this themselves” (Biddle, Macdonald & Baker, 2018, pp. 91-92). The need for more capable allies is useful for US strategy of ‘offshore balancing’ which desires to have allies take more responsibility for regional security and reduce US military presence (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016).

The outsourcing of SFA security tasks reduces the cost of ‘boots on the ground’ for the United States and Western allies in multiple forms. This economic logic is seen in a Principal-Agent understanding of SFA (Biddle, 2017; Biddle, MacDonald & Baker, 2018). Cost-savings are considerable when substituting a mass mobilization for a modest ‘teaching’ force (Biddle, MacDonald & Baker, 2018). SFAs also represent a transfer of martial risk to side-step the negative political/social costs of the sponsor’s domestic casualties. However, there are risks, most significantly the agentic ability of the recipient country to act in opposition or shirk the principal’s desires. In some cases, the agent’s strategic interest of strengthening the principal to deflect external threat may threaten an agent’s domestic interests or power base. In other words, “the kind of powerful, politically independent, technically proficient, noncorrupt military the US seeks is often seen by the partner state as a far greater threat to their self-interest than foreign invasion or terrorist infiltration” (Biddle, MacDonald & Baker 2018, p. 100). Therefore, strategic interests between domestic and international actors during military assistance are important to recognize and optimally align.

SFAs can be formal or informal and function through “a diffusion of norms, values and supposed best practices” (Knowles & Matisek, 2019, p. 13). SFAs therefore carry forward the cultural baselines of the teaching actors who teach what they know – the teaching soldier can likely only replicate what is known from their respective military culture. Troops who deliver SFA carry forth their national biases, including the fundamental elements of external legitimacy. It is important to note that SFA sponsoring militaries themselves need to be recognized as a ‘paradigm

armies' (Sanders, 2008). This means possession of sufficient combat skill to be desired credible models to emulate by the agent's political leadership (Biddle, MacDonald & Baker, 2018).

A main SFA drawback is that the desire for tactical proficiency ends up strengthening coercive elements of the state or unsavory actors who do not respect human rights (Knowles & Matissek, 2019, Brzoska, 2006). Military training, especially at advanced levels, may give recipients skills to enact coups or destabilize democratic process as exemplified by the recent case in Mali (Gramer & Hadavas, 2020, August 21). The training of security elites can lead to 'combative contradictions' whereby autocratic interlocutors – for example, military officers can be used in coups or to subvert democracy (Abrahamsen, 2019). These concerns appear in the critical literature on SSR regarding the dangers of strengthening the coercive capacity of security actors in failed, failing or fragile states (Autesserre 2012; Sedra 2017; Abrahamsen, 2019). The risk of war crimes and other unprofessional behaviour of the SFA recipient can damage relationships with the host society, evident in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations which saw the decisive terrain as the moral allegiance of the community (Smith, 2008). Other risks of SFA include the partiality of partnership in situations where there is domestic infighting or when the state lacks the institutional capacity to effectively adjudicate between political factions. An SFA will inevitably partner with a chosen political group and train members of the host security forces who carry factionalized loyalty (Mukhopadhyay, 2009; Knowles & Matissek, 2019; Matissek & Reno, 2019). Thus, SFAs are critiqued as unable to solve "problems that are inherently political" (Knowles & Matissek, 2019, p.12). Additionally, there is a risk that today's ally may become a more lethal future

enemy for the provider of SFA. The example of US policy in Iraq to de-Bathify the Iraqi army and work predominantly through Shia personnel, illustrate these points.

SFAs also risk creating ‘islands of excellence’ of small groups of elite military units which become highly proficient, but which are limited and not indicative of widespread force improvement (Knowles & Matissek, 2019). This was evident in Iraq, when elite units became over-used and quickly worn out (Biddle, Macdonald, & Baker, 2018; El-Ghobashy, 2017, July 21). In this regard, success of SFA is possible such as in highly motivate top tier units, but remains isolated, rarely able to effect change to military organizations systemically.

Despite risks, SFAs have been used by great powers for strategic benefit or managing complex security problems in a low-cost and politically convenient manner. In Ukraine, a range of challenges in the military required improvement but the situation was not a post-conflict situation. Rather the situation was urgent, and the Ukrainian military began reforming under duress and needing to defend the state on hundreds of kilometers of the Donbas front. Immediately, Western advisors began sharing expertise and training the Ukrainian military, not simply in improvement of its civil-military relations, but also its combat capability.

Internal Legitimacy

Military professionalism is linked to *internal legitimacy*, which describes how supportive, or oppositional a society is toward its military. Clausewitz’ trinity concept understood the state, society and the military to be interrelated (Clausewitz & Heuser, 2008). This is important because while it is easy to view militaries as separated entities during peace time, war is never bounded and inevitably involves societies, directly and indirectly. Concordance theory therefore rightly

begins with a baseline understanding that militaries are grounded within their broader societies. The military profession is therefore regulated through ongoing negotiation between the military, political elites and society (Schiff, 2009).

The level of a society's support for the military can also wane at different times and a military's influence can change in "relative power, prestige and resources" according to need (Siebold, 2001, p.152). The need for a military is most notable in times of war. Huntington (1957) describes how the American military's growth during World War II made it a powerful state and societal actor. At the government level, huge war-time budgets and the quantity of military personnel on issues of defence policy and strategy gave it influence. At the societal level, widespread experience in the military provided social connection and shared understanding for veterans after the war.

Societal support for the military can also wane following the rise and fall of dominant ideologies in society. A recurrent theme for Huntington is the ideological gulf between a conservative military culture and a recurrent liberal ideology in American society that has caused episodic tensions (Huntington, 1957). Society can influence what concordance theory calls 'military style' – "external manifestations and inner mental constructions associated with the military: what it looks like, what ethos drives it, and what people think about it." (Schiff, 2009, p.47). Militarism is the degree to which the military is present in society (Mabee & Vucetic, 2018). Mann (1987) defines militarism as "a set of attitudes and social practices which regards war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable social activity" (p.35). This frame enables us to

see how the potential external threat facing a state can affect the progression of militarism. In the case of the post-Cold War United States, where theoretically the military threat of the Soviet Union had been nullified, Bacevich (2006) notes a continued expansion of the American military and war-preparation as normalized.

Military reform and society's militarism needs to be understood as situated – meaning grounded uniquely in a particular time and place. As stated by Abrahamsen (2019), variations of militarism derive from “historically formed social relations between soldiers and civilians, militaries and states” (p.545). This approach helps understand how the relationship between a state military and its society co-evolve. In modernization theories, the military was often seen as an agent through which state development could occur (Mullins, 1987). This interaction is seen in Tilly's (1985) ‘state making through war’ model, which describes an evolutionary relationship between society and the military in Western European states. In this relationship state formation arose from war-making, extraction and protection, that served mutual benefit between the state and society. However, Tilly recognizes that states arising through war was a European path and may not apply to “states that have come into being recently through decolonization or through reallocations of territory by dominant states have acquired their military organization from outside, without the same internal forging of mutual constraints between rulers and ruled” (Tilly, 1985, p.186).

My understanding of internal legitimacy builds on the ideas of militarism as a dynamic process developing over time. The type of civil control mechanism can be a determinant of how

integrated the military is within a society. Another factor is the military's visibility in society, affected by factors, such as the size of the military, its geographic footprint and the security environment. The military can easily be forgotten by society should the military be stationed in remote areas, or when long periods of peace endure (Janowitz, 1960).

All members of professional militaries were unequivocally apriori civilian members, thus, militaries are formed from the 'raw materials' of society (Siebold, 2001). It is important that the military be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the society, so that society will supply the needed human resources. How civilians come to find themselves in the military can come from voluntary or coercive mechanisms of participation. This can particularly be true should there be perceptions of unfairness in how recruits are chosen.

Huntington's model of professionalism contrasts citizen-soldiering where soldiers retain a primary civilian identity which is returned to after an acute period of need. A professional military generally relies exclusively on, or places emphasis on volunteerism and in the second half of the twentieth century Western countries have generally adopted volunteer models of recruitment.²⁰ Moskos' occupational model identifies how wages become an incentive for citizens to join the military when wages are higher than expected socio-economic class expectations of the poor. In the United States, after the switch to an all-volunteer force African-Americans entered the military

²⁰ The United States for example moved to an all-volunteer force in 1973, Moskos, 2001).

at a higher rate and became overrepresented in the US military at enlisted levels, particularly the combat arms (Janowitz & Moskos, 1974). The occupational model leads to questions of legitimacy of who dies for the state.

In contrast to voluntary recruitment of professional militaries, the universal conscription model has a much greater connection to society as military service becomes a near-universal rite of passage. This can engender an egalitarian experience in the citizenry, but it can also provoke negative feelings. The form of recruitment – conscription or voluntary service can be operant in democracies or authoritarian regimes and the method of recruitment can be coercive or not (Schiff, 2009, p. 46). Concordance theory implies that a societal consensus is needed on how the military recruits; the consensus meaning that the state's form of recruitment is just and accepted by the society. However, citizens in authoritarian regimes are much more vulnerable to abuses of the state during recruitment, especially in times of acute need which can engender negative feelings toward the state (Schiff, 2009).

The relationship between society and the state can be informed by direct experience with the military when the civilian is conscripted or voluntarily joins the military. Experiential opinions can transmit into society beyond the individual and publicize how a recruited civilian is treated by the political and military leadership while in military service. This aspect is comprised of whether citizens feel valued and adequately compensated for putting their lives on the line. Relatedly, are aspects of welfare in the state's treatment of its military personnel, including provision of human rights during recruitment (OSCE, 1994, art.27) and during service (OSCE, 1994, art.28, 30).

Internal legitimacy is therefore related to the military's conduct, carrying internal and external ramifications. A military's conduct in war, and its level of respecting laws of armed conflict (LOAC) during the conduct of war (OSCE, 1994, art.29,30,31), is widely seen as a reflection of the level of a military's professionalization (Paterson, 2019).²¹ Internally, a military's behaviour toward its own citizens is visible to co-citizens, for example in roles of domestic policing. Unprofessional conduct in the form of extra-judicial killing or inappropriate use of force is termed *unprofessionalism* (Musa & Heinecken, 2022). Heavy-handed approaches, or illegal conduct can jeopardize societal trust for the political authority that SSR process attempt to strengthen. In post-conflict settings, legitimacy can be seen in a desire to hold former combatants accountable for war crimes, key for meeting the society's need for justice and to ensure that citizens find new security forces legitimate (Brzoska, 2006).

The literature on Security Sector Reform (SSR), as expression of externally inspired military reform, provides some key points in relation to the Ukrainian case. The first observation is that SSR processes have not had much real-world success (Bzroska, 2006; Jackson, 2018; Sedra, 2017). Some argue that the main problem has been an inability to establish deep local connections

²¹ As an example, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine permits the international community authority to override state sovereignty in situations of grave abuse of citizens, a situation that could involve civilian or military leadership. Within this category is the ability for the military and state to hold its members accountable through appropriate disciplinary mechanisms.

to the societies where they were enacted (Chandler, 2015; Donais, 2018; Jackson, 2018). As a result, SSR policies at least rhetorically began to prioritize the importance of the local in its second generation (Chandler, 2015). Yet problems have remained (Brzoska, 2006; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). The literature provides another important finding relevant for the Ukrainian case, which is that context matters. Locations where reforms have been implemented are deeply challenged by a lack of cohesion, weak civil societies, and identity conflict (Brzoska, 2006; Busterud, 2015).

Critical for SSR is an examination of pre-existing societal arrangements. A focus on the local brought in the consideration of elites (Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). Elites had been long viewed as important for SSR success to avoid their resistance as potential spoilers (Brzoska, 2006; Robinson, 2019). However, action through elites as necessary actors for SSR success run the risk of generating resistance when their interests are threatened (Jackson, 2018, p.5). In addition, chosen elites can be questioned as to how fully they represent broader society (Jackson, 2018, p.4; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). Busterud (2015) demonstrates how pro-Western elite sponsorship for Montenegro to join NATO trumped popular Montenegrin sentiment. This was ultimately problematic in that the pro-Western government was defeated in 2020 (Stradner & Jovanović, 2020, September 17). Deep pre-existing internal divisions along ideological lines, risk that SSR, or broader reform process may be quickly undone as political winds oscillate.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored fundamental literature about military professionalism and discussed three distinct but interrelated conceptions within it – external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy.

I define external legitimacy as a relationship between the national military and the international community, where positive assessments of military professionalism can provide the state external legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. Importantly, there is leeway in how the external community interprets the state's external legitimacy, a site of possible political manipulation.

External legitimacy carries two meanings. The first is an idealistic democratic conception which discerns adherence to democratic norms of civil military relations. This conception is founded on Western norms of civil military relations and is foundational to the normative underpinnings of Security Sector Reform (SSR) activities. The democratic aspect considers that since World War II, civilian control of the military has become a requirement for democratic recognition. Perceptions of the civil-military relationship being properly aligned can provide the state access to politico-economic forums reserved for democracies. Conditionalities of membership to the European Union (EU) and Membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), serve as prime examples (Duman & Tsarouhas, 2006). If the civil-military relationship is deemed misaligned, the state can receive rebuke or face material consequence.

The second meaning is that democratic norms have been overridden in the interests of security, from the Cold War to the post-9/11 era. A stability conception of external legitimacy is

based on a state's assessment competence. Specifically, a state's ability to exercise effective command and control over the military and maintain stability over territory, which carries strategic value to external states. This conception is visible both as a critique of second generation SSR policies made by critical literature and in Strategic Studies literature on Security Force Assistance (SFA) where it is a naked desired outcome to strengthen. Thus, a military's capability lends the state reputational benefit of being useful to the security interests of large powers, or simply not to appear as a liability, useful given the international community's desire to avoid conflict spillover and broader politico-economic disruption. These two forms of external legitimacy fundamentally involve military professionalism. With the importance of external legitimacy grounded in multiple literatures, Chapter 5 will revisit them when discussing Ukraine from 2014-2022.

For combat capability, the assessment of combat effectiveness of a military force requires consideration of multiple variables. Material factors such as the sophistication and quantity of weapons systems, supplies and logistical capabilities are centrally important. However, except in a military dictatorship, the military does not have full control over material aspects of combat capability, being beholden to constraints of the political level. At a surface level a baseline factor is the quantity of extant military personnel, recruiting base and speed of force generation to replace casualties (Brower, 2004). There are also questions of type and quality of military personnel

which involves military professionalism.²² However, within its sphere of influence, the military can influence human factors that contribute to combat capability. Factors include: the efficiency and quality of leadership in the Chain of Command and guiding ethos and culture of the military (it's morale, motivation, fighting spirit) and levels of education, training and skill. These factors can permit or constrain the range of options available for Force Employment (FE), for example, the range of tactics, weaponry, and mission-sets available to commanders as options. These aspects, however, are not easily quantified. Aforementioned aspects of combat capability will be assessed in Chapter 6 which examines Ukrainian improvements to combat capability between 2014-2022. The analysis focuses on areas that the autonomous professional military has some degree of control over within Force Generation (FG), such as training, education, culture, and Force Employment (FE), such as the quality of doctrine, strategies, and tactics that govern military force.

For SSR, processes reorienting the state-society relationship, the literature came to understand the importance of local legitimacy. In this way, locals were seen as important to SSR policies but the challenge remains very difficult to operationalize. From these starting points,

²² These aspects relate to the quality of the Profession of Arms, both for the Force Generation (FG) of personnel, including, motivation, fighting spirit and Force Employment (FE), in the quality of doctrine, strategies, and tactics that govern military force. Unlike material factors, the aforementioned factors are not easily quantified and of what kind, including factors, such as the disposition of combat versus supporting trades, numbers of personnel in reserve or regular force functions, levels of training and readiness to deploy.

chapter 7 will analyze the relationship between the Ukrainian Armed Forces and wider Ukrainian society. It will ask, did reforms focused on improving the material welfare of military members affect this relationship and did this affect battlefield success post-2022??

Chapter 3: Military Reform and Path Dependence period

Chapter 2 highlighted the importance of the military as a central actor within, and potentially outside of politics and identified three distinct aspects of military professionalism that capture internal and external elements of military reform – external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy. These elements are used to underpin the analysis of the Ukrainian military improvement in 2014-2022. However, to understand how the Ukrainian Army reformed in 2014-2022, it is important take stock of its historical trajectory, considering the military's evolution from the Soviet and Independence periods. This chapter introduces the concept of path dependence, which provides the analytical framework of the thesis and helps explain the mechanism of how change (and stasis) occurred.

The first section of the chapter introduces path-dependence, its general and more specific meanings as well as sub-concepts that provide mechanisms to understand the empirical realities of what happened in the reform period. This includes the key concept of 'lock-in'. In a second section, the chapter outlines reviews literature about the Soviet military and how military professionalism existed in the Soviet era. The Soviet military legacy is explored using the three elements of military professionalism: external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy, permitting a historically informed understanding of the reform efforts between 2014-2022.

A third section demonstrates how these Soviet legacies were locked-in and did not simply disappear in Ukraine's Independence era (1991-2014). Rather, the entrenched nature of Soviet

orientations and organizing logics continued to permeate Ukrainian society, including the defence sector and military.

Path Dependence Theory

The conceptual usage of path dependence is found in sociology, history, political science and economics and related sub-fields. At a general level, path dependence represents an understanding that history matters. Multidisciplinary literature widely credits the works of Paul David (1985) and Brian Arthur (1989; 1994) in economics as pioneering the awareness and application of path-dependence (Sorensen, 2015; Dobusch & Kapeller, 2013; Pierson, 2004). David and Arthur's work explained how some technologies, or products gained prominence above competitors, even when alternative technologies may have ultimately been superior. David (1985) explains how the QWERTY typewriter keyboard came to be universal and Arthur (1994) the VHS technology. Arthur (1989; 1994) demonstrates the effects of how 'increasing returns' disrupted expectations of predictability that standard economic models of market activity were built on. Arthur's ideas about path-dependence drew from the science of complex systems and their behavior, whereby, path-dependence is recognized as a feature of complex systems. Arthur, who spent time at the Santa Fe Institute, one of the pioneering schools studying complex systems, developed the field of 'complexity economics' in the 1990s, using complexity science to understand markets as a dynamic process, rather than an objective rational Newtonian state. In the words of Arthur (2021): "the economy becomes something not given and existing but constantly forming from a developing set of actions, strategies and beliefs – something not mechanistic, static,

timeless and perfect but organic, always creating itself, alive and full of messy vitality” (p.136).

The connection between complexity science is that complex systems have history and manifest path-dependent evolution. Further, complex systems resist simple causality (Jervis, 1997).

In political science path-dependence has been influential in the study of institutions in historical institutionalism and in Comparative Politics (Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2004). In historical institutionalism which broadly asks questions about change in political order over time (March & Olsen, 1998), path dependence is described as an attention to “temporal phenomena” (Fioretos, Falleti, & Sheingate 2016, p. 5). Therefore, path-dependence recognizes that historical factors have influenced future outcomes of respective subjects of analysis: global order, political regimes, nation-states, and institutions in political science; technology and firms in economics and management. With a wide variety of units of analysis, authors have emphasized different aspects of path-dependence – its implications, operant causal mechanisms and temporal sequencing.

While causal mechanisms are based in mathematics (Arthur, 1994; Page, 2006), path dependence is readily explained in a lay capacity focusing on implications. Implications of path dependence provide concreteness, useful for policy-oriented fields to bring specificity beyond simply recognizing the importance of historical factors. However, there are many implications and singular aspects are often taken to represent the totality of the concepts which may gloss over a fuller understanding of the concept. Criticisms highlight that many invocations of path-dependence have simply stated that ‘history matters’. However, for Sydow, Schreyögg and Koch

(2020) the recognition that history matters is insufficient and is “not a theoretical explanation” (p.718). Other criticisms note that invocations of path-dependence lack theoretical rigour (Bennett & Elman, 2006) or lack precise analytical meanings (Pierson, 2000). Using path-dependence is to identify and explain why certain events became causal to path dependence, versus “any causal story” (Bennett & Elman, 2006, p. 258). However, Sorensen (2015) argues a theoretical usage of path-dependence “must include an explicit specification of the particular positive feedback effects involved” (p.24). Within different disciplines using Path-Dependence, Dobusch and Kapeller (2013) note divergent methodological approaches impacting questions of causality and testability.

I proceed to use path-dependence to understand the Ukrainian reforms between 2014-2022, as the Soviet historical legacy is a factor which cannot be ignored in my analysis. Without the historical awareness path-dependence provides, my analysis of 2014-2022 would be rightly criticized as a “snapshot” in time (Pierson, 2004, p.2). This snapshot would be unmoored from the Soviet legacy, and less useful to broader understandings of how militaries reform over time and how the period is connected to broader nation, or state-building processes in Ukraine. In the upcoming section, my analysis identifies specific factors and points of their interaction to substantiate how path-dependence was manifest. This specific identification would seem to satisfy Sorensen’s call to explicitly identify specific mechanisms.

What causes path-dependence?

It is widely accepted that path dependence can arise from structural conditions of a situation, or agentic actions. Causal factors can originate from ‘chance’ or ‘random’ events due to the non-linear dynamics of complex systems and their propensity to be ‘sensitive to initial

conditions' (David 1995; Arthur 1994). Causes of path-dependent processes can arise from the micro level and be small in constitution (David, 1985; Arthur, 1994). It is also widely accepted that early events matter more, as these can be locked-in and become entrenched (Arthur, 1994, Pierson, 2000, p.253; Sorensen, 2015). However, Page (2006) demonstrates path dependence does not depend uniquely on order. For example, *phat* dependent processes can also occur. Page deliberately mixes the order of the letters from 'path to phat' to demonstrate the presence of another form of historically determined outcome but which does not require a particular order of events. Thus, it is important to recognize that path-dependence can also occur from more recent events. Whether arising by structural/agentive, small, early or more recent events, causal factors of path-dependence can often be overlooked or deemed un-important in the present.

Regardless, particular mechanisms can influence the probability that one alternative gets favored and begins to occur more frequently. Once an outcome becomes encouraged or incentivized to be more frequent, or repeated, or accepted, a 'path' can form. The most frequently invoked mechanism has been that of the 'increasing returns' from economics literature. An increasing return can come from learning that occurs through familiarity, such as a consumer base learning a particular skill or adopting specific behaviour, leading to a product becoming an industry standard (David, 1985). Or, the uptake of a technology as an industry standard can lead to widespread adoption even by competitors (David, 1985; Arthur 1994). Or, adoption provides coincidental side-benefits, such as access to a broader or deeper network, thus increasing the likelihood of this choice being taken (David, 1985). Overall, mechanisms that reinforce one

historical trajectory gain strength as other potential paths become less probabilistic to occur as time passes and eventually other paths become impossible to develop (David, 1995; Sorensen 2015, Pierson, 2000). Page (2006) critiques the broader path dependence literature as having conflated the entire concept of path dependence to the singular mechanism of “increasing returns”. Page (2006) demonstrates mathematically that increasing returns are not required for a process to be path dependent and identifies other mechanisms “self-reinforcement, positive feedback and lock-in” (p.88).²³ Thus, it is important to conceive of a multiplicity of possible mechanisms through which path-dependence can manifest.

At a general level, path-dependence contains a built-in relationship with temporality as it provides a dichotomy of past and present. Specificity exists in several models which name different temporal periods of path dependent phenomena. Bennett and Elman (2006) note how path dependence progresses through four temporal periods: causal possibility, contingency, closure, constraint. In the phase of ‘causal possibility’ the unfolding situation is open, such that distinct causal outcomes to a situation are theoretically possible. In the second phase (contingency), specific factors ranging from external factors (being exogenous to the situation), or internal (endogenous to the unit) come to be impactful above others. The impacts cause a

²³ Self-reinforcement is the case that a decision will bring effects which reinforce that decision, allowing it to become more easily maintained going forward. Positive feedbacks are similar to increasing returns but operate differently mathematically. Increasing returns are that the more a choice is made, the more likely there are benefits which will accrue (Page, 2006, p.88).

narrowing of options in the closure period, leading to a constraint period, where other options are not possible. The Constraint period implies a lack of options to enact change, carrying similarities to the period of lock-in. Similarly, Sydow, Schreyögg, and Koch (2020) organize the periodization of path-dependence in three categories: pre-formation, where a path dependent process has not yet developed and the situation is open to possibility; formation, where the path is forming and taking strength; and then lock-in, where change is highly restricted, or not-possible. Sydow, Schreyögg, and Koch (2020) and Bennett and Elman's (2006) model are useful to understand how path dependence unfolds. The linearity of Bennett and Elman's (2006) model is likely a strong model but an understanding of path dependence deriving from complex systems recalls that situational dynamics are always open to evolution.²⁴ Sydow, Schreyögg, Koch (2020) argue that multiple paths can be operating at the same time.

As noted by Bennett and Elman (2006), when using path-dependence concepts, there are advantages and disadvantages for qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches, arguing that that case studies and process tracing for complex social problems (p.259). They argue that:

Case studies can also be valuable in providing clearer understanding of the causal mechanisms that lie behind the creation and reproduction of institutions and of the

²⁴ My use of path-dependence seeks to avoid reductionist fallacies that systems-oriented theories intended to originally correct. Thus, it considers the path-dependence and not always deterministic given the interplay of other attributes of complex systems.

interactions among those mechanisms that lead to either the lock-in or breakdown of these institutions (p. 264).

Most methods enacting path dependence employ it historically, using case studies and process tracing. These methods have immense value in identifying periodizations and causal mechanisms at play. Historical perspectives have the benefit of temporal distance and potentially greater source access or awareness of a situation. Factors causing path-dependence are hard to pin-point in the present but are often revealed with historical perspective. Yet, awareness of path-dependence being operant in the past causes a reflection about the present. As described by Thietart “present strategic activity is induced by its past” (Thietart, 2016, p. 779). My analysis of the Ukrainian military system in this thesis began in 2021, prior to the February 2022 invasion, and I considered my analysis to be in a present situation. I observed that reform actors were aware of the opportunity they possessed, but reform efforts were ongoing. Results were mixed in assessment, and it was not clear what their eventual impact would be. However, the invasion of 2022 offered a way to close the period of analysis and engage in a historical use of path-dependence, one albeit that was very recent and fresh. Thus, this temporal event is chosen for its significance, rather being an arbitrary date. This temporal approach is consistent with Former Spanish Minister of Defence Narcís Serra’s observation that military reform is a process requiring the identification of “crucial events in order to define periods” (Serra, 2010, p.35).

Further, while path dependent analysis foregrounds an awareness that actions in the present *may* have extremely influential consequences, a broader understanding of complex

systems recalls that global security issues, such as military reform, involve multiple systems and create conditions that are ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The result is that any remedial action taken is prone to creating unintended consequences and disproportionate effects. In consequence, a linear understanding of path-dependence was avoided.

For institutions, arguments over what factors are important have been seen in “functionalist” as well as “rational choice” explanations (Pierson, 2004). Functionalists argue that uses of path dependence in political science in relation to institutional development identify different locations for viewing what has changed and deemed to be important – leading to differences of levels of analysis and units of analysis. Institutions can be viewed at the agent/individual level, or the aggregate level, thus, requiring a multi-level analysis. Study of institutions can examine formal rules, norms and culture, or material factors such as distribution of resources or actors preferences and political competition (Fioretos, Falletti, & Sheingate, 2016).

There could also be an interplay between the temporal period and the actor involved. For example, in a period of “lock-in”, there could be consideration of who the beneficiaries of the lock-in and desire it to continue. What practices, systems and activities do these actors enact to permit the exercise of the path’s stability? In contrast, what contextual and structural factors (legislation, engrained culture, cognitive thinking patterns, dispute resolution mechanisms), restrain reformist efforts? Specific factors will come to be important depending on the unit of analysis. Factors noted by Mahoney (2001) include: demographics, types of leaders (elites or populist) and the presence of

oligarchic blocs or democratic movements and their interplay of action/reaction. Sorenson (2015) analyses power-dynamics and institutional compromises.

It follows that specific factors are important for an analysis of path dependence in militaries. Temporally, all factors can be examined from a baseline. Then, the results of military reform processes can be examined to uncover if baseline factors have changed.

For external legitimacy, what are the pre-existing norms of civil military relations that govern relationship between the military and the state, political authority and society? For example, what is the status of legislation to define authorities and responsibilities within the civil-military relations construct. Further, level of influence does the military have in policy making and what level of agreement exists between the military and the political authority on when to use the military. Further, what is the extent of formality/informality and efficiency/inefficiency in practice?

For combat capability, how much control does the military have over the functional imperative? What is the level of funding to the military and defence sector by the political level and subsequent force size, equipment and capability. What are the dominant ideas about strategy and war fighting in the Officer corps and how do thinking patterns between generations differ. What is the level of readiness, morale, training and skill of the military and efficiency of process – level of coordination within the military system (command and control, logistics, education, transportation, combat arms) and efficiency of coordination with other security partners of the state.

For internal legitimacy, what is the relationship between the society and the military? How much does the population trust the military? What is related to the military's treatment of the population during interactions, and the treatment of its sons and daughters in the course of service.

As the Ukrainian military came from a Soviet heritage, the next section turns to a more specific discussion of the Soviet era and how the three elements of military professionalism existed within it. This discussion provides necessary historical knowledge but more importantly grounds the argument of how my thesis uses path-dependence. The argument is that inherited Soviet legacies remained locked-in within Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian military, preventing reform and ultimately leading to battlefield failure in 2014-2015.

Military Professionalism in the Soviet Period

There is a vast literature on societal transitions from Soviet rule and challenges of overcoming legacy orientations and invocations of path-dependency explaining why legacies were so hard to reform (Švec, 2004; Grant & Milenski, 2018). The following section examines literature about the cultural and organizational referents that housed the Soviet military, to understand the starting point from where the Ukrainian military developed from.

Studying Soviet civil military relations during the Cold War was challenging.²⁵ Access to information was difficult due to the authoritarian nature of the Soviet state and presence of mass surveillance and repression contrasting civil military relations in Huntington's American context, or broader democratic West. Much of the Soviet civil-military relations literature therefore acknowledged Schiff's (2009) concern that civil military relations were different from Western conceptions. Huntington (1957) had mentioned the Marxist archetype of civil military relations acknowledging the difference (pp 92-93), but Huntington's control mechanisms were imported (Leppingwell, 1992, p.541). Consensus in the field is that the Soviet military was professional (Kolkowicz, 1967; Sherr, 2002). The Soviet military contained: "(a) high professionalization and demands for professional autonomy; (b) a professional ethos, including strict codes of honor and discipline; and (c) an organizational structure whose levels of authority are easily discernible and stable" (Kolkowicz, 1967, p.21).

External Legitimacy

²⁵ There was a lack of data about the Soviet regime (Kolkowicz, 1970), the nature of secrecy in the Soviet Party and Military, and lack of open societal debate and corresponding documentation to analyze (Monks, 1984; Colton, 1990) and distinguishing party propaganda from real occurrences (Colton, 1990). The field's methodology, labelled, "Kremlinology" was limited to "shades of wording from leader's speeches and bylined statements, and its broad inferences about political views and lineups from data about careers, ranks and personnel movements" (Gustafson, 1990, p.335). Other challenges included the nature of the regime, including a lack of rules for political transition (Kolkowicz, 1982).

Civilian control over the Soviet military existed through the Communist Party's civilian leadership; a feature common across the Soviet communist systems (Cottey, Edmunds & Forster, 2002; Robinson, 2019). This control remained intact from the Soviet Union's inception until the failed coup in August of 1991. Control was maintained via a "dual loyalty", to the military chain of command and the Soviet Party. Importantly, loyalty was toward the communist party and not the state itself (Robinson, 2019). Soviet civil-military relations focused on the relationship between the military and Party identifying three main perspectives (Colton, 1992). A conflictual model understood the Party-military relationship as antagonistic and competitive as the military rivalled the party for control of the state and subjective control was dominant (Colton, 1990). Colton (1990) argues that this conflictual perspective is most represented by the early writings of Roman Kolkowicz (1967), who paints the Soviet military as a competent and powerful actor in Soviet politics. Emphasis was placed on the military's growth in World War II, geographic reach as a national institution, capable personnel originating from an autonomous intelligentsia with independent education system and habitual attempts to become self-assertive. In consequence, the conflictual model stresses the Party's civilian control and surveillance, where the military was subjugated by "a horse collar of ideological and political controls" (Kolkowicz, 1967, p.13).

Kolkowicz (1967) stresses the party's "intolerance of any form of expressed opposition and its constant fear of military insubordination and the military's intrusion into Party politics" (p.14). This description fits with Huntington's description of totalitarian societies with a tendency to possess powerful military forces, but who are deliberately organized into competing component

parts (Huntington, 1957, p.82). The USSR's military leadership was surveilled by non-military, but armed security forces – the NKVD - later KGB who safeguarded the Party from military insubordination (Knight, 1990). This organizational configuration is an important particularity, as Western states generally do not have such domestic surveillance organizations (Kuzio, 1995). The Party's surveillance was a constant feature of the Soviet period, but was most overt and coercive during the Stalinist period (Colton, 1990; Kolkowicz, 1967; Knight, 1990). Surveillance, and coercion, generated great institutional rivalry between the armed forces and the NKVD, later KGB, particularly due to the massive purges of the Officer corps 1937-1941 (Knight, 1990; Adelman, 1982b). The Party maintained control via political indoctrination of the military carried out by the Main Political Administration (MPAs) (Leppingwell, 1992). The Party also positioned party loyalists within the military. However, this posed a problem as political loyalty did not always equate to actual military expertise.

The second lens Colton (1990) identifies is a cooperative form of relationship that emphasizes partnership, mutual need, and co-dependence. Kolkowicz's later work (1982) evolved to support this cooperative view, noting that the Party-military relationship is “not of the zero-sum game, pure conflict variety” (p.129). Mutual dependence meant the military could lend or deny support to party leaders, serving as “arbiter and adjudicator of the leadership competition” (Kolkowicz, 1982, p.122). Conversely, the military needed the party for “technology, weaponry, manpower, ideological rationale and legitimacy of its external and internal missions” (Kolkowicz, 1982, p.129). In turn, the military would be rewarded with pro-military budgets, foreign policy

influence or positions in Party leadership structures (Kolkowicz, 1982). Thus, the military had “much at stake in the perpetuation of the Communist Party’s authority within the state, since under the conditions of progressive independence and interpenetration of the two institutions, the military finds most, or all, of its interests satisfied” (Kolkowicz, 1982, p.129).

Colton’s third lens (model 3) is a hybrid of the conflictual and cooperative of different forms and resists creating a timeless archetype of the civil-military relationship. This model appreciates evolution from one era to the next and differences between political administrations (Gustafson, 1990). Also, there is a wider appreciation of actors, including not only the surveillance agencies NKVD/KGB (Gustafson, 1990), but also individuals. The individual level of the hybrid approach helps overcome how much of the literature treats the Soviet military as a homogenous bloc where individuals are mentioned sparsely, limited to a few rare military leaders interacting at the highest levels of the political-strategic interface. Notable individuals are World War II hero Gregory Zhukov, whose post-war career oscillated between sanction under Stalin, to becoming Minister of National Defence and exiled under Krushchev (Adelman, 1982b; Biographics, 2019 August 13th).

Another important figure was Andrei Grechko, who was a rare military officer promoted to civilian offices in the Soviet organization and serving as Defence Minister from 1967-1976. The hybrid perspective highlights generational differences between within the military. Similar to Huntington’s description of the American World War II experience, the World War II generation formed a bloc and manifested partnership across the civil-military divide. For example, Brezhnev

as a former military officer, ostensibly produced policy favorable to the military's interests (Colton, 1990). The identification of generations provides insight into how reform can occur. In the 1980s a new generation of Soviet military leaders, less connected to the World War II generation, exhibited a degree of openness to change (Parrott, 1990).

Another focus in the Soviet literature is based on events, including, the impact of the war in Afghanistan (Colton, 1990), and the Chernobyl disaster which impacted the military as well as Soviet society writ large (Smith, 1990). Political transitions were also important moments for change as the lack of established rules for political power transition meant unpredictable results (Kolkowicz, 1967, 1982). For example, the ageing health of Brezhnev signaled an impending political transition and the military pressed for greater influence due to division within the Politburo - "the division of opinion invited military intrusion into the party's policy decisions and possibly even its choice of future leadership" (Parrott, 1990, p. 63). In this view, the military as a corporate entity became more active when situationally possible.

However, the most important for this review is the failed August 1991 coup upsetting the longstanding tradition of the military's non-interference. It confirmed a question that had previously consumed the field, that pondered if, and how, the military would interfere in Soviet politics. The coup proved a complicated case as elements of the military did not seek power to govern directly but supported a political coup to preserve the old system under threat from Gorbachev's reforms. However, it is not clear whether the military was truly without a corporate interest. The cooperative lens could be seen in the shared objectives of officers conducting the

coup and the Soviet Party (Leppingwell, 1990). What complicates the case further is that military support for the coup was not cohesive within the military with ideological differences between sub-groups of conscripts and senior officers (Leppingwell, 1990). The coup also brought attention to how sub-group nationalities, which had been downplayed by the party contributed to the USSR's dissolution (Lehrke, 2013). Lehrke (2013) analyzes the Soviet military from a bottom-up approach recognizing the heterogeneity of military sub-systems, rightly understanding militaries not as statically defined entities but as evolving. The August 1991 coup also serves as a dramatic bookend to the Soviet era, as the coup was a defining moment in the dissolution process of the USSR (Pyskir, 1993; Leppingwell, 1992). It also gave Ukrainian nationalists room to maneuver.

Combat Capability

The issue of combat capability is central to Cold War strategic studies and Soviet civil military relations literature who run a blurred line between a purely academic production of knowledge and the strategic value of knowing thy enemy. Roman Kolkowicz, a Polish American sociologist, published several important works for RAND. This literature spans the USSR's lifespan and again shows temporal snapshots at various points. Other Cold War literature of the Soviet case focuses on substantive or technical analyses of equipment, doctrine, strategy, fighting style, or structure (Leites, 1981; Monks 1984). However, it also provides insight into Soviet military's role in the process of doctrine and strategy creation. Under Marxist-Leninist ideology military doctrine was composed of a political and military technical component, and its creation involved political and military leaders. This imposed a typology of types of wars the USSR would encounter, most important being the defence of the homeland and later (in the 1960s), defence of socialist

revolution globally (Monks, 1984). The political aspect defined war as originating from imperial/capitalist/bourgeois aggression and much of Soviet military thinking responded to rivalry with the United States which caused periodic assessments of combat capability (Gustafson, 1990; Monks, 1984).

As the Soviet Union was a military superpower, although not an economic nor political one, the Party was aware of the need for military strength to defend from capitalist or bourgeois aggression and provide the USSR legitimacy in foreign policy (Kolkowicz, 1982). As described by Kolkowicz (1982), “the vital political, ideological and defense interests of the party and Soviet government depend on the might of the armed forces” (p.121). The military’s relative power could be seen via their presence within official positions of influence such as membership in the Politburo, or the security committees in the Party. It wasn’t until the election of Grechko to full member of the Party in 1973, that the military had representation at the highest level of the state (Monks, 1984).

At the military technical level there were debates between different officers, or factions of the military. This was seen post-Russian Revolution with debates between Trotsky and Frunze, although later debates were quashed by Stalinist totalitarian control and purges (Monks, 1984).

Under Stalin, professional autonomy was highly curtailed and military thinking could not

challenge Stalin's five 'permanent' factors of war which survived until his death in 1953.²⁶ From this perspective, the Party placed great limitations on autonomous military thinking and inhibited Soviet military thinking from adapting to the nuclear age (Scott & Scott, 1984; Monks 1984; Colton, 1990). The conflictual lens emphasizes rivalry and notes that "civilian forays into military doctrine and policy sparked military resistance" (Parrott, 1990, p.81). The nuclear era eventually brought more open debate about nuclear strategy, for example under Krushchev and Brezhnev, although tension between military and political leaders existed (Monks, 1984). Krushchev complained that the military, "always want a bigger and stronger army. They always insist on having the very latest weapons and on attaining quantitative as well as qualitative superiority over the enemy" (Kruschev, as quoted in Colton, 1990, p. 25). Other examples include Grechko who warned of slacking on defence preparedness (Parrott, 1990). Later, Gorbachev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika lowered defence spending and angered the military, hesitant to trust American signs of military drawdown (Leppingwell, p.33).

These examples demonstrate how the Soviet military exhibited Huntington's military mind. The point here is to show that Soviet military never had full control over military thinking. However, except for the period when Stalin's permanent factors dominated military thinking (1942-1953) the Party recognized its limitations deferring to the military's professional expertise at

²⁶ Stalin's five points were: "(1) stability of the rear, (2) morale of the army, (3) quantity and quality of divisions, (4) armament, and (5) organizing ability of command personnel" (Scott & Scott, 1984, p.38-39).

the technical level. Thus, efficiency in combat was valued by the Party for pragmatic reasons, even above ideological ones. Early on, the Party relied on members of the formerly Tsarist Officer corps despite their questionable loyalty (Adelman, 1982b, p. 19). During World War II, the Soviet Army slowly grew in expertise via the necessity of battle with requisite political beliefs taking a back seat. Adelman (1982b) writes:

Battle-hardened and skilled officers were promoted while incompetent officers were pushed aside in the course of the war. Officers with the requisite talent and lower-class background, hastily promoted during the Great Purges and educated in academies in the 1930s, were often given command posts beyond their capacity in 1941. By 1945 the surviving officers had gained the necessary skills and confidence and formed a cohesive and talented Officer Corps (p.22).

What is important is that the USSR's experience of war was a vehicle for combat improvement. While combat improvement through experience could result for any military, it is particularly prevalent in communist state development, owing to common revolutionary beginnings that overthrew previous political systems (Adelman, 1982a). The trend of privileging combat effectiveness over ideology continued much later when officers from non-Russian speaking regions could not enter top echelon forces due to language deficiencies or a lack of trust based on identity factors (Jones, 1990). In both cases, the Party's ideological convictions were subjugated to pragmatic realities of combat capability.

However, central to military professionalism, Leites (1981) offers a theory of how the Soviet military “would fight” during the Cold War using Soviet officer texts from the Revolutionary War and World War II (p.185). Leites’ analysis of historical writing shows how the military experience of World War II oriented future military thinking, highlighting the conservatism of the military mind and the tendency to default to previous thinking. His point is important for understanding how a Soviet fighting style was entrenched as a long-standing mindset held in the minds of the officers trained, a critical point for understanding how the Soviet legacy was transferred to the Ukrainian military.

The ideological framing of war in the Marxist-Leninist tradition was seen as providing a higher-level purpose to sustain morale, motivation and preparedness for Soviet society and its military, a consistent theme of Grechko’s military writings, for example (Monks, 1984). However, while morale was seen as a Soviet advantage for combat, the literature also notes negative aspects of a military mindset rigidly inflexible derived from the hierarchical nature of the Soviet military system and its implication on command and control. Although hierarchical obedience was established by Huntington as critical to combat capability, hierarchy in the Soviet case was more extreme due to the authoritarian nature of the regime. In the Soviet military, just as the Party, the military hierarchy was very centralized. Porter (1992) writes:

“the Soviet Military leadership, in turn, has been fixated on maintaining operational control over its forces in the field, extending this to even small units and local tactical

decisions that most Western Armies leave to the discretion of lower-level commanders”

(Porter, 1990, p.298).

This hierarchy manifested in the maintenance of strict routine at the “micro” level, even though at an operational level, Soviet commanders were taught to understand and value war-fighting principles that demonstrate flexibility, such as speed, rapidity and the offensive and to seize opportunity. However, at a lower level of military hierarchy, there is a reticence for personnel to deviate from orders to avoid responsibility (Leites, 1981, p.198). Further, there is an “an aversion to modifying plans in the course of executing them” (Leites, 1981, p.203). This can certainly be understood as a fear of subjecting oneself to discipline in the case of failure. A confirming perspective comes from Air Commodore Williams, a UK Royal Air Force Commodore who had significant postings in the Soviet Union, including as UK defence attaché to the Soviet Union from 1978-81. In the following passage Williams (1987) comments on how the intense fear that military Officers had at the hands of the Party, are replicated within the chain of command which would come to have effects on how the Soviet military fought:

this rigid discipline has enabled the Soviet Army to force through an attack or to maintain the structure of a defensive position, despite horrendous casualties, because it has overcome fear amongst the soldiers by an even greater fear of execution at the hands of their superiors. As such, it has traditionally enabled the Soviet Army to compensate for a great many minor tactical deficiencies. However, at the same time, this concept of culpability is the prime reason why senior officers or commanders at any level are loathe

to allow initiative to juniors and insist on a rigid adherence to orders. This in turn tends to create stereotype and prevent the development of any low-level flexibility, however, much the new textbooks might call for this. If future concepts of operations and tactical developments in the Soviet Army do come to demand a significant degree of initiative, the overcoming of this traditional attitude to authority will be one of the greatest problems the Soviet General Staff will have to face if they are to achieve their goal (p.113).

Williams' quote is important as it describes the limitations of the Soviet system's dependence on harsh discipline. The quote, however, also mentions advantages useful to certain forms of warfare. Williams (1987) relays how Germans viewed the Soviet soldier as possessing "stoic endurance or indifference to pain or death" (p.185). For Soviet soldiers this lack of fear may have come from a greater fear of an internal threat. The nature of this organizational style made the Soviet military dependent on the receipt of top-level instruction for tasks, extending down into minutia. In combat this could bring a form of leadership paralysis described by Williams (1987) in the following manner:

the Soviet conscript NCO cannot be expected to relieve the junior officer who commands the platoon or company of the tedium of running the sub-unit or instructing in basic training in the way that NCOs do for the junior officer in a British Army unit (p. 114).

Williams' writing was during the final years of the USSR, a time when Western militaries were adopting 'mission command' doctrine that empowered junior personnel in leadership.²⁷ The comparison of Soviet and British NCOs testifies to how different the military cultures had become and is important for understanding the culture that the Ukrainian military inherited. Further, Williams writes that "command and control continues inflexible and slow in response to the demands of rapidly changing situations" (p.186). Williams (1987) continues: "should things go wrong they would not find it easy to improvise and could possibly flounder in confusion and indecision"(p.187). However, other attributes of the Soviet way of war can be interpreted more positively. Williams (1987) argues that:

The Soviet Officer undergoes a much higher level of theoretical and technical instruction than does his British counterpart and his approach to the organisation of war is very much more structured. The Soviets deride the British reliance upon initiative as 'an unwise reliance upon native wit'. The Soviet military concept of a military doctrine incorporates a large fund of military expertise and experience on the basis of which the young Soviet officer is instructed and much of which, in the forms of norms and drills, he is expected to learn, memorise, and apply on the battlefield (p. 120).

²⁷ Western military planning, relies heavily on the concept of mission command. Mission command is originally derived from the Prussian concept of 'auftragstaktik' and was employed by the Wehrmacht in World War I and World War II. Mission command entered American doctrine in 1982 (Shamir, 2010, p. 653) and British doctrine in 1987 (Storr, 2003) and became a feature of anglo-saxon military doctrine.

This passage speaks highly of the Soviet capacity to develop educated and capable personnel for military employment. However, it was difficult to maneuver for those with little power or social connection, the conscripted rank and file and junior officers (Monks, 1984). It appears that sub-military groups existed based on seniority. Younger officers were required to demonstrate unquestioned loyalty until arriving at a senior rank when they could depend on an informal network of loyalists. At that point, Williams argues, Soviet officers become more willing to show initiative demonstrating how change occurred via “the traditional Russian system of nepotism and favouritism” (Williams, 1987, p. 124). The aforementioned focuses of the Soviet military’s style of organization and fighting style undoubtedly transferred to the new Ukrainian military. The officers were former Soviet officers, and many Ukrainians had served in the Soviet military. In this way, Soviet military legacies certainly lived on.

Internal Legitimacy

The Tillyean conception of state development through war is applicable to the Soviet context as the Soviet Union was established from the Russian civil war, between 1917 and 1921. Citizens gained the benefits of a state – protection and development of the state apparatus and were encouraged, forced and conscripted to support the revolution, militarily and socially. The ‘people’ were central to the Soviet narrative of the revolution. The first of Stalin’s five points – stability of the rear, is about warfare and sustainment of the war effort by the people (Monks, 1984). Active citizen engagement occurred in World War II. However, the relationship between the state and the citizenry was different from Tilly’s Western European model as the Party always held a dominant position over the citizenry, underwritten by totalitarian means of control. Cold

War sources also indicate that the military was influential in providing the Party legitimacy toward society. Kolkowicz (1982b) saw this support as so essential, surmising that the military could seize control if the Party was ever to lose domestic hegemony. Although the military refrained from intervention until 1991 it did intervene as Kolkowicz (1982b) warned in the August coup.

The Soviet military was very present in society (Kolkowicz, 1967; Williams, 1989). This was evident in participation rates in World War II and public visibility through internal policing. The military was also present from the earliest parts of Soviet life. Williams (1989) provides a detailed examination how primary and secondary schooling, and community programs taught military skills. The process included the glorification of military heroes, progressive indoctrination of communist ideology, nationalism and disdain for political opponents of the revolution. This sentiment was not bounded as historical but manifested into a myth of an eternal war against fascism or external enemies (Williams, 1989). In sum, the military was a normal part of life and Soviet society was highly militarized.

The Soviet Army was a conscript army dependent on the population to supply predominantly young men for military service. This served a social function as “an important component of political socialization for young men” (Jones, 1990, p.251). Formal military service began at 18-years old en-masse with very few escaping (Williams, 1989). Conscripted like in many other national experiences was a unifying factor of Soviet citizenship (Sherr, 2005). Relatedly, the armed forces in the Soviet system “was not a military machine but a social

institution, which has left behind deeply entrenched attitudes about authority, society, national security and the role of the military in defending it” (Sherr, 2005, p. 158).

In the early periods of Soviet history, conscripts came from peasant classes. However, as the state modernized, the base demographics of the country became more urban, educated and there were smaller families (Jones, 1990). The generations of the 1970s and 1980s, Jones (1990) notes, carried attitudes less predisposed toward military service, to the chagrin of military leaders. Jones (1990) notes how the Soviet military attempted to improve welfare for conscripts to make it more tenable for the population as conditions of military service and living standards were notoriously bad. Society would also be influenced by returning soldiers sharing first-hand accounts with their families and communities which could potentially turn public support against the Party or military. The Afghan intervention (1979-1989) was largely kept secret from the population at least during early phases but returning soldiers aroused skepticism in the population (Jones, 1990, p. 247-248).

Another aspect of internal legitimacy comes from where the originating socio-economic status of where military recruits from. Skocpol (1979) argues that “modern, professional military establishments tend to be organizationally and socially differentiated from the dominant economic classes they serve” (p.290). The official Soviet rhetoric was one of egalitarianism where service would extend to all sectors of society, although necessarily proletariat class origins were important for the officer corps. Soviet military professionalism desired homogeneity and national or ethnic identities as modes of social organization were downplayed as they were a threat to the Party’s

desire for ideological allegiance and loyalty. Conscripts were often transferred to other Soviet Republics (Braw, 2021 August 19) with the logic of avoiding ethnic co-sympathies as the military had an internal policing role. Jones (1990) notes how the integration of Southern Islamic conscripts affected the military since they tended to be less fluent in Russian than their European and Slavic counterparts. Lehrke (2013) notes how pre-existing (societal) identity factors were recreated within military sub-groups which affected unit cohesion, performance, organizational affiliation and institutional allegiance.

Ukrainian identity appears was present in the Soviet military. Adelman writes that Ukrainian officers tried to stop the exportation of grain from Ukraine during the Holodomor as it affected their morale (1982b, p.19).²⁸ The effects were long-standing, since “in 1941 the horrors of collectivization and dekulakization drained the fighting spirit of the peasant soldiers, and the Great Purges demoralized soldiers from urban areas” (Adelman, 1982b, p.22). In the post-war era, however, Ukrainians were seen as a distinct but highly integrated ethnic sub-group in Soviet military structures (Lehrke, 2013). As a sub-group of the Soviet military Ukrainians were held in high esteem as being “conscientious and reliable” (Jaworsky, 1996, p. 223). Ukraine was considered the second most important Soviet Republic in the USSR as Ukrainians shared a co-

²⁸ The Holodomor was a famine that occurred as a result of Soviet collectivization in 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine killing millions. It became a defining moment in Ukrainian national consciousness. It has been subject to intense debates of political memory since independence (Subtelny 2009; 413-416; Applebaum, 2018).

Slavic ethnic status with Russians, higher than the nationalities from the Caucasus and Central Asia (Plokhy, 2015). However, there was a form of glass ceiling with few Ukrainians making it to the highest ranks (Jaworksy, 1996). In the late Soviet period, Ukrainian nationality became an organizing cry for political action (Pyskir, 1993; Kuzio, 1995).²⁹

Path-dependence in the Independence Period

With Independence, the Ukrainian military was created from the previously Soviet personnel based in Ukraine. Although after 1991, Ukrainian decision-makers were formally autonomous, Soviet legacies continued across societal domains. This section turns to the independence period arguing that Soviet legacies became prominent in Ukrainian society. After outlining three key contextual points that broadly apply to the societal transition, this section examines Soviet legacies within the rubrics of external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy. Without this historical understanding of how Soviet legacies carried over the Independence period, the significance of the reform progress between 2014-2022 would be misunderstood.

A Massive Undertaking

²⁹ An October 1990 the Soviet Ukrainian parliament adopted a law aimed at the ‘Ukrainianization’ of the forces in Ukraine. This involved placing special restrictions on Ukrainians from serving outside of Ukraine. Furthermore, there were attempts to repatriate Ukrainians serving in other areas of the USSR to the irritation or non-compliance of Moscow (Pyskir, 1993). The nationalist movement Rukh created a Ukrainian Officers Corps Efforts were made to nationalize Soviet military assets and to set up independent Ukrainian defence institutions.

In December 1991, the Ukrainian people expressed their desire to leave the Soviet Union and develop an independent state.³⁰ Like other post-communist states, Ukraine embarked on a transition from a communist political system to a democratic state. However, the contexts between the post-communist states were highly variant (Cottey, Edmunds & Forster, 2002, p.19), demonstrating the relevance of applying Shiff's (2013) call for situationally informed analysis of civil military relations.

First, the transition from a communist-authoritarian system to a democracy was much broader than a military transition. It was a “a ‘quadruple transition’” of state-building, nation-building, democratization, and marketization (Kuzio, 2016b, p.131). The scale of the task, however, was enormous and would be overwhelming for any state. As noted by Sherr (1999) Western European states developed state and nationhood in stages, not all at once (Sherr, 1999, p. 54). Thus, the development of the Ukrainian military was not isolated from society, but deeply embedded within these four aspects.

Second, Ukrainian society had been deeply conditioned by Soviet culture, mentalities and psychology for large segments of the 20th century and there is wide agreement that Soviet legacies carried into the independence period in general and specific ways (Sherr, 2005; Nastych, 2003; Lehrke, 2013; Oleinik, 2017). A general authoritarian culture permeated the state's

³⁰ The parliament of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) declared sovereignty from the Soviet Union on July 16, 1990, followed by a declaration of independence on August 24th, 1991. A referendum on December 1st 1991, provided overwhelming support for independence with 92 percent in favor.

relationship with society. Oleinik (2017) argues the Soviet authoritarian culture persisted as a normalized cultural acceptance of a highly unequal power gap within society, the presence of the use of force, and zero-sum political processes (Oleinik, 2017). Oleinik contrasts this authoritarian governing model to ideals of democratic modes of governance where power is held by multiple actors and who cooperate for mutual benefit (pp. 372-376). The strength of this authoritarian culture is explained as being deeply rooted, from the Russian Imperial era through Soviet communism (1919-1991) (Bugriy, 2018; Oleinik, 2017). For the Ukrainian citizen, authoritarian culture had been present through awareness that national governance was entirely subservient to the core Soviet system. Further, suppression of dissidence was known. The Soviet experience of authoritarianism was normalized across a Ukrainian society that is ethnically and culturally diverse.³¹

The point here is not to discuss the identity factor at length, but rather to establish that the new Ukrainian state was formed from a population that had collectively been conditioned by a long-standing authoritarian Soviet culture. Moreover, the Soviet experience, as a Russian dominated entity, had been profoundly violent toward competing national identities, including a Ukrainian national identity. The human imposed famine of the Holodomor, Stalinist purges of the

³¹ Plokyh (2015) notes how under Petro Shelest, a Ukrainian identity was fused with a Soviet identity in the post-Kushev period.

Ukrainian Communist Party (Oleinik, 2017) and the Soviet counter-insurgency campaign against the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) between (1944-1950) are important examples. The Soviet legacy of authoritarianism affected Ukraine's process of democratization and political process (1991-2014) (Sanders, n.d, p. 71; Cleary, 2016). This meant continuance of Soviet authoritarian elements blended with some democratic elements in Ukraine's Independence period. Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine's first and second presidents, are described as manipulating processes to maximize personal and positional power (Subtelny, 2009, pp. 604-605). Kuchma is charged with expanding presidential powers with the adoption of a new Constitution in 1996, concentrating formal executive power in the position (Hale, 2011; Sanders, n.d.; Sherr, 2005). The Constitution was amended in 2004, at the height of the Orange Revolution, giving greater power to parliament, specifically, taking away the president's right to remove the prime minister without parliamentary approval. Under the Yanukovych presidency (2010-2014), however, the power-sharing features of the 2004 amendments were abandoned and the system reverted to the 1996 Constitutional format which contained greater Presidential powers (Hale, 2011). It is easy to apply the charge of non-democratic authoritarianism for the Kuchma and Yanukovych administrations, generally considered those more adversarial to the West and more aligned with Russia (Oleinik 2017). However, "European-supported politicians (Yuschenko and Tymoshenko) manifested virtually the same tendencies to use clientalistic methods to augment their own power and subvert rivals during 2005-10 as did those oriented more toward Russia" (Hale, 2011, p.608).

Relatedly, the rule of law in a democratic sense did not develop. The use of state resources for personal gain, extended beyond an economic sense to include the judicial and intelligence apparatus for political sabotage of opponents. Thus, Hale (2011) describes Ukraine as ‘clientelistic’ – where rules are not applied equally manifesting as a ‘hybrid’ form of democratic and authoritarian governance. Other related weaknesses of Ukrainian society are described as:

[a] lack of trust between state and society, the dominance of ‘subjective’ private agendas over public responsibilities, the incoherence of the legal order, the incompetence of state institutions, the relative absence of institutions independent of the state, and in both public and private spheres a lack of accountability and transparency” (Sherr, 1999, pp. 54-55).

Third, the independence period was dominated by elites (Puglisi, 2003; Nastych, 2003; Pleines, 2016; Kuzio, 2016a; Flikke, 2008). Elite support became necessary but not necessarily sufficient for successful defence reform progression (Robinson, 2019, p. 114). Although the concept of ‘elites’ did not formally exist under a communist ethos of equality, in practice, there was an elite cadre of decision makers ‘nomenklatura’, or “authoritarian communist elite” (Nastych, 2003, p.300). In the independence period, some of the Soviet elites used ‘horizontal mobility’ using pre-existing influence in the Soviet system to attain political power (Nastych, 2003). As Subtelny (2012) explains:

The non-violent disintegration of the USSR meant that the former Soviet elite in Ukraine was not displaced. In 1990-1, the pro-independence forces realized they were not strong

enough to attain their own goal on their own. Therefore, they reached an informal agreement with the more flexible elements of the Communist establishment, led by Kravchuk. Essentially, it allowed the Communist elite to retain its dominant political, administrative, and economic positions in return for its support of independence (p.603).

In this process “[elites] only changed their political rhetoric but their value system, patterns and style of policy - as well as decision-making remains the same” (Nastych, 2003, p.307). What was previously “bureaucratic dictatorship” became elite acquisition of the state’s wealth (Sherr, 1999, p.57). This led to elite governance in independent Ukraine, known as ‘Sistema’ – “informal power networks that govern the country” but which lie outside of democratic process (Gressel, 2019, p.7). Their centrality to Ukrainian politics is seen in Cleary’s (2016) assessment that “power, both political and economic, will be distributed not across society but amongst the elites” (p.10).

Undoubtedly, the continuance of authoritarian governance via that entrenchment of elites impacted Ukrainian development in the 1991-2014 period, stalling marketization and liberalization efforts in the 1990s. This authoritarian, elite-led development exemplifies a post-Soviet model of state ‘capture’ whereby elites privatized state resources for their own interests rather than the public good (Easter, 2012). Former Soviet directors of state enterprises, termed ‘red directors’ acquired state assets (Puglisi, 2003; Plokyh, 2015; Kuzio, 2017). Then, political elites and economic oligarchs developed a mutually dependent relationship using key appointments of loyalists to formalise power (Flikke, 2008; Pleines, 2016). This relationship is epitomized by the position of the President who could dispense favours as “closeness to the president guaranteed access to the

administration, redistribution and utilization of state financial or administrative resources” (Puglisi, 2003, p.111).

Kuchma also developed a large network of loyalist patronage of his political base in Dnipropetrovsk as did Yanukovich and the patronage system of the Party of Regions (Kuzio, 2017, 193-210). With political coverage, elites affected Ukraine’s economic development by managing privatization to shield their own interests from foreign competition (Puglisi, 2003, p.105). The entrenchment of politico-economic elites meant that the previous state-owned industries and income generating entities were now narrowly owned by elites, and profits unavailable for reinvestment into state institutions. Outflows of money from public coffers to private hands through theft of state resources meant that state institutions, including the military, went underfunded at a critical time of development.

Fourth, the 1990s were an economically devastating time for Ukraine, with GDP falling far below its 1991 level (Plokhyy, 2015, p.328), which was deleterious for military reform (Mychajlyszyn, 2002; Jaworsky, 1996, Sanders, n.d; Dick, 1994). This economic downturn constricted state finances, with the military not actually receiving budget allocations, for example from 1992-1995 (Jaworsky, 1996).

Fifth, Ukraine’s starting point originated from pre-existing Soviet infrastructure. As the Ukrainian SSR had been a satellite member of the USSR, many governance functions had been centrally controlled centrally by Moscow and institutions needed to be created or replaced with

autonomous Ukrainian ones. In other words, antecedent Soviet infrastructure was present, however, it was incomplete. In the words of Canadian-Ukrainian historian Subtelny (2012):

Ukraine had many features of a modern society: a highly educated workforce, health and welfare systems, efficient communications, extensive urbanization, and a highly developed industrial and agricultural base. It had a bureaucracy in place, especially at the local level. But what this modern society lacked were the traditions and institutions of self-government, decision making and policy formulation. Until 1991, Kiev had been, in political and institutional terms, little more than a branch office of a highly centralized corporation based in Moscow (p. 603).

Subtelny's words illuminate how Ukraine lacked traditions and structures for decision-making. In the military realm, Ukraine was different from the non-core Soviet countries of the Warsaw-Pact who had possessed national armed forces during the Soviet era (Cottey, Edmunds & Forster, 2002, p.4). Ukraine's challenge as a core USSR state was not simply reform, but the creation of national structures and defence institutions from the inherited Soviet forces.³² The next section focuses more specifically on understandings of external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy in the Independence era.

External Legitimacy

³² In contrast, the non-core USSR militaries had pre-existing national structures but in the Soviet system were simply the "bone and muscle, without heart or brain" and whose subordinated leadership was "deprived of operational (combined arms) and strategic command experience" (Sherr, 2001, p.69).

Ukraine's 1991 Constitution, amended from the old Constitution of Soviet Ukraine, designated its identity as a "democratic state" (Article 1, Constitution 1991). For the military, Article 17 provided for the monopoly of the state's use of force, although civilian control in the sense of Western style democratic oversight was not explicitly stated. Nevertheless, Ukraine inherited the Soviet "military tradition of subordination" to civilian authority (Lehrke, 2013, p.155). However, Ukraine lacked an autonomous defence ministry, a civilian management cadre for defence, as well as adequate legislation (Sherr, 2005; Jaworsky, 1996).

An early success was the subordination of the previously Soviet officer corps to the Ukrainian Chain of Command. Pyskir (1993) employs Huntington's 'hierarchy of obedience' to argue that loyalty was critical to avoid the 'spoiler' effect that officers who had recently been loyal to the Soviet state could potentially pose (Pyskir, 1993). Nationalist elements desired ethnicity requirements for serving in the Ukrainian military, as the position of the Union of Ukrainian Officers in November 1991 demonstrates (Kuzio, 1995). The nationalization process included the voluntary repatriation of 33,000 ethnic Ukrainian military members previously serving in other areas of the USSR (Sherr, 2005). However, Soviet military personnel, particularly officers stationed in the Ukrainian SSR at independence, included many ethnic Russians. Ultimately, loyalty was achieved through an oath of allegiance to the Ukrainian state that was ethnically blind and completed by early 1992 (Pyskir, 1993). The fact that it occurred peacefully helped solidify the external legitimacy of Ukrainian statehood for the international community (Sherr, 2002a;

Mychajlyszyn, 2002). The loyalty of the Officer corps, however, remained a lingering concern (Pyskir 1993; Jaworsky 1996).

In practice, the officer corps never became a domestic political broker capable of challenging civilian authority (Jaworksy, 1996) and was ineffective in the political decision-making nexus (Lehrke, 2013; Sherr, 2005). Thus, the Ukrainian military lacked the means and capability to be influential as an autonomous institution.

Western democratic conceptions of legitimate civil military relations and defence management were lacking. At the level of structure, the presence of multiple militarized security organizations continued the Soviet legacy of competing security elements (Parchomenko, 2000; Sherr 1999; 2005; Kuzio 2012). This was a structure with “no analogy in a democratic state with the rule of law” (Kuzio, 2012, p.560). In Ukraine, non-military security organizations proliferated, implying that more actors beside the military needed to be subordinated (Sherr, 2005). Conflict between the security police (SBU) and the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) was a real possibility during the Orange Revolution (Lehrke, 2013). Since most defence ministers were military or ex-military, there was little civilian influence or parliamentary oversight over defence policy (Mychailyszyn, 2002). A tradition of little societal involvement in terms of awareness, let alone transparent oversight of the security, defence and military sectors, proved enduring (Gerasymchuk, 2012).

Similarly, it seems that Ukrainian political elites thought that rhetorical allegiance to the idea of reform would suffice to enter Western organizations, rather than actual reform (Sherr,

2005). This lack of deep understanding of democratic significance was witnessed more broadly in the post-Soviet state transitions. Gheciu (2005) notes that post-communist elites, although anti-communist, did not necessarily ascribe to liberal democratic conceptions of society, especially democratic oversight of the armed forces (Gheciu, 2005). Here, Gheciu gives weight to the staying power of new leaders who had been “indoctrinated with communist ideas” (p.986). Compounding the issue, the concept was lost in translation, since ‘control’ carried a less authoritative meaning in Ukrainian and Russian (Sherr, 2005, p. 160; Gerasymchuk 2012).

In the practice form of external legitimacy, infighting between the General Staff and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) existed (Mychailyszyn, 2002) and was complicated by a lack of clarity in responsibilities for budget and policy formulation (Sherr, 2002a, pp. 66-67). Also, the Soviet legacy of authoritarianism was pervasive in bureaucratic institutions, including the military, where secrecy was seen as a “positive value” (Sherr, 1999, p. 63). In Kuchma’s second term, his personal control over the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) is said to have followed his whims with little parliamentary input into defence matters (Sherr, 2005). In 2001, Ukraine’s reputation was tarnished when military and political leaders attempted to deny that the Ukrainian military shot down a Russian civilian airliner (Siberian Airlines 1812). Grytsenko (2002) argues that the obfuscation in this process was a Soviet legacy of avoiding responsibility.

Progress was mixed. Ukraine adopted Western styled defence management policies in the early 2000s, evident in the state’s first Defence Review of 2004 and development of the first Strategic Defence Bulletin (SDB) (Snitsarenko et.al, 2019). Kuchma’s second term was marred by

allegations of anti-democratic governance. Western frustration with Kuchma resulted from his signalling of democratic motivation and running on a pro-EU, and pro-NATO platform, but was perceived to be using anti-democratic process domestically (Sherr, 2005; Svyetlov, 2007). Negative perception of Kuchma cast doubt on the state's external legitimacy, described as appearing to "transition towards an authoritarian rather than democratic political system" (Puglisi, 2003, p.102). In this period paradoxically, relations with NATO also expanded with a 2002 decision of the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) of NATO membership and a NATO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). However, despite growth in mechanisms of contact with NATO, Kuchma's reputation was concerning for NATO. In 2002, a NATO-Ukraine Action Plan stated clearly that democratic political process was important for membership - "it is the country not the army that joins NATO, and the state of the country will be the principal benchmark that NATO will use to assess progress" (Sherr, 2005, p. 170). This ruling tarnished external legitimacy and is speculated to have delayed a NATO Membership Action Plan (Sherr, 2005).

Chronic underfunding in the period meant the military had to manage situations of scarcity and became involved in the underground economy that flourished in Ukraine throughout the 1990s (Jaworsky, 1996). Legislation legalized the military's ability to operate as a business in 1997. This permitted the military to have alternate means of acquiring funding that the state did not provide. However, it had the negative effect of fostering a military ethos of self-reliance and encouraging local level corruption (Jaworsky, 1996). The sale of equipment often went to private

hands, depriving stocks of equipment but also losing the cost of reinvesting this revenue. The military was not adhering to democratic norms.

Combat Capability

Combat capability throughout the period is paradoxical. At first, the material size of the nationalized military inheritance meant Ukraine became one of the largest militaries in Europe.³³ Radin (2020) provides a highly positive assessment of Ukraine's combat capability at independence, arguing that it was "a 3 out of 3" (Radin, 2020, p. 185). In addition, the inheritance of nuclear weapons and their production capacity unexpectedly gave Ukraine a nuclear status and the world's third largest nuclear arsenal (Budjeryn, 2016; Bailes et. al, 2003). The transfer of authority at independence had not been violent, but it was diplomatically opposed by Soviet authorities and there was no good-faith 'turnover' to brief Ukrainian authorities.³⁴ As a result, Ukrainian authorities lacked full knowledge of the legacy equipment and installations. Nevertheless, the transfer of such material, as well as the officer corps, is described as "the largest defeat the Red Army suffered since World War II" (Pyskir, 1993, p.156).³⁵

³³ The inheritance was enormous, roughly representing forty percent of the Soviet Union's military assets (Facon, 2017, p.48) – the second largest share after Russia (Lehrke, 2013, p.152). It was so large due to the highly militarized nature of Soviet society, the presence of 'military-industrial complex' infrastructure and the fact that Soviet force deployment at the Western periphery (Ukrainian SSR) during the Cold War (Jaworsky, 1996; Dick 1994). See also Bailes et. al, (2003).

³⁴ A common term to describe outgoing personnel forthrightly passing along job-related information/training for incoming personnel during military rotations.

³⁵ In terms of equipment, the Black Sea fleet was an exception. Russia desired to keep the Black Sea fleet arguing that the 1954 transfer of Crimea had been illegal. Admiral Igor Katanov "aggressively defended the fleet against 'Ukrainianization'" and Kravchuk and Yeltsin signed dueling decrees attempting to claim the

Assessments of military strength in the independence period, however, likely gave too much emphasis to gross counts of material capability overlooking human factors of combat capability. The inherited force was simply a “force grouping – without a defence ministry, without a general staff and without central organs of command and control” (Sherr, 2001, p.67). Without a legacy of strategic institutions in Ukraine, “the military carries on the old, Soviet daily routine and thinks only tactically and operationally, but not strategically” (Dick, 1994, p.518). At the level of command and control, the depth of the loyalty commitment was unclear; some officers apparently “had only a limited commitment to the new state” (Jaworsky, 1996, p. 232). Therefore, an outward acceptance of the loyalty oath was not fully indicative of allegiance.³⁶ However, the inherited personnel possessed military experience (Sherr, 2001). The ethnic Ukrainian officers who had been serving in the core Soviet command structure repatriated valuable experience, useful to develop the command-and-control infrastructure.³⁷ The influx of experience was certainly an advantage, but also meant that the Ukrainian military inherited pre-existing Soviet military mindset and culture indoctrinated under the Soviet ‘paradigm’ army system (Sanders, 2008).

Black Sea fleet, ultimately leading to an agreement to share the fleet equally between Russia and Ukraine (Pyskir, 1993, pp.153-154). This strategic element and subsequent agreements on the co-usage of Crimea are important to the Tuzla island incidence in 2003 and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

³⁶ More attractive living conditions in Ukraine than Russia were perhaps non-ideological incentives for ethnically Russian Soviet military personnel to remain in Ukraine and accept the oath (Jaworsky, 1996; Pyskir, 1993).

³⁷ In contrast, the non-core USSR militaries had pre-existing national structures but in the Soviet system were simply the “bone and muscle, without heart or brain” and whose subordinated leadership was “deprived of operational (combined arms) and strategic command experience” (Sherr, 2001, p.69).

Demonstrating path-dependence, this mindset was locked-in. Despite reforms to proceed with a Western focused military curriculum, resistance from the “Old Soviet School” achieved the re-insertion of Soviet thinking in the mid-1990s (Gerasymchuk, 2012, p.256). Thus, communist ideas and Soviet military culture persisted in the personnel and continued to be reproduced in the Ukrainian military education systems in the independence period (Sherr, 2002b; Sanders, 2008). Despite newly established points of contact with Western militaries and ideas, senior officers rarely had any exposure to Western training/ideology (Ulrich, 2007, pp. vi-vii). The level of exposure was not sufficient to permit a breakout from locked-in legacy Soviet culture. For example, the Soviet culture of poor leadership/initiative amongst lower ranks continued (Young, 2017). Further, the Officer corps was described as inefficient where “patronage and personal loyalty rather than competence and loyalty towards the Ukrainian state, were employed as the standard criteria for appointment” (Puglisi, 2017, p. 49). Losiev (2016) mentions that Ukrainian patriotism was lacking in the independence period “thrown to the margins and was doomed to smolder somewhere on the periphery of military service” (Losiev, 2016, October 21). Losiev references how a nationalist naval officer Serhii Nastenka was attacked by the Russian navy during the patriation of naval vessels in 1992, but was not heroized, nor promoted to Admiral despite showing great courage and tenacity in standing up for Ukrainian rights. Losiev (2016) also

notes, Major General Volodymyr Mulyava³⁸ who was as a Ukrainian nationalist but was ostracized by a “liberal press”.

Economically, the massive military was a hindrance to national coffers. A force reduction was urgent and 300,000 personnel were demobilized between 1991-1996 (Sherr, 2005). The downsizing was not to adapt to democratic norms that desired to reduce militarism in the post-Cold War era. Rather, the logic was a necessity of the military cost ‘burden’ (Mullins, 1987) where the state could not afford to maintain such a large force (Jaworsky, 1996). The legacy military infrastructure was far beyond what Ukraine needed, with too many military education institutions (Jaworsky, 1996). Further it was top-heavy, with an excess of officers but shortage of junior officers and NCO corps (Ulrich, vi-vii). The shortage of junior ranks and NCOs was exacerbated by draft-dodging, leading to a poor quality of conscript (Sherr, 2005; Mychaljyszyn, 2002). Low wages also disincentivized civilian expertise from entering the defence bureaucracy (Mychaljyszyn, 2002). Further, the UAF’s massive stocks of equipment were not adequately maintained leading to their deteriorating value and utility.

Conditions in the late 1990s in terms of personnel and equipment in the Ukrainian armed forces were described as “demoralising and potentially destabilising” (Sherr, 1999, p.61). Another

³⁸ General Mulyava was head of the Political And Educational Administration of the UAF during the 1990s. Source: (Ploky, 2001).

description was: “low morale, a poorly prepared military force, and a low level of prestige, which ultimately hampers efforts to reform the military” (Mychaljyszyn, 2002, p. 467). Domestic defence and military reforms paralleled reform progress in socio-political-economic terms also described negatively “a set of sketched, patchy, unfinished reforms” (Puglisi, 2003, p.103). In 2000, the Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies (UCEPS) under the leadership of Colonel Grytsenko, later the defence minister in the Yuschenko government, held a conference of over 100 defence experts and stakeholders from across government and civil society (Grytsenko et al., n.d.). The roundtable proceedings include internal polling of the group on key issues of reform progress and provide a ‘needs assessment’ to orient reform efforts at this juncture. Agreement within the group was that “there had not been reforms but rather, unsuccessful attempts of reforming” (Grytsenko et al., n.d., p.38). That reforms were not able to break out inherited structural constraints is evidence of path-dependent lock-in.

Despite the early reductions, the size of the forces remained problematic. The UCEPs report argued that reductions of force size were still required but with the caveat that reduction should ensure combat effectiveness (Grytsenko et al., n.d., p.33). This logic of reduction was an economic imperative and coincided with dominant thinking about military organization in the post-Cold War context, specifically the concepts of ‘transformation’ and Revolution of military Affairs (RMA) popularized in Western militaries in late 1990s and early 2000s (Sloan, 2002). The RMA was a belief that technology would henceforth accomplish in war what previously required swathes of manpower, arguing that ‘mass’ in post-Cold war armies was no longer needed. Instead,

militaries could be composed of fewer but higher quality and technologically equipped forces, providing theoretical benefits of 'agility' and 'jointness' in operational effectiveness as well as cost-savings. This thinking was popular as it suited policy makers chasing the post-Cold War peace-dividend, eager to reduce military budgets. In the 2005-2009 period, the United States served as "paradigm army" an 'imitative' example for Ukraine under the logic of RMA (Sanders, 2008). However, the UCEPS report also cautioned against importing American models too closely. Downsizing was accomplished by Defence Minister Skidchenko's (2001-2003) closure of bases and sale of excess equipment, but results were marginal (Sherr, 2005). The size of the forces above 400,000 in 2001-2003 remained problematic. Grytsenko (2002) later described military reform in the first decade as "limited to a reduction in numbers without meaningful improvement in quality" (p.63). Despite some downsizing, the UAF was described over a decade after independence as "a bloated, grossly underfinanced establishment of 400,000, lacking an authoritative, coherent and realistic scheme of transformation and development" (Sherr, 2005, p. 163).

Path dependent lock-in can also be seen in structural conditions that denied Ukraine opportunity to disassociate from Russia given pre-existing historical, geographic, economic, and cultural proximities, which affected foreign policy and military strategy creation and ultimately combat capability.

In the independence period Ukraine had to negotiate with Russia. Ukraine at first rejected the Russian Federation's bid to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) but eventually

joined although signaling no real desire to engage meaningfully. The CIS was a post-Cold war organization that attempted to keep the Soviet states in a formal political alliance, to counter NATO and protect Russia's sphere of influence. Ukraine's rebuff was partially dependent on elite preferences who saw better opportunities within Ukraine rather than a Russian led CIS union (Sherr, 1999 – quoting Tor Bukkvoll). This rebuff was key for the autonomy of Ukrainian statehood and was an influential example for the other post-Soviet states to follow (Jaworsky, 1996). While Ukraine declined formal alliance with Russia, Ukraine began a relationship with the West. This relationship focused on Ukraine's inherited nuclear arsenal as the handling of inherited nuclear weapons³⁹ and the proliferation potential they posed were of immense concern (Schadlow, 1996; Budjeryn, 2016).

The 'Friendship Treaty' in 1996 resolved outstanding issues of the ownership of the Black Sea fleet and long-term presence of the Russian Navy in Crimea and transfer of nuclear weapons to Russia. The peaceful resolution of these issues appeared satisfactory on the surface and President Kuchma thought he was receiving a security guarantee from Russia in exchange for reputational benefit of renouncing its nuclear weapons. Beyond nuclear weapons, Ukraine became an important strategic partner for the United States in the post-Soviet space (Parchomenko, 2000; Subtelny, 2009). A second focus of the Western relationship was through NATO beginning in 1991

³⁹ See Budjeryn (2016, p.12) for details of the nuclear weapons inherited.

with the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and in 1994 when Ukraine joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program (NATO, 2024 October 3). In 1997, the NATO relationship expanded to include permanent offices in Kyiv (Kozlovska, 2006). Further, Ukraine signed a Distinctive Charter with NATO which established the NATO-Ukraine Commission which was the primary mechanism of the relationship until 2023 (NATO, 2024 October 3). By 1999, the Ukrainian military had participated in over 100 military NATO exercises in the Partnership for Peace program (PfP) (Sherr, 1999). The expansion of the NATO relationship was indicative of partial Western leanings, within a "multi-vectored" foreign policy courting both the West and Russia. Eastern elites had influenced security policy explaining the multi-vectored approach evident in the 1997 policy of neutrality (D'anieri, 2020b). These eastern elites based in Kharkiv, Donetsk and Crimea were pro-Russia in orientation but were pragmatic in terms of business interests, conscious of the need for Russian, as well as EU markets (Svyetlov, 2007). The military also needed supply chains from Russia for the defence industry (Kuzio, 2017; Sherr, 2005). In this way, the multi-vectored policy for Kuchma was a pragmatic realization that a relationship with Russia was required and intended to co-exist with a relationship with NATO (Sherr, 2010). However, relations with the West after a series of scandals in which Kuchma continued Soviet era authoritarian zero sum politics. Leaked audio tapes alleged Kuchma ordered a campaign of blackmail to ensure re-election, involvement in the murder of journalist Georgy Gongadze and sale of Kolchuga radar equipment to Iraq, called the "tapegate scandal" (Tyler, 2001, February 19; Haran & Pavlenko, 2003; Byrne, 2004, August 12; Kupchinsky, 2002, December 12). The US suspended aid to Ukraine and Kuchma then turned

more formally to Russia who supported him, meeting 40 times with Putin between 2000-2004 (Kozlovskaja, 2006; Haran & Pavlenko, 2003).

For the military, multi-vectored policy meant trying to please two masters. As Mychaljyszyn (2002) writes “without a clear strategic doctrine, the military cannot distinguish between foes and friends and cannot develop proper operational and military policies” (p.465). The development of the National security concept of 1997 had “noteworthy” aspects of progress in being updated to Ukraine’s new security reality by recognizing a commitment to regional security issues, non-military threats to security and desiring greater coordination amongst security actors (Sherr, 1999, pp. 64-54). However, Ukrainian force posture and training curriculum remained unchanged from its Cold War configuration of confrontation with the West (Sherr, 1999; Mychaljyszyn, 2002). Military curriculum teaching the traditional Soviet military curriculum and the introductions of NATO standards proved confusing, inefficient, and duplicative (Ulrich, 2007). Further, it was also unclear whether the Ukrainian military had learned the ‘soft’ military skills for NATO’s new missions of the era.⁴⁰ Instead, the Officer Corps’ preparation remained focused on conventional warfare (Sherr, 2005, p. 161-162).

⁴⁰ ‘Soft’ military skills were non-traditional skills deemed below the threshold of conventional warfare which became necessary for military missions in the post-Cold War period that were not associated with traditional forms of warfare. This included, negotiation, conflict resolution, delivery of humanitarian aid and non-violent engagement with the local population.

Following the resolution of the Orange Crisis in 2005, the pro-Western orientation of the Yushchenko government allowed for closer alignment with the West and more radical defence reforms (Sanders 2008; 2017). For Yushchenko, military reform was a demonstration of commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration (Sanders, 2017). Despite Russia's disapproval of closer Ukrainian-West ties, Ukraine came to increasingly "identify culturally and socially with the imitated, the United States" (Sanders, 2008, p.604). In a military technical sense, NATO standards were seen as superior to Russia's (Sherr, 2005; Sanders, 2008). Ukraine's military-military cooperation with NATO in 2005-2010 is described optimistically, as "significant measure of cultural change in what had only recently been a Sovietized military establishment" (Sherr, 2010). However, optimism was short lived. President Yanukovich won the 2010 election and closed "six specialized structures coordinating NATO-Ukraine integration" (Sherr, 2010, p. 31). In April of 2010, Yanukovich signed the Kharkiv Accords to receive discounted gas in exchange for renewing Russia's naval basing rights in Crimea, seen as a move away from Europe and NATO (Sherr, 2010). Western cooperation, particularly with NATO was effectively halted and domestically there was further democratic backsliding (Cleary, 2016). Yanukovich was accused of orienting the military's loyalty toward him personally, following Putin's model in Russia (Kuzio, 2016). This continued the Soviet model of loyalty to the party, now reformed under the personage of the President. The degradation of the Ukrainian military under Yanukovich was severe and characterized as willful. As described by Kuzio (2016) "Yanukovich and his allies committed

treason in facilitating the degrading of Ukraine's armed forces and Russian penetration of Ukraine's intelligence services" (p.684).

Internal Legitimacy

In the development of the Ukrainian state, the peaceful but not friendly divorce from the USSR was different from Tillyean state development through war, or Soviet experience through war, where the previous regime was destroyed. Rather, Ukraine inherited its military from the Soviet Union and this meant retention of thinking patterns about the state-military-society relationship. In the leadup to independence, the formation of new political parties demonstrated an expansion of political expression but simultaneously a fragmentation of the political scene (Subtelny, 2012). With Ukraine's July 1990 independence declaration, the creation of national security forces was authorized. Ukrainian military members serving in other parts of the USSR returned home after 1991 and nationalist political parties and broad domestic support provided a supportive environment for the nationalization of the Ukrainian forces (Kuzio, 1995; Pyskir 1993). Demonstrating, the effect of military participation on societal consciousness, nationalist groups including the Association of Ukrainian Youth and the Committee of Soldier's Mothers protested unfairness of Ukrainians conscripted to serve in the broader union, deployed to 'hot-spots' of conflict of inter-ethnic origin, and the abusive treatment received; Ukrainians were often

disparagingly termed 'Banderites'.⁴¹ There was also support for nationalization with the active duty ranks of the Soviet military structures through the Union of Ukrainian Officers of Ukraine (Jaworsky, 1996; Kuzio 1995). The nationalist elements insisted on the creation of independent Ukrainian security forces and reorienting the governance institutions to serve Ukraine first (Kuzio, 1995). Politicians demonstrating the military mind, Yury Shcherbak (Ambassador to the United States) and Hryhorii Pryhodko (leader of Ukrainian Nationalist Party) warned of historical mistakes that left states vulnerable without capable armed forces of defending the state (Kuzio, 1995). The August 1991 coup permitted Ukrainian leaders' freedom of action to follow-through on intent and begin the process of building autonomous Ukrainian military forces. Pyskir (1993) credits success to the negotiation skill of Soviet Air Commander Kostyantyn Morozov and Chairman of the Ukrainian SSR Leonid Kravchuk, who conducted formal negotiations with their USSR counterparts. The process occurred through the nationalization of the Soviet military, including personnel and hardware on Ukrainian territory during 1991-1992 (Pyskir, 1993). However, nationalism became less pronounced. As an important institution of the state, Ukraine needed to come to terms with how the military would be composed ethnically who had variant historical affinities for the USSR. The Ukrainian nationalist military organizations who fought the

⁴¹ The term Banderite is used to indicate a follower of the Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera. Given the USSR's fight against the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and the historical connection to partnership with Nazi Germany in World War II the term held a pejorative connotation in mainstream Soviet culture.

Soviets beyond World War II who were starkly anti-Soviet. This military tradition was popular and heroized amongst ethnic Ukrainians particularly in Western Ukraine. For other Ukrainians in the South or East, particularly of Russian ethnic or linguistic origin, the attachment to nationalist military history was generally unknown, weaker or not accepted. Particularly in Donbas and Crimea, attachments to Russian or Soviet identities were more common (Kuzio, 2016). In other words, despite societal heterogeneity, the Soviet identity remained an integral aspect of Ukrainian society into the future, bound to have future consequence for military cohesion and loyalty.

Poor living and health conditions were a major grievance for military personnel throughout the USSR pre-Independence and Leonid Kravchuk, while Chairman of the Ukrainian SSR had attempted to address this in October 1991 (Jaworsky, 1996). However, budget shortfalls in the 1990s meant the continuation of inadequate lodging, sanitation, and poor health outcomes, especially for conscripts, affecting citizen opinions of military service. Another Soviet legacy was the continuation of civil-society being excluded from participatory governance and a lack of civilian participation or civil-military cooperation in defence matters, a feature common in post-Soviet spaces (Jones & Mychajlyszyn, 2002).

This chapter has elaborated how Soviet legacies remained entrenched in Ukraine's post-Independence era, including the military realm. Legacies were locked-in, meaning the massive societal transition was inhibited by vestiges of the previous Soviet governance model.

Chapter 4: Critical Juncture, 2014-2022

Given the sticky hold of Soviet legacies that were prominently evident up to 2014, it is surprising that reform efforts between 2014-2022 suddenly were able to make progress. This chapter turns to another concept of path-dependence, that of ‘critical juncture’. As periods of path-dependent stability can be locked-in and difficult to change, critical junctures, offer an important theoretical mechanism to understand exit from lock-in. Pierson (2000) notes that “the only kind of path dependence with major ramifications is path dependence that is potentially remediable” (p.256). I consider that the path-dependent Soviet legacies experienced in Ukraine from 1991-2014 were ‘remediable’. Historical precedent of other post-Soviet states exiting the Soviet orbit and entering Western political and security arrangements, testify that a break from the Soviet past is possible. This chapter provides the analytical framework and building blocks that underpin the subsequent analysis in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of how improvements occurred despite the locked-in Soviet legacies. A first section explains how the critical juncture permitted reforms to exit the Soviet legacy. In a second section, the external assistance of Op Unifier is introduced, providing contextual details for the reader to understand the empirical analysis.

Critical Juncture Theory

Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) argue that the sub-concept of ‘critical juncture’ has received less attention than other concepts of path dependence. Variations of methodological approaches in path-dependence noted by Dobusch and Kapeller (2013) also apply to the concept of critical junctures. Guided by a conviction that any methodological approach should be flexible and adapted to the particular research objectives, I have deliberately eschewed choosing to simply

adopt a singular methodological approach. Thus, in this thesis I employ critical juncture in a qualitative and interpretational way within a case study. This flexibility has permitted an approach that includes elements raised by the authors discussed in the following passages.

Critical junctures are important to examine because, as Mahoney (2001) explains, critical junctures offer sharp distinctiveness from periods of stability or equilibrium. For political science, the concept of critical juncture permits to explain how change can affect political order. In a critical juncture “both decisions of key actors and sheer chance events influencing these events, is more important than in normal times” (Cappocia & Keleman, 2007, p.364). Specific factors come to have influence in the situation, when during lock-in, that influence was not present or not strong enough to overcome the constraint. The critical juncture can come from external shock, or through endogenous change, which can be sudden or gradual. The critical juncture can also arise from “small events, human agency or historical peculiarities” (Mahoney, 2001, p. 113). The result is that the critical juncture represents a temporal opening permitting a reset of possibility. Path-dependent processes are sufficiently relaxed to permit an exit from existing locked-in paths. Thus, a critical juncture is one where new possibilities and choice become available within a temporal window. Cappocia and Keleman (2007) argue “that the duration of the critical juncture must be brief relative to the duration of path-dependent process” (p.350) and surmise that shorter junctures heighten the factor’s impact. The implication of the short duration is that agents are not afforded much time to affect change; an insight important for those desiring to “reshape existing institutions and create new arrangements” (Sorensen, 2015, p.25). However, there is also urgency

and responsibility as “the particular circumstances, timing and configuration of actors during significant planning historical critical junctures can have long legacies” (Sorensen, 2015, p.27).

With an understanding of why critical junctures are important, my use of critical juncture grapples with how to know if a critical juncture has taken place. Methodologically, I employ a historical narrative approach that is reliant on three themes of military professionalism, representing a wide consideration of possible factors within the object of study. The main arcs of this heterogeneity are the internal/external dynamic and the military/society elements of the story. Data sources used to infer understanding are also heterogenous in nature and permit themes and patterns to be triangulated between them.

While a narrower focus, for example on a specific actor, might allow for a more specific identification of causal mechanism it would not have allowed for the appreciation of the complexities of historical processes associated with critical junctures. While narrow and specific knowledge is valuable, my apriori knowledge of Ukraine imprinted an awareness of deep complexity within the situation – historical and emergent which precluded narrowness. In answering my particular research question, I could not ignore a range of factors that I deemed to be relevant and connected to the questions pertaining to whether Ukraine had undergone a critical juncture and whether there was genuine reform.

The Critical Juncture in Ukraine, 2014-2022

My argument is that a critical juncture opened in late 2013 beginning with the Maidan Revolution. The Maidan began as a protest against the Yanukovich government’s sudden

withdraw of Ukraine from the EU ascension agreement. The Maidan protest is credited to a micro-event in which a protester Mustafa Nayyem issued a call to organize on social media on November 21st prompting Ukrainians to gather in Kyiv's central square, called *the Maidan* (Johnson, 2014, November 21). The Maidan protests in Kyiv's central square, grew larger in size through December and brought in different social groups and continued into 2014.⁴² The Yanukovich regime attempted to dislodge the protest through anti-protest laws and arrests, leading to violent clashes with security forces. Escalating violence culminated when 88 protesters were killed on February 20th (BBC, 2014, November 13). The Yanukovich regime crumbled on February 21st, 2014, when Yanukovich fled. In response, Russian swiftly moved to take control over key areas of Crimea (February-March 2014), leading to its eventual annexation by referendum on March 16th, 2014. Major uprisings then occurred in April 2014 with separatist groups taking control of municipal buildings in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblast, which ultimately began the Donbas war.

The destabilizing events from (November 2013 – April 2014) permitted the critical juncture to open. In terms of institutions, Sorensen (2015) explains how critical junctures occur when there is a “loss of legitimacy” whereby the old institution is seen as inadequate (p.25). With the old systems discredited, a new project has room to maneuver. The entirety of the Ukrainian state and society was affected by the critical juncture. It is very clear the Maidan protests demonstrated

⁴² Several labels describe the Maidan protests from November 2013-February 2014. These include EuroMaidan, and Revolution of Dignity. For simplicity, the term Maidan is used.

widespread disenchantment with Yanukovich, his governing style and the political project of remaining in the Russian orbit, his project represented. However, Yanukovich's escape to Russia on February 21st meant a need to form an interim government, permitting a new political reality. The structural constraint represented by Yanukovich and his political bloc was suddenly gone. The ouster of Yanukovich meant that the political elite in control of national security, defence and military policy were now predominantly Ukrainian loyalists. From the perspective of path-dependence, the ouster of the Yanukovich regime provided a new political leadership opportunity to conduct reform unrestricted by a powerful pro-Russia lobby and political group the Party of Regions represented. This window was opened, and included the Maidan's spirit of activism which was embraced widely by Ukrainian society, apart from part of the Donbas of course (Kudelia, 2016).

The interim government was formed on February 22nd and served until the May 25th election and inauguration of the Petro Poroshenko on June 7th. The political activism Maidan generated meant a high level of citizen engagement, not only electorally, but also provided new opportunities for political participation. Further, the actions of Russia indicated that the external threat environment had massively changed. For state officials, the Officer corps and civil society, it became clear that physical security of the state was at risk from Russian aggression.

With the outbreak of the Donbas war in April 2014 and uprisings of the separatist movements, a voting bloc normally aligned with Russian ideals was removed from Ukrainian

elections and political process. Elections did not occur in occupied Crimea and significantly restricted in Luhansk and Donetsk.⁴³

Undoubtedly, these events introduced a critical juncture for the Ukrainian state and society. By the same token, it had profound effects on the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Following, Arthur's development of path-dependence from complexity science, I conceive of the Ukrainian military, or Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) as a complex system in order to capture its multilevel nature, its multiple sub-systems as component parts, and connections to other areas of the government and society. As an institution, the MOD and UAF, together form a massive entity, composed of several hundred thousand people whose membership swelled in periods of war. As the period of analysis begins in 2014, the status of the Ukrainian military at the end of 2013 is taken as the starting point (Ministry of Defence, 2014, p. 65-68). For the military, the annexation of Crimea meant that Russian aggression had moved outside of the diplomatic and economic realms and formally into a kinetic, military one.

In this temporal period the conditions of the lock-in period were fundamentally weakened, thus permitting an opportunity for a change away from the trajectory associated with the Soviet legacy and military system. Reforms coalesced through the will of government, officer corps, civil society, and Western sponsors. Path dependence using historical case study involves locating

⁴³ The May 2014 Presidential election could only occur in 2 of 12 electoral districts in Luhansk, and 8 of 24 electoral districts in Donetsk (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), 2014 June 30, p.25)

moments where other options were possible (Bennett & Elman, 2006). Mahoney (2001) similarly argues that the critical juncture must involve choice – “if there is no choice between alternatives, there is no critical juncture” (p.113). Choice can be seen in the onset of the critical juncture - a choice to fight and resist was made – and the choice was agreed between the political level, the Officer corps (for those who did not defect) and broader society.

How Soviet legacies were overcome is due to the window the critical juncture provided. Here, I continue from Page (2006) that there are many possible mechanisms which may be operant, but I identify two factors - unified will and genuine learning. These two closely related mechanisms reinforced each other in the period from 2014-2022. Additionally, each year of implementation had a compounding effect, increasing the likelihood of its continuance.

Borrowing broadly from SSR/SFA about the will of the recipient security force and host society to enact reforms, a unified will between the state, military, society and external actors permitted military improvement. The very real physical and existential threat from Russia permitted a unified agreement on the need for reform. Previously, Ukraine had been divided at the political level, in society and within the Officer corps about relationship with Russia, and subsequent policy directions, but in the period, there was an unprecedented level of agreement between actors. Internal Ukrainian actors - society and political and military leadership recognized that Russian aggression represented not only a territorial assault, but also a moral one against Ukrainian statehood. The new conditions offered by the fall of the Yanukovich regime offered a critical juncture to accomplish genuine change. Ostensibly to salvage a deteriorating situation and

establish a needs assessment of the security situation interim-President Turchynov commenced a defence review in April 2014 in conjunction with the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on High-Level Military Reform (JWGDR) (Presidential Decree, 2014). The defence review was hastily conducted but was an exercise in civilian governance of the defence sector (Snitsarenko, et al., 2019). This internal Ukrainian desire for self-correction meant a renewed cooperation with NATO that had been curtailed under Yanukovich. The JWGDR was joined by another external review conducted by the RAND corporation in the fall of 2015 (Oliker et al., 2016). At the level of external legitimacy, there was a desire to turn more toward the West in the interim government. This meant a more earnest appreciation of democratic civilian military relations. Within the military and defence realm, a desire to improve combat capability existed between the political level, and the military leadership. From the outside, key Western states supported Ukraine at the level of foreign policy and technical expertise in combat capability. Societally, a move toward Ukrainian identity gave military development strong societal support.

The theme of 'irreversibility' was present and circulating amongst reforming actors, who were conscious that their actions mattered significantly to future outcomes, whether or not they understood them conceptually in terms of path-dependence. Due to unified will and prior factors of reform impediment, genuine learning could embark, with compounding strengthening successes. Learning in this sense, borrows from the idea of the military learning from defeat found in Huntington, as a responsibility of a professional military. The political, military and societal realms recognized the need for reform and were open to learning. Learning was augmented by the

accompaniment of Western external assistance and advice that was absorbed into law, the military organization, guidance documents and attitudes within the military and society. In terms of combat capability, the Ukrainian military system, recognized NATO military prowess as paradigm armies to learn from, permitting the military to learn new skills and perspectives, compounding with every year. Learning also occurred internally through the experience of the Donbas war. In consequence, significant changes were made that improved external legitimacy, combat capability and internal legitimacy.

Operation Unifier (Op Unifier) and the Defence Reform Advisory Board (DRAB)

As a form of external will, the international community supported Ukraine in political rhetoric, denouncing Russia, but also substantively under the broad umbrella of Security Sector Reform (SSR). A report from the Folke Bernadotte Academy of the Swedish Government (Hanssen, 2016) classified programmatic activities within twelve thematic areas: Anti-Corruption and Accountability; Cyber Security and ICT; Democracy and Human Rights; Gender; Conflict Management, Prevention and Dialogue; Public Management; Parliamentary and Public Oversight; Border Security and Human Trafficking; DDR, SALW and Demining; Justice Reform; Medical Assistance and Equipment; Capacity Development (p.9). This included bi-lateral country

support,⁴⁴ programs from individual EU member states,⁴⁵ and multilateral organizations⁴⁶

Hanssen, 2016, p. 12).

In the Canadian case, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's strong diplomatic support for Ukraine in 2014 materialized into Operation Unifier (Op Unifier), a military assistance mission established in 2015 in response to a bilateral request from Ukraine. The mission represents an expansion of bi-partisan Canadian support to Ukraine since the beginning of the independence (Kordan, 2018, p.3-11.) Op Unifier enjoyed the support of the long-standing Ukrainian diaspora in Canada and its primary political lobby, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC).

In response to a Ukrainian request, Op Unifier began in 2015 with reconnaissance missions occurring in the Spring and Summer of 2015. In the inaugural rotation (roto), "roto o", of Op Unifier, tactical training began in western Ukraine, at the International Peacekeeping Support Center (IPSC) on the Yavoriv military base, located in Starychi, Lviv Oblast. Op Unifier was embedded within broader reform structures that existed joining the American Joint Military Training Group-Ukraine (JMTGU), and broader partners of the Joint Military Council (JMC) and Multinational Coordination Cell (MCC) which included "Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States" (Government of Canada, 2023, November

⁴⁴ from: the United States, Turkey, Switzerland, Norway, Japan, Canada, Australia and Albania

⁴⁵ United Kingdom, Sweden, Slovakia, Romania, Portugal, Poland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, Ireland, Hungary, Greece, Germany, France, Finland, Estonia, Denmark, Czech Republic, Croatia, Bulgaria.

⁴⁶ NATO, Council of Europe, DCAF, United Nations, OECD, OSCE and European Union.

28). Op Unifier is a non-combat mission labelled as “military training and capacity building” (Government of Canada, 2023, November 7). The focus of the mission has been described as to “assist with security force training” (Government of Canada, 2022, February 15). Operation Unifier had several lines of effort, separated into different functional skillsets. A Canadian military document, CJOC Primer, describes the CAF’s activities in capacity building, “the CAF has expertise” in the organization of the Training System, Combined-arms tactics, leadership, NCO development and utilization, Profession of Arms (POA), and gender integration (National Defence of Canada, Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), 2020, p.6). Op Unifier ran continuously within the territory of Ukraine over the course of 12 distinct rotations, as illustrated in figure 2, from autumn 2015 to February 2022 when the mission was withdrawn as Russia’s invasion appeared increasingly imminent. After a brief pause, Op Unifier activities re-started outside of Ukraine in Poland, Latvia and the UK (Government of Canada, 2023, November 7).

Figure 2 Op. Unifier Rotation Dates (from inception to the February 24th Invasion).	
Rotation (Roto)	Dates
0	September 2015 - January 2016
1	January 2016 - August 2016
2	August 2016 - March 2017
3	March 2017 - September 2017
4	September 2017 - March 2018
5	March 2018 - September 2018
6	September 2018 - April 2019
7	April 2019 - October 2019
8	October 2019 - April 2020
9	April 2020 - October 2020
10	October 2020 - March 2021
11	March 2021 - September 2021
12	September 2021 - February 2022

Op Unifier's activities during 2015-2022 had multiple focuses and expanded in terms of subject matter taught and geographical reach. It is generally understood to be the military component of a larger Canadian effort to support Ukraine, described as "but one element of an intricate multi-organisational Canadian effort to support and develop Ukraine in its pursuit of greater western alignment, structural reform and ultimately NATO compatibility and membership" (CJOC, 2020, p. 6). The Canadian government stated that by January 31st 2022, the CAF had trained "33,346 Security Forces of Ukraine (SFU).... spanning all lines of effort since the start of the mission in September 2015...including training to 1,951 members of the NGU". (Government of Canada, 2022, February 15).

Most Western training occurred at the International Peacekeeping Support Center (IPSC) in Western Ukraine a base where American cooperation with Ukraine had occurred prior to 2014. Operation UNIFIER was headquartered at the IPSC before moving to Kyiv in 2020 (AP 15, 2022, February 16). A large component of the training involved Ukrainian battalions who had already finished a tour in the Donbas warzone to travel to the extreme opposite of the country to receive training at the Starychi base, the (IPSC) in Lviv Oblast. Generally, Ukrainian soldiers were moved directly from the front to the IPSC, without being permitted to return home or embark on leave. The IPSC was the main training area for Op UNIFIER and had the bulk of training activities and personnel located there. While Op UNIFIER had an initial focus on tactical military training it expanded in the 2019-2020 period to have an increased focus on building defence institutions (AP

6, 2023, January 14). Op UNIFIER confronted the enduring nature of Soviet mentalities. Soviet legacy was a theme present in all interviews with CAF personnel often brought up early in interviews by the participant, pre-empting my formal questions. Soviet legacy was described as all-encompassing, not just in the military realm, but everywhere in society. One interviewee explained that Canadians felt the Ukrainians were “more Soviet than the Russians” (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

Higher order advice on Defence Reform was provided by the Defence Reform Advisory Board (DRAB), a multinational advisory body that began in 2016 with experts from six supporting states (US, UK, Canada, Lithuania, Germany, Poland) (Fuhr, 2017). According to Parliamentary testimony from Canada’s representative, Ms. Jill Sinclair, the DRAB was an initiative of Ukrainian Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak and the DRAB offered advice on 162 objectives across five thematic pillars (Fuhr, 2017). External support from Canada and other supporting countries are of central, but not sole, importance for the improvement in military professionalism and are present in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter 5,6 and 7 turn to the empirical and analytical analysis of Ukrainian military improvement in the 2014-2022 period. Chapter 5 analyzes improvement to external legitimacy. Chapter 6 examines improvement to combat capability, and chapter 7 analyzes internal legitimacy. Interview data from participants of Op UNIFIER is a primary source of data used for Chapters, 5, 6, and 7, as the three elements of military professionalism are interrelated. The most significant contribution of Op UNIFIER data is to Chapter 6, as Op UNIFIER was primarily focused on

improving combat capability. Methodologically, Op UNIFIER plays an important role due to the access potential I had due to my employment within the Department of National Defence (DND). Informally, I was aware that Op UNIFIER participants had witnessed, experienced and participated in the reform process firsthand and had unique insights from the practitioner level to compliment other sources of data. As travel restrictions due to COVID during the summer of 2020 and beyond meant I was unable to travel to Ukraine, speaking to CAF members who had participated on Op Unifier was logical.

***Chapters 5, 6 and 7 turn to an empirical description and analysis of the 2014-2022 period; see Annex E for a table that identifies key positions and time in office for the primary actors mentioned.

Chapter 5: External Legitimacy

Ukrainian defence and military reforms of 2014-2022 affected external legitimacy and improved the state's reputation on the world stage. While military professionalism is but one component of a total perception of the Ukrainian state, this chapter focuses on how Ukraine attempted to move toward democratic standards of civilian control as espoused in Euro-Atlantic definitions.⁴⁷ The chapter argues Ukraine's external legitimacy was improved during the critical juncture. Internally, agreement between the political level manifested that a turn to the West was necessary for Ukraine to survive. There was a recognition that Western donors held democratic values of external legitimacy as necessary conditions for moral and material support. International assistance was invited during the period to advise on improvement of civil military relations. Notwithstanding growing pains, there was strategic agreement between the Ukrainians and the communities of Western assistance as to required paths forward and what was required. Overall, improvement of factors of external legitimacy occurred in the period permitting expansion of Western assistance, during the period and more substantially after the 2022 invasion. The

⁴⁷ Although not covered in this analysis it is acknowledged that the reform of Ukraine's military industrial complex, notably, the state's weapon producing industry – Ukroboronprom, an assortment of defence companies is undoubtedly related to external legitimacy and combat capability.

argument does not claim that norms of civil military in Ukraine have been perfected to an infallible standard. Rather, significant progress was made which afforded the Ukrainian state opportunities to prepare for the impending 2022 invasion. The first section outlines what path-dependence would indicate – that Soviet legacies would be locked-in and unchangeable. Section two identifies reform efforts that occurred in the period within structural aspects, cultural aspects of governance and aspects of military conduct. Section three concludes the chapter discussing results and how the reform progress should be interpreted.

2014 Status and the Expectation of Locked-in Soviet Legacies

Ukraine had taken steps toward entrenching norms of Western civil-military relations in the Independence period, as established in diplomatic adherence to NATO and OSCE foundational documents (Project Reforms Office (PRO), 2016, Nov 29). Thus, pre-existing legislation and structures of civilian control existed at the time of crisis in 2014. At a surface level, civilian control was present via the executive offices of the President, and Prime Ministers and the Cabinet of Ministers as civilians, as well as the Parliament representing the public (Lins de Albuquerque & Hedenskog, 2015). Yet, the 2014-2015 military failures occurred. Retrospective analysis reveals how a poor level of civilian control and oversight impeded an effective military performance in 2014-2015 (Ulrich, 2021, March 21; Oliker et al, 2016). Factors of civil military relations important to external legitimacy are observed in the “Rand report” (Oliker et al., 2016) which was an investigative report published by the Rand Corporation commissioned by the Ukrainian government to assess the military defeat. The report noted that in 2014 civilian control was

shallow, concentrated almost exclusively in the executive, stating: “civilian control remains weak in Ukraine except at the very top” (Oliker et al, 2016, p.22). A 2016 Project Reforms Office (PRO) document entitled “Theses of the Concept of Civilian Control” also notes the narrow concentration of control within the Executive (Project Reforms Office (PRO), 2016, Nov 29). Specific to the MOD, the Rand report notes unclarity in the relationship between the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and General Staff (GS) where there was “confusion, gaps and overlaps” which “preclude effectiveness and limit oversight” (Oliker et al., 2016, p.22). The position of Minister of Defence (MND) was disempowered relative to the Chief of Defense Force (Chod) who retained a parallel line to the President, meaning the General Staff did not need to pass through the MND or share information. The position of MND was thus weak in practice and could not provide definitive oversight over the military (Oliker et al., 2016). The RAND report recommended strengthening the role of the Minister relative to the Chod and General Staff (GS). Further, civilian control was weak in that the MOD in 2014-2015 was highly militarized in terms of military members occupying the bulk of numerical positions, as well as the ministry’s working culture (Oliker et al., 2016). Soviet legacies were very much engrained and inhibited progress (AP 27, 2023, January 26). For example, The Rand report notes that culturally, decisions were pushed upward as decision makers avoided responsibility (Oliker et al., 2016).

Further, clarity of Command and Control of the Donbas war was identified as problematic (Oliker et al., 2016). The Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) that was established in April 2014 was commanded by the Ministry of Interior, (MOI) and the National Guard (NGU) was the lead

security agency. In 2014, the state's monopoly on the use of force was questionable. After the Maidan crisis, the state was thoroughly shaken, and the formation and armament of the volunteer battalions occurred through oligarchic sources outside of government control.⁴⁸

It is important to establish as a baseline for the analysis that in 2014 Ukraine was an extremely corrupt country.⁴⁹ This state was a result of the path-dependence of Soviet era cultural norms continuing in the Independence period, meaning corruption was rampant. In 2014, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) assisted Ukrainian government report described corruption in Ukraine as “pervasive and oppressive” (Government of Ukraine, 2014 July 11, p.3). Assessments of external legitimacy observes that the public service was described as:

“A bloated, inefficient and politically-controlled public service sector, characterized by lack of transparency in its processes and decisions, low pay, an insufficient skills base and duplication of responsibilities among agencies;” (Government of Ukraine 2014, July 11, p.3).

Further, corruption was rife in the defence sector, described in early 2015 as “endemic” (Lins de Albuquerque & Hedenskog, 2015, p. 30). An editorial in Defense One cautioned against the provision of aid to Ukraine on the basis of existing corruption stating:

⁴⁸ As prominent example, Igor Kholomoisky, an oligarch from Dnipro, played funded the Dnipro and Donbas battalions. While outside of government control, these actions are credited for Ukraine maintaining control of Dnipro and Kharkiv. See Cohen & Green (2016).

⁴⁹ The Transparency International score for Ukraine in 2013 was 25 out of 100, and 26 in 2014. Source: Transparency International (n.d.).

Aid contracts should include rigorous independent oversight, also tapping into Ukraine's committed and increasingly sophisticated independent anti-corruption reformers...Those calling for immediate, unconditional shipments of lethal weaponry and other military assistance may think they're doing Ukraine a favor by rushing in aid at its hour of need. But in the armed forces as in the political arena, most of the Yanukovich-era corrupt networks remain in place. And helping them entrench their positions and tighten their stranglehold over the new Ukraine would jeopardize the country's future (Chayes, 2014 May 16).

Despite sympathy for Ukraine and widespread antagonism toward Russia, the expectation amongst Western allies was that Ukrainian society and the defence establishment was corrupt. Ukraine had to overcome a global perception of legacy Soviet influence and corruption to ensure continued support, both material and moral. Ukrainians were dependent on the external assessments of supporters which could dictate levels of support. For Ukraine, improvement in civil military relations was critical to ensure financing, armament, expertise, and moral support to legitimize its statehood and overall resistance to Russian aggression. However, in 2014, popular support for arming Ukraine was low in the United States and even lower in Germany (Drake, 2014 May 1) two critically important allies. Locked-in Soviet legacies would predict that the status quo would inhibit change in these areas.

Reform Efforts in the Critical Juncture

However, the new conditions offered by the fall of the Yanukovich offered a critical juncture when the old trajectory could be potentially modified. First, without Yanukovich, the relationship with the West could be pursued directly. In the 2014-2022 period, the political level consistently repeated that Ukraine needed to turn to Europe and adopt Western standards, often referred to as Euro-Atlantic, or NATO standards. Interim-President Turchynov commenced a defence review in April 2014 in conjunction with the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on High-Level Military Reform (JWGDR) (Presidential Decree 468, 2014). This internal Ukrainian desire for self-correction meant a renewed cooperation with NATO that had been curtailed under Yanukovich. The JWGDR was joined by another external review conducted by the Rand corporation in the fall of 2015 (Oliker et al., 2016). External legitimacy was not simply an assessment of Ukraine by Western powers from afar. Rather, new opportunities of interaction between Western arbiters of legitimacy, and elements of the Ukrainian government were afforded.

Evidence of Ukrainian openness to Western tutelage appears in rhetorical speech acts, for example, from Poroshenko's inaugural speech in June 2014 (Kaylan, 2014 June 8th). In November 2014, Poroshenko signed Presidential decree, № 842/2014 which approved recommendations of the NSDC following the Minsk I ceasefire in September 2014. Recommendations included increasing civilian positions (2b) in "military formations and law enforcement agencies" (TSN.UA, 2014, November 5). This Presidential move signalled a political desire to move toward Euro-Atlantic norms and were soon solidified into important guidance documents. The National Security Strategy (NSS) developed in 2015, states as an objective: "the formation of a new security

culture” with EU and NATO as references (President of Ukraine, 2015, May 6, 4.2). Later in 2015, a new Military Doctrine provided an objective of “improving the system of democratic civilian control over the security and defense sector in accordance with EU and NATO standards” (Parliament of Ukraine, 2015, 17). Then, the Strategic Defence Bulletin (SDB) in 2016 provided more concrete objectives for the defence and military sector which made explicit statements in this regard:

“In accordance with Euro-Atlantic Standards, Ukraine will strengthen civilian democratic control over the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the defence forces by increasing the transparency and integrity of defence planning and resource management which will enable the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to more effectively exercise its power in the defence sector” (President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20, 2.3).

The NSS and Military Doctrine were important guidance documents critical to legitimate reform.

It is interesting to note that the MOD was initially resistant to reform as a public report claims:

The MoD was not willing to launch systemic, comprehensive reforms until key documents, such as the National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine, were adopted in 2016 (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Razumkov & MFAN, 2017, p.22).

This resistance is consistent with what a path-dependent perspective of Soviet legacy would suggest. However, the critical juncture permitted a unity of will manifest between internal and external actors for guidance documents to materialize and enact reform.

Structural Changes to improve civil military relations.

With clear direction from the political level, reforms could proceed and in August 2015 the Poroshenko government opened a dedicated office, the PROD (PRO) within the MOD to spearhead reform activity, which existed from 2015-2020. The PRO was led by Andriy Zagorodnyuk⁵⁰ from 2015-2018 who later became Minister of Defence in 2019 in the Zelensky administration. The PRO was a location where Maidan activists integrated into formal organs of the state (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2019, December 23). There was also the Reforms Delivery Office of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (RDOCOM) which was stood up in 2016. This Office is an advisory Office to the Cabinet of Ministers and looks at reforms across society. It carries a broader scope than simply defence and national security (Ukrainian Parliament, 2016 October 11). The inclusion of Maidan activists permitted international partners to feel more assured that reform was underpinned by broader societal support. The PRO was involved in the creation of the Strategic Defense Bulletin (SDB), whose final version published in 2016 called to clarify lines of responsibility and improve transparency, calling for the Chief of General Staff (Chod) to be subordinated to the Minister of Defence (MND) by 2020. This would eliminate the military's parallel link to the President, ensure a singular link of command and control and ensure the

⁵⁰ Different spellings of the name appear in different sources. For simplicity I adopt Zagorodnyuk in accordance with his Atlantic Council biography (Atlantic Council, n.d.).

MND's presence in decision making and representing an additional level of civilian control. However, the military lost its direct access to the President during negotiations of the SDB, the change was resisted by Commander in Chief Viktor Muzhenko (Butusov, 2016, May 20). Journalist Yuri Butusov reports that behind the scenes, Muzhenko was given an ultimatum by NATO partners, that continued NATO support and US financial assistance was dependent to the General Staff's subordination to the Minister. It is clear Ukraine was dependent on external assistance and needed to comply with desired norms of civil relations. While Muzhenko was not thrilled about a loss of stature for the military, Andriy Zagorodnyuk leading the PRO Office in the MOD was content with the SDB. In an op-ed to publicly introduce the SDB in 2016, Zagorodnyuk praised new levels of "public control" of the defence realm. As Zagorodnyuk described "we, the non-military, bear the same, if not greater, responsibility for our army" (Zagorodnyuk, 2016, July 11). Including references to greater societal control of the military represents more than a Huntingtonian control mechanism of military obedience to legitimate civil authority. Rather, it represents an alignment to democratic norms of civil military relations and away from the Soviet legacy, where the public had no insight or influence.

Another aspect of discussion surrounded civilianisation of the MOD. The SDB in 2016 set a target of the civilianization of positions in the MOD including but not limited⁵¹ to the MND by

⁵¹ Beyond the MND, civilianization was identified in the SDB for the deputy ministers and secretary of the MOD (President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20, 2.7).

2020, to “ensure effective democratic civilian control over the Armed Forces of Ukraine” (President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20, 2.7; Sampan, 2018, October 1). From October 2014-May 2019, Stepan Poltorak served as a uniformed MND. On the surface, Poltorak’s tenure in uniform could illustrate that civil military relations had not attained Euro-Atlantic ideals. Poltorak then resigned from military service on October 13th, 2018 but was re-hired by Poroshenko as a civilian Minister of Defense ostensibly to comply with the SDB’s technical requirements that the MND be a civilian (Ponomarenko, 2018, October 13). However, differences of opinion existed as to whether the MND was required to be a career civilian or could be a serving or retired military Officer. Ukrainian and external sources contextualized that a diversity of civil military relations constructs exist within NATO countries themselves (Oliker et al., 2016; PRO 2016, Nov 29; AP 24, 2023 January 05). The issue is not black and white, with different standards within NATO countries. Poltorak continued to serve as MND until Zelensky’s inauguration in May 2019 and upon leaving office commented on the requirements of the position:

“We have the false opinion that anyone can be the defense minister. But why should the justice minister have a law degree? And why can a person who worked anywhere become defense minister? It doesn’t work like this.” (Romaliiska 2019, May 22)

In this exchange, Poltarak implies that the position of MND requires apriori military expertise which represented a popular understanding in Ukraine, as the idea of a non-military MND was foreign to Ukrainians (AP 24, 2023, January 05). Defusing arguments of weakened civilian control, Poltorak illuminated that it was the civilian authority that had called for escalation of force on

Maidan protestors (Romaliiska 2019, May 22). Regardless, Poltorak as a uniformed military officer provided almost five years of pro-reform stability in the position of MND representing a partner that the West could develop a long-term relationship with. This stability was important as in 2014 the position of MND underwent chaotic turnover.⁵²

Seen as a Poroshenko loyalist, Poltorak resigned the day Zelensky took office in May 2019 (Romaliiska 2019, May 22). To replace Poltorak, Zelensky assigned Andryi Zagorodnyuk as MND in August 2019. Zagorodnyuk lacked a military background but had defence sector experience from leading the PRO from 2015-2018 (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10). Zagorodnyuk was well-received by external partners recognized as a genuine reformer (Falkowski 2019, November 29). Zelensky's appointment of a civilian as Defence Minister was a strong first impression that his government continued heeding Western advice. Zagorodnyuk, however, was dismissed only eight months later. The ousting of Zagorodnyuk as a civilian and known 'reformer' was interpreted by some as a step-back in the reform process, notably in terms of civilian control, such as Journalist Iliia Ponomarenko (Ponomarenko, 2020, December 23). Zagorodnyuk may have been pushing too hard too fast and perhaps gained internal enemies (AP 24, 2023, January 05), or too desiring of micro-management (AP 27, 2023, January 26). Zagorodnyuk's ouster exemplifies the tension

⁵² In 2014, turnover in the position of MND included: Yanukovych's minister Capt. Pavlo Lebeydev (February 22), to Col. Gen. Volodymyr Zamana (Feb 22-27), to Admiral Ihor Tenyukh (Feb 27-March 25) to Col. Gen. Mykhailo Koval (25 March-July 3) to Col. Gen. Valerii Heletey (July 3-October 14) to Poltorak in October 2014.

between external legitimacy and combat capability in the period. James Sherr, long-time Ukrainian analyst contextualized Zagordnyuk's ouster, stating: "he had all the makings of a brilliant peacetime defence minister, but Ukraine is a country at war" (Sherr, 2020, March 26).

Incoming MDN Andriy Taran was a retired Lt. General and served as Minister of Defence (MND) from March 2020 until November 2021. Taran's entrance was interpreted by some as a degradation of the Reform Process in several ways. First, in a representational sense, a retired military Officer replaced a civilian Minister well-known to be a democratic reformer. Secondly, Taran suddenly closed the Project Reforms Office (PRO) Office in April 2020 (Ponomarenko, 2020, December 23; Texty.Org, 2020, April 11). The closure of the PRO was met with shock and sadness by the head of the PRO, Olesia Favorska, who vehemently defended PRO's contribution at a public press conference (Ukrinform, 2021, April 21). Analyst Mykola Sungurovsky of the Razumkov Centre, commented on Taran's changes: "if the Ministry of Defense used to be one of the most open bodies, now it is one of the most closed" and "the personnel changes that took place were not entirely beneficial. There was a certain slowdown in reforms" (Korba 2020, October 21).

Additional controversy surrounding Taran included statements seemingly downplaying the importance of NATO membership and sacking another well-known reformer naval officer Andriy Ryzhenko (Korba 2020, April 16). Yet publicly Defence Minister Taran urged reforms forward ostensibly so that NATO membership could occur (WordandDeed. 2021, June 19). Taran also emphasized the need for legislative change to improve civilian control at the July 2021 Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lithuania (ArmyInform, 2021, July 9). Of course, an international

conference carried high stakes for public comments and deviation from international norms would endanger external legitimacy. Taran resigned in November 2021 facing criticism from the ruling Servant of the People party and opposition parties (Reuters, 2021, November 4). Zelensky named Oleksii Reznikov to the position of Minister of National Defence. Reznikov was a civilian and lawyer without prior military experience, except service from 1984-1986 in the Soviet Airborne Paratroops (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2021, November 5). Reznikov carried the MOD into the invasion of 2022 until September 2023, creating another period of stability. The legacies of Poltorak, Zagorodnyuk, Taran and Reznikov raise important questions about the required background of the defence minister. Oleksiy Melnyk, a co-director at the Razumkov Center argued: "the minister should be a civilian, because this is a completely different style of management, a different style of communication" (Korba, 2020 April 16). Melnyk contrasts the nature of a military management style based on hierarchy where dictates are common and consultation is not desired (Korba, 2020 April 16).

Beyond the position of MND, a desire to civilianize the MOD more broadly was a factor throughout the period. Civilianization efforts in the MOD are described by researcher Marianna Fakhurdinova as "the beginning of a worldview evolution and the first step towards establishing civilian democratic control over the country's defense forces" (Fakhurdinova, 2021, July 13). Favorska of the PRO understood civilianization as a guarantee that defence policy is being constructed by civilians, describing an ideal "harmonious" culture where "civilian and military knowledge are equally valued as diverse but equivalent" (Sampan, 2018, October 1). Representing

a Huntingtonian ideal, Favorksa saw the benefit of freeing the military from tasks of management and permitting to focus on operational planning (Favorska, 2018). Efforts at civilianization were fruitful on the surface. At the end of 2018, a reform assessment report entitled: “Reforms in Ukraine: Irreversibility of Changes”, touts that “the share of civilian personnel of the Ministry of Defence administration amounted 82% with only 18% servicemen” (Reforms Delivery Office of the CMU, 2019, p.64). However, beneath the surface, the statistic of increased civilianization was overplayed, as the extant military officers of the MOD simply removed their uniforms and re-assumed functions as civilians (AP 6, 2022, January 14; AP 24, 2023, January 5). This literal interpretation of civilianization questions whether quantitative indicator progression is truly indicative of deeper acceptance of democratic norms of civil-military relations. Recalling Serra (2010), true civilianization implies substantial control over policy rather than simply optics. Only a year prior in 2017, the civilianization progress was critiqued for being slow, and reported that the MOD remained heavily militarized (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Razumkov & MFAN, 2017, p.23). To encourage civilianization, the intake of a civilian workforce into the MOD was promoted by the international community to build expertise and depth in policy development (AP 24, 2023, January 5). Yet, the civilianization of the MOD was noted as a persistent challenge into the tenure of the SDB (AP 1, 2019, January 11). Senior Canadian officials (non-Op UNIFIER) advised and encouraged Ukraine to bring in highly intelligent younger skilled civilians into the MOD who could bring in broader forms of expertise. The inclusion of societal expertise could be very positive new sources of knowledge, for the highly institutionalized MOD

but was resisted on the basis of requiring the civilian to first join the Officer Corps (AP 6, 2022, January 14). An overly rule bound and bureaucratic attitude is simultaneously representative of cultural Soviet legacy, but also of military culture in general Huntington addressed. Additionally, Irena Favorska of the PRO Office contextualized slow progress in civilianization due to a lack of civilian knowledge and low pay (Sampan, 2018, October 1).

Despite slow progress, genuine learning occurred through various activities in the period. In 2017, The PRO conducted reach-out activities to train a new mindset and strengthen civilian elements of the MOD which included round table meetings in Kharkiv, Odessa, Kyiv, Mariupol, Dnipro & Lviv. In 2020 and 2021, training activities occurred to train public servants about issues of civil-military control and to create wider awareness of democratic standards (Bobrytska et. al, 2022).

Importantly, members of the PRO understood that true civilian control was more than surface-level compliance and understood civilian control in the way SSR literature deems legitimate. A 2016 document (PRO, 2016, Nov 29) contains a sophisticated awareness that civilian control is deeper than organigram representation, stating:

the introduction of a civilian minister, state secretary, and others in the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine without the introduction of a modern management model of the defence sector and the Armed Forces does not automatically mean the introduction of either civilian or democratic control (Project Reforms Office (PRO), 2016, Nov 29, p.2.).

Civilian control is also mentioned in relation to overall defence effectiveness. The interrelation of external legitimacy and combat capability are evident in how the Rand report connects a lack of civilian oversight with poor battlefield outcome (Oliker et al., 2016). Similarly, A PRO document mentions:

it is civilian democratic control and the introduction of a model of good governance for the defence forces that will increase the functional effectiveness of the Armed Forces, in particular through the introduction of more informed and timely management decisions, a significant number of which are delegated to the lowest level, rather than “made at the top”, as in the current post-Soviet model (Project Reforms Office, 2016, November 29).⁵³

Euro-Atlantic norms of increased transparency and efficient resource expenditure over the defence sector was linked to combat capability improvement (President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20, 2.15). Deputy Secretary of the NSDC from 2014-2019, Oleksandr Lytvynenko stated in 2016, that “without the clear, comprehensive transition to norms and values intrinsic to the democratic states, our defense will not be stable, we will not be able to realize our objectives and priorities” (National Security Defence Council (NSDC), 2016, May 24). Lytvynenko, as a reserve officer - Major-General, demonstrates a military perspective understanding of civilian oversight (National

Institute for Strategic Studies, n.d). The improvement of economy of effort in terms of resource expenditure to improve combat capability could be a “selling point” for the military to accept more civilian oversight. However, it was noted in 2017 that cooperation between the MOD and General Staff (GS) remained poor (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Razumkov & MFAN, 2017, p.22). The risk of failure was known, and a reversion to the Soviet era status quo existed. Jill Sinclair of the DRAB urged Ukrainians in 2018 to not go backwards on their reforms (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, March 3). Further, in 2019, the head of the NSDC noted persistent challenges of Soviet culture: a lack of transparency in decision making, (over-classification) and reiterated the need for civilian control (National Security Defence Council (NSDC), 2019, July 16). While seemingly negative, that there is evidence of political rhetoric continuing to call for corrective measures, is a sign that demonstrates that there as genuine buy-in rather than a mentality of check in the box completion. There were Ukrainian reformers who were not going backwards.

Change with the architecture of command-and-control streamlines organizational responsibilities to improve strategic decision making and resource management. The Rand report and SDB suggested that Force Employment, of the Donbas war be entrenched under a singular chain of command (Oliker et al., 2016, x-xi; President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20, 2.10). This operational change occurred in 2018. Further, the SDB called for clarifying relationships (President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20, 2.9) to separate Force Generation tasks of “formation, training and development” from Force Employment, the utilization of force. The separation of the

position of Commander in Chief from the position of Chief of General Staff is another example, to enable a more efficient distribution of responsibilities and manageable workload. A PRO document contextualizes the change, stating the MOD was now “empowered to shape the state of defence policy whereas the General Staff – to implement it” (Reforms Delivery Office of the CMU, 2019, p.64). In addition to touted benefits, heeding NATO advice on structural changes of command and control allowed Ukraine to resemble NATO counterpart organizations important for the state’s objective of NATO interoperability. However, adaptation to the new organizational structures remained a work in progress. Canadian representative to the DRAB Jill Sinclair, delivered a July 2019 training entitled “implementing Command and Control (C2) Transformation” for the members of the MOD and General Staff, organized by the Marshall Center (Ager, n.d.a), is an example of continued work of Western partners to educate Ukrainian parties.

Another aspect of external legitimacy is delineation of responsibility. For Canadians in Op UNIFIER, understanding the Ukrainian security system was challenging due to its complexity (Joint Task Force Ukraine (JTF-U), 2020, p.42). In the planning stage of Op UNIFIER in the summer of 2015, a Canadian officer had discussions with National Guard Ukraine (NGU) and UAF Officers who both lobbied for Canadian assistance for their respective organizations. The Canadian officer observed an inter-service rivalry between the NGU and UAF (AP 7, 2022, January 18). This inter-service rivalry could demonstrate where cooperation and information sharing could be problematic.

Additionally, the Ministry of Interior (MOI)/NGU was described by one interviewee as appearing to be more “senior” of the security organizations. This meant that the Armed Forces and MOD were less influential within state decision-making processes, than the MOI/NGU (AP 6, 2023, January 14). Op UNIFIER participants consistently disclosed how heavily militarized the NGU was in terms of force size and possession of modern equipment. The NGU was described as highly effective and capable.

Monopoly on the use of force

The Soviet continuance of the state possessing multiple militarized security agencies persisted into 2014. Two militarized state organizations existed with similar mandates to defend the state, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and National Guard (NGU) and Armed Forces (UAF). Polish representative to the DRAB, Lieutenant General Andrzej Falkowski acknowledged the complexity of the security and defence sector, noting that the MOD (Ministry of Defence) and UAF are simply two of the actors within the security sector (Falkowski, 2019, November 29). Criticism in the period was that the 2003 legislation needed updating to fully account for civilian control and oversight over all security organizations (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Razumkov & MFAN, 2017).

Additionally, the presence of non-state armed actors of the volunteer battalions in the early part of the Donbas war was problematic. In September 2014, the Kyiv Post reported that 44 Volunteer organizations had been formed for the war effort see figure 3 below, “Volunteer Battalions” (Kyiv Post, 2014, September 9) numbering approximately 10,000 personnel (Motyl 2015, March 26).

Figure 3 Volunteer Battalions, source: (Kyiv Post, 2014 September 9).

It is important to note that the battalions were formed legally given a series of laws passed by the interim government in April 2014 (Motyl, 2015, March 26). The volunteer battalions were, heroized in Ukrainian society for their bravery, creativity, and nationalism (AP 6, 2023, January 14). A sympathetic perspective is understandable given the context. However, according to a high-ranking Canadian military official deployed on a fact-finding mission in the east of Ukraine in early 2014, there was a genuine concern in Canada and other NATO capitals as to whether Kyiv exercised control over the volunteer battalions (AP 5, 2022, January 13). While the volunteers cooperated with state elements in battle, it was not clear that the civilian government was formally commanding them (Bukkvoll, 2019). For Canada, one of Ukraine's strongest supporters on the international stage, the seeming monopoly of the use of force was worrying. The use of force outside of democratic government control remained a potential deviation of Western norms of external legitimacy. Additionally, the volunteer battalions were heavily militarized with access to sophisticated equipment including Armored-Personnel Carriers (APCs); normally reserved for state militaries which could not be ignored as a minor derivation (AP 5, 2022 January 13). Further, the source of funding from oligarchic sources was concerning. It was made clear to Kyiv that civilian control was a non-negotiable aspect of Canada's support in the spring of 2014 (AP 5, 2022 January 13). In addition to a reticence to escalate tensions with Russia, lack of clarity on the monopoly of force impacted Canada's reticence to supply lethal aid (AP 5, 2022 January 13).

This opinion was shared by the Obama administration which chose not to supply lethal aid despite Poroshenko pleading in congress in September 2014, right after the signing of Minsk 1 (Dorell, 2014, September 18).

However, the question about monopoly of the control of force was not immediately clarified. In October 2014, a security briefing for the Canadian electoral observation mission cautioned that control of the security situation in Kyiv remained unclear.⁵⁴ Questions were also raised in July 2015 with the eruption of a firefight between a Parliamentarian's security detail and Right Sector volunteers (Iwański & Żochowski, 2015, July 15). To clarify control, the government moved the volunteer battalions under state structures. By September 2014, Kyiv Post reported that most volunteer battalions were under the authority of the UAF, Ministry of Interior, or National Guard with only a few outside of the formal authority of the security organs (Kyiv Post, 2014 September 9). The folding of the volunteer battalions into the formal state apparatus was an important change that permitted a higher degree of external legitimacy to be established. However, journalist Christopher Miller reported in 2018 that a few volunteer battalions remained effectively outside of government control. These groups resisted inclusion into official state structures and remained active on the front, and received tacit assistance or approval (Popular Front, 2018, August 1). A Vice documentary demonstrates the presence of independent volunteer

⁵⁴ The author's experience as a participant of this mission.

battalions on the Donbas front in 2018 (Vice News, 2018, May 25). In the documentary, former interim President Turchynov unabashedly underlines the importance of the volunteer contribution to save the country and adds that he would ask for their assistance again (2:16-3:20). The documentary concludes by wondering about the repercussions of the volunteers, post-war. The significance of Turchynov's remarks suggest that necessity of survival during war trumps external legitimacy.

The monopoly on the use of force was critically important for external legitimacy and possibility of illegal conduct in war. A United Nations Report noted allegations of extra-judicial killing by all parties to the conflict, including the UAF and the volunteer battalions (Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, 2016, p.12). As expressed by a Canadian soldier, war is a nasty business and it would not be too difficult to find questionable combat on either side (AP 28, 2023, March 14). Due to technological means, war in 2014-2015 meant that videos and images could easily move from the battlefield to the global imaginary, meaning the associational risk for Ukraine's supporters was immense.⁵⁵ The volunteer battalion fighters were quite variant in origin, level of training and efficacy. However, some came to be known for brutality (Hunter, 2018, p. 100). One high profile case surrounded the Tornado Battalion which

⁵⁵ Allegations of Russian, DNR and LNR propaganda focused on civilian casualties by the UAF.

was recalled from active duty in Luhansk in June 2015 for illegal conduct (Miller, 2016 December 30). The battalion was then disbanded on June 18th 2015, and members later convicted by a Ukrainian court of a range of serious crimes (Ukraine Crisis Media Center, 2017 April 11). War crimes were a potential liability for states willing to support Ukraine. Multiple interviewees from Op UNIFIER mention that this reputational concern was ever-present. Professor Christian Leuprecht in his testimony to the Canadian Parliament in 2017 stressed the imperative to avoid a situation of the UAF committing atrocities to preserve the UAF's internal legitimacy (House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN), 2017, p.21). Not only did volunteer battalions cloud perceptions of civilian control, their possibly extremist ideological motivations and related iconography threatened Ukraine's external legitimacy. The accusation by Russia that Canada and other Western nations were supporting open or disguised neo-Nazis, fascists, became a prominent feature of the Russian narrative and information warfare activities (Brown, 2019, January 17). That volunteers with extreme right wing or nationalist ideological beliefs of political associations existed is not in question, as admitted by Turchynov in 2018, but who stressed that these were minority actors and not representative of the entire volunteer effort (Vice News, 2018 May 25, 2:16-3:20). The volunteers became subject to exploitation for information warfare purposes with supporters attempting to deny or minimize extremist connections of the battalions, while Russian efforts sought to maximize this portrayal. The most controversial groups receiving negative media attention were Aidar, Right Sector and Azov (Motyl 2015, March 26). However, membership and composition of the groups defy easy categorization. For example, Igor

Kolomoisky, the former governor of Dnipro and Oligarch is Jewish and financed the Azov Battalion, evidence that clouds the interpretations of Azov being neo-nazi (Motyl 2015, March 26; Cohen & Green, 2016). Further, a leader of the political group and volunteer battalion, Right Sector leader, Borislav Bereza is Jewish and in a 2014 interview downplayed that anti-semitism was the motivation of Right Sector and downplayed allegations that Ukraine was a neo-nazi or extremist state:

I know that anti-Semitism still exists on the everyday level in Ukraine, I have felt it myself. But it is a minor problem. There is also Russophobia and Ukrainaphobia here in certain quarters, it certainly exists. But the question of anti-Semitism is not a serious ideological problem or question in this society (Davidzon 2014, December 1).

For Canada, Op UNIFIER soldiers in interviews mentioned that there was great reputational concern over the potential presence of neo-nazi iconography and the reputational threat of financing extremists (AP 5, 2022 January 13). Canadian troops on Op UNIFIER had no independent way of verifying identity or ideological convictions of Ukrainian soldiers as training attendance was controlled exclusively by the UAF. However, strict protocols were put in place to ensure that Canada avoided training extremist groups, and a 'cease-train' order was in place should such a situation arise. Interviews of Canadian soldiers confirm that suspected extremists were present in their training but was an overwhelmingly rare occurrence. On one occasion in an after-hours context, a swastika tattoo on a Ukrainian soldier, became visible where previously it had had been concealed under a uniform. An observing Canadian soldier reported the incident and

explained to the UAF counterpart that the soldier was no longer welcome to participate in training and the soldier did not reappear in training (AP 18, 2022, March 31).

In terms of military conduct and respecting rules of war, a report surfaced in 2020 that Ukrainian forces were upset with long delays to receive permissions to return fire on the Donbas line (Vorobiev, 2021, March 15). However, a high ranking Ukrainian Officer stressed that that delays authorizing return fire were carefully restricted to ensure compliance with Minsk protocols (AP 22, 2022, June 13). The officer's explanation could provide some explanation for reported frustration from Ukrainian troops. While undoubtedly multicausal, frustration from troops focused on the urgency of battle, could indicate that Command and Control was relatively in-tact and that military members were not operating in a rogue fashion, or outside of the rule of the war. OSCE reports from the Special Monitoring Mission (from the author's observations) also demonstrate a lower incidence rate than Russia.⁵⁶

Corruption

Efforts to combat corruption at the societal level were enacted, including the creation of two separate bodies dedicated to stopping corruption, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau Ukraine (NABU) and High-Anti Corruption Court (HACC) (Fakhurdinova, 2021, July 13). These organizations have broader societal mandates, but their work applies over the military and defence realms. In 2015, the MOD introduced reforms to procurement, notorious for corruption

⁵⁶ The OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission ran from 21 March 2014 to 31 March 2022 (OSCE, n.d.)

and ongoing risk area (Ukraine Reform Monitor Team, 2015 October 5). The PRO drafted the law “On peculiarities of procurement of goods, works and services for guaranteed provision of defense needs”, which was signed into law in May 2016 (Ukrinform, 2021, April 21). An internal MOD anti-corruption Programme was enacted between 2015-2017. Further, anti-corruption training and implementing *Pro-Zorro*, an online resource to ensure procurement transparency were enacted. In 2017, *Pro-zorro*, is reported to have saved 377 million hryvnas (UAH) (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, p. 57). The PRO labelled pro-zorro a success. However, critics downplayed its significance describing that it “creates only minor obstacles to well-organized influence and manipulation” (Ukrainian Institute for the Future, 2018, p.40). MOD personnel were assigned to oversee military officers on issues of “administrative, financial and economic activity” (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2016, p. 18). A Canadian military member shared with me that in the 1990s, deployed Ukrainians were selling allotted fuel for private gain in local markets (Personal Communication, 2021, July 29).⁵⁷ With long standing patterns of corruption and entrenched

⁵⁷ “The officers were pocketing most of the money from selling diesel in Sarajevo that was supposed to go to their AFVs.” Source: Personal Communication with a Canadian soldier on OP CAVALIER Roto o 1992 to 1993. Personal communication via email 2021, July 29.

associated behavior, it is not realistic to expect that behaviour would instantly cease. Op UNIFIER interviewees observed corruption in multiple forms with established patterns continuing.

Improvements came in the form of the introduction of an internal auditing process and training auditors to international standards (Ministry of Defence, 2018, p. 31). Other anti-corruption training was conducted with sizeable attendance (Ministry of Defence, 2018, p. 32). Anti-corruption efforts became more pronounced as there is evidence that officers were investigated and removed for corruption (Solonyna, 2018, July 27; Ministry of Defence, 2018, p. 38; Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10). In 2018, it was reported that officers from the Odessa region were fired for selling materials and fuels for personal gain (Solonyna, 2018, July 27). A corruption scandal rocked the latter years of the Poroshenko term when an investigative journalist leaked details of corruption carried out by the son of a Poroshenko ally and member of the NSDC, Oleg Gladkovsky (Hromadske, 2019, March 13; Bershidsky, 2019, February 27). Poroshenko then fired Gladkovsky (Hrodmdaske, 2019, March 13), but was nevertheless tainted by the case. One observer opinion described that Poroshenko was known to be corrupt owing to his identity as an oligarch and having politically developed in the rules of the pre-2014 system but was understood positively and pragmatically as at least working earnestly on Ukrainian national security and war effort (AP 31, 2023, September 28). The continuation of corruption in the mind of the population, provides one reason why Zelensky won in a landslide in April 2019, winning 73.2 percent of the vote, evident that a reformist agenda resonated with the people (Pifer 2020, July 22). The focus on corruption continued during the Zelensky administration undoubtedly spurred on by anti-

corruption sentiment of the population, demonstrating a form of united will between society, external supporters and reformist agenda of the government. However, Zelensky's mentions in the Pandora Papers (Loginova 2021, October 3) raised doubts of his reputation. As well, his firing of perceived reformers made it seem that he was not willing to fulfill his campaign promises of anti-corruption and reform. Zelensky's approval rating dropped to 38 percent in June 2020 (Pifer 2020, July 22).

Corruption meant that front-line troops were deprived of resources that were meant for their protection and prosecution of the war. An activist from a veteran's group, ATO Veterans Society, Kirill Sergeyev, stated that "since 2014, the situation in the army has changed a lot, and the scale of corruption has decreased" (Solonyna, 2018, July 27). However, Sergeyev suggests that the lessened visibility of brazen corruption did not mean that deeper and more significant forms of corruption were resolved, as the procurement incident of Poroshenko's ally exemplified (Hromadske, 2019, March 13). This observation correlates with Radin's (2020) view that surface level reforms which did not threaten core interests could more easily be implemented. In contrast, more serious reforms, such as the state defence industry of Okronobrom, were more challenging as they threatened deeper interests (Radin, 2020). A statement from the National Security Defence Council (NSDC) in 2019 notes the continued need to overcome corruption in the defence procurement sector (National Security Defence Council of Ukraine (NSDC), 2019, July 16). Although corruption in the defence industry is not covered here, it is noted as an area of continued concern. MND Reznikov's dismissal in 2023, speculated to be related to corruption scandals

involving military procurement demonstrate that the issue was not fully solved (Ukraine the Latest, 2023, September 7). The argumentation needs to be understood clearly on this point. The argument underlines that significant progress on the corruption front occurred in the critical juncture within the defence and military sectors, although it was not completely rooted out. Again, assessment is related to progress from a very low starting point and not an arbitrary binary measure of presence or absence of corruption. Specifically, evidence of progress on the corruption front manifests in external legitimacy as to the degree to which western partners saw corruption as a fatal flaw that would require cessation of support.

Cultural aspects

The behaviour of the MOD and Armed Forces was also under scrutiny of external audiences. In the period, there were public episodes of tension officials centered on how the MOD and Armed Forces responded to public criticism. One episode of public tension occurred when Viktor Muzhenko, the Chief of General Staff from 2014-2019 had a public spat with journalist Yuri Butusov, during which Muzehenko called Butusov an 'information hyena' (Tolokolnikova, 2016, October 26). In turn, Butusov characterized Muzhenko as representative of the of the old Soviet system, intolerant of public scrutiny. Another episode of public tension involved Glen Grant, a retired UK military officer, professor and advisor to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. Grant penned a 2018 op-ed that publicly described a laundry list of Ukrainian shortcomings and insinuated that valuable time to prepare for an upcoming invasion was being wasted (Grant, 2018, January 31). This scathing public criticism from Grant, an external apparently "caused a major stir" in official circles (Censor.Net, 2018, February 8). The significance of these examples is that

the criticisms were publicly aired. Critical voices such as Grant's or Butusov's⁵⁸ provide evidence that open critique was possible and is indicative of a normalization of public critique. This is evidence of a sign of change, regardless of whether officials appreciated the criticism or not. The measure of legitimacy in democracies is not whether public officials should appreciate receiving criticism, as it is natural that they receive it with reticence. Rather, legitimacy needs to be assessed on whether criticism is tolerated.

Similarly, Poroshenko's presidency was criticized from internal sources. One critique came from an influential officer, General Serhiy Krynovos who had been an early supporter of Poroshenko. After evidence of disagreement became public a few years later, Krynovos stated:

psychologically and legally, being a serviceman, it is very difficult to criticize the president, as many would like to do. And this directly undermines the status of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. And many of those who wanted us to participate in the presidential race said: "we will help you, throw mud on the President and you will be fine". And I said: "no, no, no, we do not play such games" (Stek, 2020 January 19).

Kryvonos' declining to publicly criticize Poroshenko as the Supreme Commander in Chief opinion demonstrates a level of professional respect. It is not that Kryvonos was not critical of

⁵⁸ Butusov has a prolific publishing record with often scathing critiques. See for example. (Butusov 2015, March 13).

Poroshenko, but rather that he understood that public criticism might have deleterious effects of in-fighting when unity between the Officer corps and the highest political office were required.

Interviews of CAF members confirmed that Canadians desired to demonstrate professionalism of a professional NATO military identity, not simply through tactical proficiency but through daily behaviour and interactions. Alcohol was denied or highly restricted on Op UNIFIER rotations, although CAF soldiers mentioned that alcohol was highly present in Ukrainian societal and military functions. This is unsurprising as Ukraine has a drinking culture and that alcohol is prevalent in many military cultures, including the CAF. CAF soldiers observed high alcohol use amongst Ukrainians who were presumed to be suffering from PTSD, from the ATO. CAF soldiers desired to drink with the Ukrainians for social bonding purposes. However, adherence to dry tour restrictions have become normalized on CAF missions to limit disciplinary issues and ensure the corporate reputation of the CAF on mission; awareness of CAF alcohol restrictions was a model of professionalism for Ukrainian counterparts.

For external legitimacy, a military's comportment, and level of discipline is integral to professionalism. Improvement in the UAF's Military Police (MP) trade was an ongoing effort of Op UNIFIER, and one that interviews mentioned was particularly successful. The Military Police Line of Effort (LOE) was also described as very successful – "relationships were solid, were dynamic and they were achieving great, great success" (AP 4, 2022, January 13). This professionalization of the military police trade would assist with external and internal legitimacy as the UAF's internal disciplinary and enforcement structure was strengthened. MP improvement was accompanied by

efforts to develop, the NCO corps (discussed further in Chapter 6). This is significant as MPs, and NCOs, are important to the maintenance of order and discipline in the ranks. An improved enforcement mechanism through the MP trade and NCO development meant that the military's overall level of professionalization increased. As described by Zagorodnuk, military police reform was important particularly to the issue of corruption, particularly weapons smuggling (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10). MP trade improvement meant a mechanism to reduce unprofessional conduct in the barracks, and in combat as well, something that is noticed by external observers and affects external legitimacy.

Results of reform in the period

This section turns to a discussion of results of the reform activities in the period as they pertain to elements of external legitimacy. How can the success of reforms be judged more broadly? During the critical juncture, there was unified will between the state-military and society centered on agreement of the need to reform, critical necessity to strengthen the state against Russia and desire to turn to the West in a civilizational sense. This will was apparent quite immediately in the period. The successive administrations of Turchynov, Poroshenko and Zelensky gradually turned away from the previous multi-vectored foreign policy, and towards stronger relationships with Western partners. The resolve demonstrated in the period was enormous and many involved with the Maidan movement were instrumental in government. The inclusion of the non-military elements through Maidan volunteers provided a strong base of

legitimacy for the overall project crucial to the attainment, sustainment and expansion of Western support.

The Ukrainian government's undertaking of a defence review commissioned in the Spring of 2014 was an exercise in civilian governance of the defence sector (Snitsarenko, et al., 2019). The defence review in 2020 can similarly be understood as an expansion of this process. The political level's willingness to invite and cooperatively engage with external advice from NATO, DRAB, Rand and Western military assistance missions such as Op UNIFIER strongly suggests that the will was genuine. The Rand corporation as a think tank connected to the American government holds an authoritative opinion about external legitimacy. The spirit of openness continued as DRAB, the PRO Office and NATO advisors assisted with the creation of the SDB. The internal (PRO) and external elements (NATO, Op UNIFIER, DRAB) offered input and corrective assessments which was included in foundational products, meaning reform was not an insular effort. Radin (2020) relates an observation that the SDB's extremely high uptake of the Rand report's recommendations (p.194). While Radin, mentioned this observation to draw attention to the massive influence of the Rand report, the uptake also indicates a genuine Ukrainian desire to heed advice and thus reform.

The DRAB brought credibility to the reform process by inviting advice from supporting states deemed worthy to emulate 'paradigm armies' in terms of combat capability, but also in terms of democratic civilian control. The DRAB was touted by Zagorodnyuk as having real power by having "direct access" to Poroshenko and the highest levels of military command (Rahemtulla

2016, November 17). Access to highest levels of Ukrainian leadership in an uninhibited manner was confirmed by a member of the DRAB (AP 24, 05 January 2023). It is important to note that beyond minimum standards, the DRAB did not impose a specific form of civilian control (AP 24, 05 January 2023). Rather, the multinational composition of the DRAB exemplified a diversity of expression of democratic civil military relations that could be consulted, for Ukraine.

The advice offered to Ukraine was not externally imposed uni-directionally. Rather, Ukraine invited external assistance, meaning reform must be understood as a genuine expression of will. Ukraine was a willing participant and not a begrudging recipient of reform which indicates that the political will to reform was genuine.⁵⁹ The presence of societal and external partners is important, as militaries may be unable to self-correct and could often desire to display Potemkin facades of reform success. Throughout the period relations with Western partners was constant. The head of the PRO, and later Minister of defence Andriy Zagorodnyuk, one of the key figures in the early reform process summarized:

We actively engage foreign advisors. We have features that no other country in the world has. That's why we can't just copy everything like someone else. Nevertheless, it is right to adopt their methodologies because it helps (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10).

⁵⁹ The invitation to RAND was submitted by the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC).

Although not devoid of challenges, Western partnerships were generally positive. As MND in 2020, Zagorodnyuk touted positively about the NATO-Ukraine relationship, “we are constantly communicating at the working group level” (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10). Zagorodnyuk in 2019, also commented about close collaboration with the United States and the reputational aspects of reform progress optics:

We also have a permanent group of strategic advisors that has existed for several years.

There is a US representative there ... They analyzed our reforms in detail, i.e. they dove into the topics, and we gave them briefings. Because international support for our reform is extremely important to us (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10).

Western assistance, such as the DRAB worked with and through the PRO as a central interface that would direct reforms. It was reported that personnel of the PRO were sincere in reform desire and open, accepting and inviting of Western support (AP 24, 2023, January 5th). Outside opinion of Zagorodnyuk describe him as a reformer (Fałkowski, 2019) and doing excellent work (AP 24, 2023, January 5th). The PRO reform efforts in my perspective were genuine. The PRO was influential for the creation of the 2016 Strategic Defence Bulletin (SDB) which was a very significant program of reform. Internally, defence commentator Yuri Butusov, noted for blunt criticism of the government was optimistic that the SDB would permit the reform process to “move from words and imitations to real actions” (Butusov 2016, May 20th). There is further evidence that the SDB provided a focal point for international support to be anchored. This is evident in 2018, in a declaration of the UK Government which states the UK government:

“assures continuous support for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspiration, primarily the process of increasing the capability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces through implementation of Ukraine’s Defence Reform programme as outlined in the Strategic Defence Bulletin”

(Ministry of Defence of UK & Williamson, 2018 November 21).

This UK assessment was one of many which congratulated Ukrainian reform progress, while also referencing requirement of additional work to complete. Other assessment reports (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), 2017 September; Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Razumkov, MFAN, 2017) paint a more negative assessment of reform progress on civilian control across the totality of the security sector.⁶⁰ Further, Fałkowski, a member of the DRAB mentions that there are:

significant challenges to overcome in meeting Ukraine’s goals. Its institutions are still fragile and not yet fit for democratic, Euro-Atlantic purposes. The MoD has made some progress in implementing modern principles of defence management, but the process still requires fundamental institutional and cultural changes (Fałkowski, 2019, November 29).

However, slow progress needs to be contextualized. SSR literature demonstrates, cultural adoption of democratic norms is not a quick fix and must be understood as incremental. A PRO document

⁶⁰ Although the subsequent analysis will focus on defence and military aspects of civilian control for pragmatic reasons, I certainly do not want to discount the importance of the broader actors in the civil-military relationship.

of 2016, similarly, advocates for recognition of gradual progression, evident in the following passage:

The concept of civilian democratic control over the armed forces should offer not only an ideal “end state” for the state, but also critically important realistic stages of reform, step by step, that will not lead to the destruction of existing administrative and operational mechanisms, because the state of chaos is worse than imperfect solutions (Project Reforms Office, 2016, November 29, p.1).

As one interview participant stressed, the immensity of Ukraine’s reform projects across all of society simultaneously between 2014-2022 cannot be discounted (AP 24, 05 January 2023). This comment about the scale of reform tasks, is consistent with challenges identified in SSR (Sedra, 2017). Further, adoption to norms of democratic civil-military relations coincided with the urgent need to address the war as the state’s survival hung in the balance. The significance of the war was noted a few years later:

In 2014, with the survival of Ukraine’s security and defence sector the primary concern, ad-hoc initiatives and familiar ‘soviet’ style ‘fixes’ were applied in order to ensure a functioning Armed Forces, with intelligence and counterintelligence competencies. The challenge during this period did not concern effectiveness, but rather survival (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Razumkov, MFAN, 2017, p.22).

The analysis of reform progress needs to begin from the starting point of the independence era rather than an ahistorical one, unanchored in space. Thus, while the negative aspect of the

military resisting the General Staff's subordination under the MND earlier in the period occurred, contextualization notes the positive that emerged – that this disagreement did not materialize into formal disobedience and the military complied. This approval of the “NATO-desired” version of the SDB allowed Poroshenko to “receive political support and positive assessment by NATO of its cooperation with Ukraine” (Butusov 2016, May 20). A deepening appreciation of democratic norms of civil military relations comes later in the period when Commander in Chief Zaluzhny (July 21st 2021 – 8 February 2024) remarked that “the Ukrainian Armed Forces are meant to execute orders, not to decide whether we will follow them or not” (Lashchenko, 2021 September 5th). Zaluzhny's remarks reflect an acceptance of the military's role within an externally democratic construct of civil military relations.

Progress of reform success was noted. For example, a 2019 Ukrainian report from the Cabinet of Ministers, supported by a myriad of international partners praised C2 organizational changes (Reforms Delivery Office of the CMU, 2019). These C2 Organizational changes were also a sign of progress for United States Deputy Assistant Secretary for National Defense Laura Cooper at a conference entitled “Democracy in Action: Zero Corruption Conference” in 2021 (Vergun 2021, June 7). The conclusion of progress was echoed by outgoing MND Poltorak arguing that MOD progress had been positive:

And today, we are working very productively. If we take the defense ministry, the biggest part of the homework is done. We reached a new stage in managing systemic reforms. We have very productive work with our strategic advisors. And I think that the armed forces

definitely will not trail far behind, when the question about accepting us into NATO will or not will be raised (Romaliiska, 2019 May 22).

The Ukrainian press reported at the end of 2020, reform progress had been quite effective with a compliance of 79 percent of the 2016 SDB indicators (Voloshin, 2020 December 5).

Similarly, Zaluzhny expressed that the Ukrainian military had become NATO compliant, referencing the successful implementation of over 300 reforms, including the separation of powers of the Chief of Defence Staff from the Commander of the Joint Forces Operation (Radio Svoboda, 2021 September 26). The importance of demonstration of progress of external legitimacy was key to attainment of Western cooperation. As expressed by Zagorodnyuk:

One of the most important ways for us to join NATO is reform, not just as an operational component, but also as a political one. When our partners see that we are reforming, it brings us closer to the Alliance. They [NATO] left with an extremely positive report. We can say for sure that the reform movement that we are undergoing is extremely positively assessed by the international community and our partners (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10).

Yet assessments throughout the period remained mixed. After noting some positive developments,

Vineta Kleine, head of NATO's representation in Ukraine noted more was required "of civilian democratic oversight, judicial reform, and anti-corruption" (Ponomarenko, 2021, September 15).

Kleine further commented:

In Ukraine's case, like in any other country's case, it is about showing with practical examples that rule of law is ensured, that (in Ukraine's case) anti-corruption institutions operate effectively, that reforms Ukraine has committed to are being implemented. These things raise the country's image (Matiushenko, 2021 November 15).

While NATO membership was not extended in the period, the NATO relationship progressed. In June 2020, Ukraine received an Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP) which is a highly visible deepening of the relationship and testament of improvement (North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 2020, June 12). US and Canadian support was important in NATO's consideration for extending an Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP) to Ukraine (Sheiko, 2020, February 13; AP 24, 2023 January 5th). The US representative to NATO, praised anti-corruption efforts and measures to strengthen civilian control "We support President Zelensky's efforts in that regard and we will continue to work with them as they solidify their democracy and instill the anticorruption measures that have been introduced by President Zelensky" (UNIAN, 2020, February 11).

In terms of cultural development there is evidence of a maturing culture along democratic norms of civil-military relations. In one instance, Zagorodnyuk while defence minister (February 2020) declined to publicly criticize the work of the previous MND (Poltorak):

"No. I'm definitely not going to talk about blame. It makes absolutely no sense. Now we have a clear plan of what to do. We are implementing it. I will not blame anyone, especially from previous periods" (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10).

Zagordnyuk's comment is a progression from the Soviet blame culture that was evident in the Independence period (Grytsenko, 2006). Although this is speech-act cannot be taken as indicative of widespread cultural change, it is an example of leadership action. Further, Zagorodnyuk claims that during his tenure as MND he had never received untoward top-down pressure from the Presidential level (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10).

In the period, Ukrainian society improved its corruption ranking slightly.⁶¹ In the first year, Zagorodnyuk while MND praised the MOD's focus on corruption efforts:

We had corruption everywhere. And now it remains at many levels. Unfortunately, this is not something that can be fixed in 5 months. We have replaced those deputy ministers who had corruption risks, changed the heads of the main departments and structural units with corruption risks. We have changed the main inspection that is supposed to check. We have appointed a new management team to analyze risks and fight corruption. We have handed over dozens of cases to law enforcement agencies that had not been handed over before. We constantly cooperate with the NABU, the SSU, the SBI, and the prosecutor's office. We cannot conduct our own investigations, but we clearly analyze the risks and show where they exist. This includes land, illegal alienation of real estate, and corruption at state-owned enterprises of the Defense Ministry... (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10).

⁶¹ 2013: 25/100; 2014: 26/100; 2015: 27/100; 2016: 29/100; 2017: 30/100; 2018: 32/100; 2019: 30/100; 2020: 33/100; 2021: 32/100; 2022: 33/100. Source: (Transparency International, n.d.)

In another quote in the same interview, Zagorodnyk provides a realistic answer about the feasibility of identifying and stopping corruption, stating: “To be honest, not always.” However, he then stresses the MOD’s proactivity and particular attention to the anti-corruption efforts (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10).

In 2020, Zagorodnyuk met with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and acknowledged that “international support for our reform is extremely important to us” (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10). Without fully discounting diplomatic speak, the public statements identify that key allies observed a measure of progress.

Public expressions of external, opinions of Ukrainian reform progress were undoubtedly important for Ukraine. External legitimacy was a qualifying determinant to the strength of Western support, and a constant source of worry for Ukraine. American public opinion of supporting Ukraine increased in 2015 (Pew, 2015, February 23). After two years of reform, BBC reported in 2016 that there was possible “Ukraine fatigue” amongst key partners, “due in part to what is seen as Kiev's lack of significant movement on reform” (Stern, 2016, December 7).

Orienting EU allies to support Ukraine instead of Russia, where significant business interests existed was a struggle in the period. As described by Pifer: “Few things would damage Ukraine more than if its friends in the West begin to question whether the country is worth the trouble—and simply give up” (Pifer, 2020, July 22).

In terms of tangible progress, the United States began sending lethal aid to Ukraine during the Trump administration starting in 2017. Ukraine received expanded export capability and visa

free travel to the EU, which Poroshenko states was the result of the credibility the state received through the effort of diplomats and a sign of political and economic independence serving to safeguard from Russia (Presidential Administration of Ukraine, 2018, August 31). Canada negotiated a free trade agreement with Ukraine which came into force in 2017, and began sending lethal aid in December 2022. This level of increased reputation was critically important as Ukraine quickly received moral legitimacy of its post-2022 defence from Western states and permitting contributions to their war effort. Important changes occurred in this critical juncture facilitated through unity of objective amongst key internal and external actors and genuine learning occurred. This includes a reorientation of the foreign, security, defence and military policies, enshrined in law and guidance documents. Additionally, there was improvement of civilian control through the position of the MND and improvements to clarity in the delineation of authority and responsibilities between the General Staff and MOD. Additionally, there were efforts to increase civilianization in the MOD and improve the state's monopoly on the use of force as well as improve disciplinary mechanisms over the military's conduct.

Conclusion: Post 2022 Invasion Results

By 2022, Ukraine had made significant progress from its starting point in 2014 and strengthened its reputation with respect to civil military relations and external partners. In the defence of the invasion, it was noted that military commanders were relatively unknown and that focus was being directed to Zelensky as supreme Commander in Chief (Battleground Ukraine 2023, April 28; Herszenhorn & McLeary, 2022, April 8). This suggests a military desiring to

remain within the democratic conception of civil-military relations by not desiring to amass political power.

To conclude, this section, the dramatic increase in Western support to Ukraine post-2022 demonstrates that a critical juncture had occurred permitting locked-in aspects of Ukraine's defence sector to be improved and aligned with democratic norms. Thus, reform progress was made in terms of external legitimacy. Path-dependence lock-in would indicate that Ukraine would remain mired in corruption and suffer from continued poor military professionalism. However, support for Ukraine in domestic populations of Western countries was much higher than in 2014. As a result of improvements in civil-military relations and military professionalism, previous characterizations of Ukraine as corrupt, un-democratic and oligarchic were significantly abated post-2022. Ukraine's external legitimacy was not perfect, but instead of remaining shortcomings being focused on, Ukraine received tremendous sympathy in Western publics. Externally, Ukraine was framed in the Western zeitgeist in a much more legitimate manner than in 2014. This meant Western support could expand. Western intervention was minimalistic in 2014 and included only non-lethal military support, but post-2022 became overtly lethal and much more substantial. Further, Western weaponry and equipment was influential to war success.

US security Assistance between 2014 and 2022 was 2.8 billion USD (Yousif, 2022, October 22). Between February and October of 2022, US security assistance was 17.6 billion USD (Yousif 2022, October 22). The massive military Western support for Ukraine was critical to Ukraine's ability to prosecute the defence and not run out of war supplies. In the first year, following the

2022 invasion, Trebesch et al., (2023) tracked 143 billion Euro of total aid to Ukraine. A graph from Trebesch et al., (2023) is reproduced in figure 4 to provide an indication of source countries and type of aid (Trebesch et al., 2023, p. 26). By November 2023, The US government reported a total of 47 Billion in military assistance since 2014, with 44.2 of that coming since the post-2022 invasion (United States Department of State, 2023 November 20).

Throughout the 2014-2022 period, progress was made on reputational improvement with Western allies permitting the intensification of Western training occurred. With this training, more advanced combat training could be learned – the subject of chapter 6. This support was essential for preparing for war, and eventually the 2022 invasion.

Figure 4. Total bilateral commitments - by type of assistance (billion Euros)
bilateral commitments January 24, 2022, to January 15, 2023

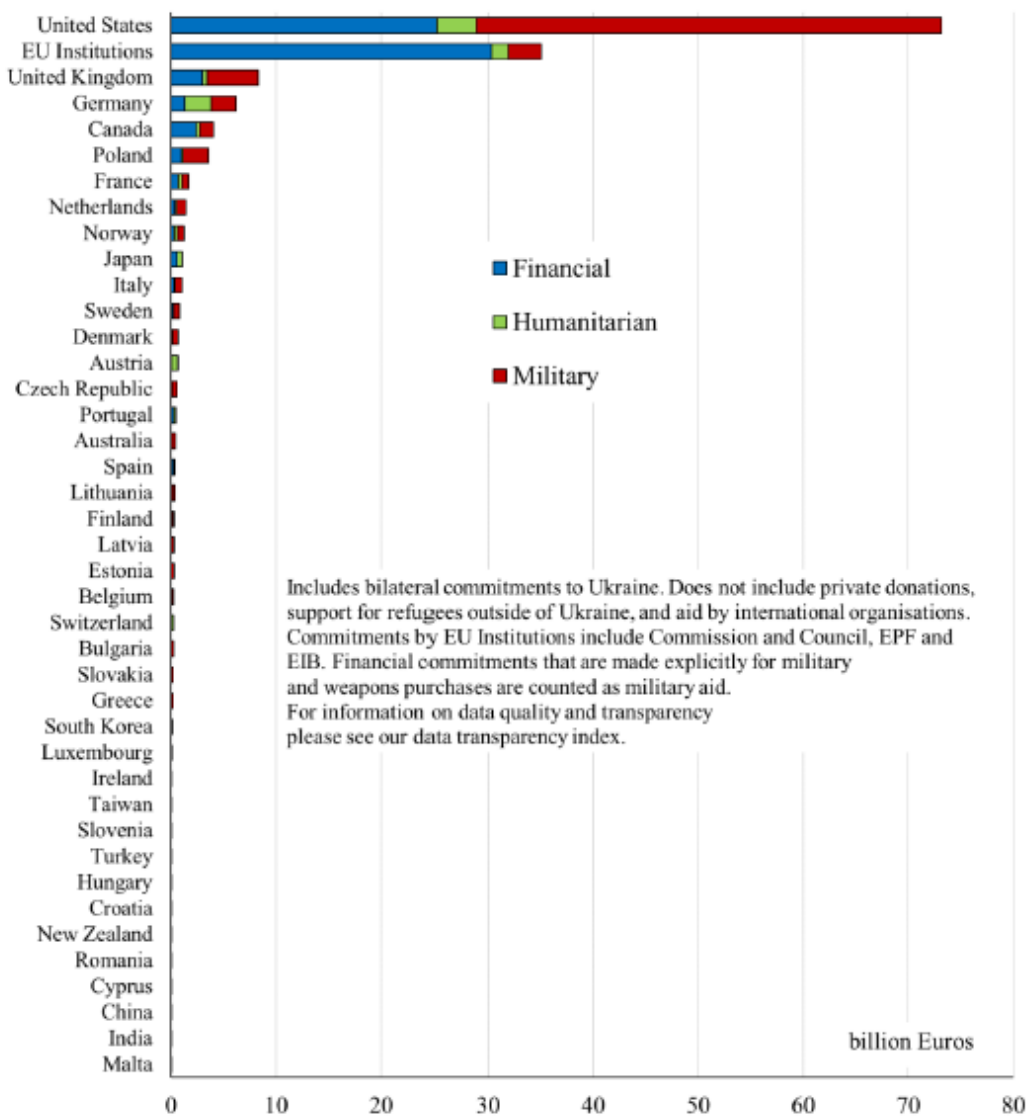


Figure 4 Bilateral Funding to Ukraine post-invasion, source: (Trebesch et al., 2023, p. 26)

Chapter 6: Combat Capability

“I would not want to go head-to-head with them”

(AP 9, 24 January 2022).

This chapter argues that significant improvement occurred in the Ukrainian military’s functional imperative during the ‘critical juncture’. In this period, a unity of political and military will emerged, coalescing on the need for reform to occur, as well, that Western military expertise be the source to learn from. Without the critical juncture, the locked-in Soviet approaches to warfare and military organization, mindset and culture would likely remain locked-in. Section one of the chapter summarizes key points of failure experienced in 2014-2015 organized between Force Generation (FG) and Force Employment (FE), the result of locked-in Soviet legacies. Section 2 then details key organizational changes, the stand-up of a Special Operations Forces (SOF) organization; focus on merit, reorientation of the education system, increases in budget, and the expansion of training opportunities through partnership. Section 3 focuses on specific learning accomplished through Op UNIFIER highlighting Soviet legacies in the military realm, including Op UNIFIER’s role in deepening specific military capabilities, mission command and NCO development. During the period there were a vast number of reform efforts related to combat capability. While many are discussed in this chapter, it is certainly not a comprehensive historical account. The analysis does not detail the improvement of other security actors, nor the defence industry, although the moves to reduce military supply chains on Russia was an important factor (AP 6, 2022, January 14). Sections 2 and 3 provide evidence of improvement of factors in the critical juncture through an intertwined linkage of internal and external factors, including:

political direction, the experience of combat during the fighting of the Donbas War (2014-2022) and Western support.

The final section of the chapter examines results of the process. It considers how the Donbas war provided immediate location for the military to hone its skills, avoiding skill-fade and unique learning through war. The presence of war on its own could have improved combat capacity, but the critical juncture is important to explain the Western assistance whose supportive elements and guidance improved the process, by bringing in material support, and expertise. The argument is that genuine learning occurred, attested to through Op UNIFIER impressions of Ukrainian skill development. An important part of the argument is that each improvement was reinforcing, with success accumulating on previous gains. It does not claim that improvement to combat capability will be sufficient for war victory in the current war, (however victory is defined) and it is unwise to speculate as the war continues at the time of writing.

2014 Status and the Expectation of Locked-in Soviet Legacies

On February 28th 2014, at an emergency meeting of the National Security Defence Council of the interim government, there was a realization that requisite military capabilities were lacking. A transcript recording the meeting offers insight into how the interim government was viewing the situation:

Nalyvaychenko: The information coming through our channels fully confirms Russia's readiness to deploy troops concentrated along our border. Both Americans and Germans are unanimously asking us not to start any active actions, because, according to their

intelligence, Putin will use this to launch a large-scale land invasion. We need to hear our Western partners, and they need time to make decisions.

Turchynov: If we take into account the level of readiness of Russian troops on our eastern borders, we must do everything to be able to defend ourselves, the Russians will reckon only with the strong.

Tymoshenko: But the fact is that we are weak.

Source: (Shtogrin, 2019, February 27).

While Turchynov's attitude is undoubtedly valiant, Tymoshenko's recognition of military weakness was sobering and accurate as Ukraine could only muster 6000 combat capable troops in the Spring of 2014 (Faucon, 2017, p. 5; Puglisi, 2017; Kofman et al., 2017). Standing manning levels were insufficient causing a need to rely on mobilized conscripts or volunteers with low experience (Lavrov, 2015; Cohen, 2016, June 10). Further, mobilized conscripts were "poorly trained, poorly equipped, poorly motivated" (Lavrov 2015, p.218). There was a lack of personal equipment - body armour and helmets and armoured vehicles for troop and supply transportation (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (2017a). Pre-existing stocks of war supplies were insufficient: the Air Force lacked precision guided munitions (Lavrov, 2015). Certain trades lacked skills or leadership capability - Ground Force Air Defence, Missile Troops and Artillery (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (2017a), pp. 44;46). The transportation infrastructure and maintenance/repair capacity were not sufficient (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (2017a), pp. 58-59). Deeper FG problems had meant the training system failed to provide combined arms experience without exposure to large-

scale exercises (Lavrov, 2015). Further, the level of logistical supply chains to maintain deployed troops were insufficient, such as lack of drinking water (Stek, 2020 January 19). Ukraine also lacked modern encrypted communications equipment⁶² which proved devastating (Battleground Ukraine, 2022, September 1; Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017a, p. 50).

In tracing the cause of unreadiness in 2014, Sanders (2017) notes the failure of the transformation model which moved to a lower quantity of troops during the 2006-2010 period. While the lack of mass deriving from pre-2014 force reduction is an important factor, it is not sufficient. An effective defence of the state would not be possible if political or military leadership hold agendas or loyalties contrary to the state's best interests. On this point, a common refrain in Ukrainian society is that Ukrainian military capability was deliberately curtailed under Yanukovich's tenure (2010-2014) (Butusov, 2014, October 10; Kuzio, 2017; AP 6, 2022, January 14; AP 16, 2022, March 30). Figure 5 illustrates a total reduction of the UAF over Yanukovich's tenure.

⁶² This was reported reserve Officer Lt. Colonel Pavlo Khazan that in 2014 the UAF lacked encrypted communications, (Battleground Ukraine, 2022, September 1).



Figure 5 - Reductions in the Ukrainian Armed Forces and MOD, (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2014, p.66)

Multiple forms of disloyalty were in fact witnessed at political and military levels which impacted the Ukrainian state's response to Crimea. First at the political level, the Yanukovich regime and its political loyalists defected, leaving the government in disarray. This included Pavlo Lebedev, Ukraine's Minister of Defence from 2012-2014 (Andreikovets, 2022 November 2). Throughout 2014-2015 loyalty remained an issue. According to Viktor Muzhenko, Ukraine's Commander in chief from March 2014- April 2019, a plan for withdrawing from Debaltseve mysteriously appeared on a politician's Facebook account (Day, 2017, March 9). However, it is not clear whether this incident represented an unintentional opsec⁶³ failure, or an act of disloyalty.

At the military level Ukrainian military members had a choice to make in terms of allegiance, illustrating Lehrke's argument about social transition (Lehrke, 2012). Disloyalty was

⁶³An abbreviation of "Operational Security", used as a military term to denote the need to not reveal information.

suspected in Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General Volodymyr Zamana,⁶⁴ as he did not sign combat orders to authorize Crimean based units to fight back (Stek 2020, January 19). Retroactive accusations against Zamana suspected that he had acted on Russian orders to keep personnel levels in military units lower than legally permitted, deliberately disbanded units and air defenses and placed Crimean forces under naval commander Admiral Yuriy Ilyin, who defected to Russia (Ponomarenko, 2019, February 25). An alternative explanation to Zamana's disloyalty was that Russia intercepted communications to Crimean based units (Losiev, 2016). Regardless, orders to Crimean based troops were not received absent or intercepted orders partially explains the response failure to the appearance of 'little green men', now known to be Russian SOF (Losiev, 2016 October 21).

However, disloyalty was broader. Speaking retroactively, Commander in Chief Muzhenko (March 2014 – April 2019), states that Russian Generals were literally commanding the Ukrainian military in 2014 (Day, 2017, March 9). Mass defection of Crimean based Officers and police forces, including from the notorious Berkut⁶⁵ occurred (Shtogrin, 2019 February 27). Defection from the

⁶⁴ Zamana was eventually arrested and charged with treason in 2019 (Warsaw Institute, 2019 February; Ponomarenko, 2019 February 25). However, his culpability was not clear cut. Zamana had previously led Ukrainian defence reform efforts and met with NATO and US officials, in 2012 and 2013 (NATO 2012, July 31st). Further, Zamana had been fired by Yanukovich on February 18th 2014 for refusing to send in the army to disband the Maidan protests (Ponomarenko, 2019 February 25). After a legal process Zamana was acquitted and blamed acting President Turchynchov during the court process.

⁶⁵ The Berkut was a special police force that operated under the Ministry of Interior, see: (Jacobs, 2014 January 27). The Berkut was responsible for the violent suppression of the Maidan protests and following the fall of the Yanukovich government was disbanded on February 25th 2014.

Naval Officer corps to the Russian side included First Deputy Commander of the Naval Fleet in Crimea Sergei Yeliseyev and Naval Chief Denis Berezovsky (Polityuk & Zverev, 2017 July 24). Muzhenko estimates that 70 percent of Naval personnel stationed in Crimea chose to defect to Russia (Day, 2017 March 9). Acting President Turchynov, in hindsight claimed that:

out of 13,468 soldiers and officers of the Armed Forces who were in Crimea, only 3990 (29.6%) did not betray their country, out of 10936 employees of the Interior Ministry - only 88 people (0.8%), out of 1870 border guards only 519 (27.7%) returned to Ukraine, out of 2240 employees of the SBU - only 242 (10.8%), out of 527 officers and warrant officers of the State Guard Department did not betray Ukraine - only 20 people (3.8%).

(Gordon.com, 2017, February 27).

High ranking and mass defection permitted Russia to control Crimea efficiently. The presence of Ukrainian military officers loyal to Russia, especially in influential positions such as intelligence is understood by some as a deliberate cultivation, planned over decades by Russia to neuter Ukrainian military identity and capability, especially under the Yanukovich regime (Kuzio, 2017; Bonenberger, 2022, May 9). Additionally, it is speculated that Russia ensured the Ukrainian military was dependent on Russian military supply chains (AP 6, 2022, January 14).

Defection of military personnel in Crimea meant an immediate loss of equipment and access to Crimean military infrastructure, for force generation (education, housing) and force employment (armament stocks and naval and air equipment) (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015, p. 19). More importantly there was a loss of leadership and expertise invested in personnel.

Beyond Crimea, the extent of Russian penetration of the Officer corps, Ministry of Interior, SBU were unknown. In the early part of the crisis (February/March), the Ukrainian military's loyalty was an immense concern for Canada (AP 5, 2022 January 13).

The Ukrainian Officer corps who did not defect were confronted with a psychological barrier which ostensibly also delayed a reaction. Like much of Ukrainian society, the Officer corps was unable to conceive of Russians attacking them (AP 24, 2023 January 5th). Losiev (2016, October 21) describes a sentiment of denial and disbelief that Russia could become an adversary. In the words of Commander in Chief Muzhenko, "the beginning of the Russian aggression was a time of shattering of illusions" (Day, 2017, March 9).

That the Officer corps had not been preparing for war with Russia, cognitively or materially during the Independence era was what Losiev calls an error of "geopolitical infantilism" (Losiev, 2016 October 21). Losiev blames a compounding effect of consecutive generations without clarity in defence and foreign policy. The military did not provide the state with a realistic threat assessment, nor concrete defence plans for Russian aggression. Of course, the political level under Yanukovych's pro-Russia stance likely would not have entertained warnings from the Officer corps for those who held this opinion. Further, Soviet legacy military infrastructure meant a lack of operational presence in the east to respond to the separatist challenge, then Russian aggression.

In terms of FE, critiques of command and control were abundant.⁶⁶ There was poor coordination between the NGU and UAF at Ilovaik and confusion from separate chains of command for the NGU and UAF at Debaltseve (Cohen, 2016, June 10; Butusov, 2015, August 21).

Overall, Soviet legacies that continued in the Independence era contributed to lack of military preparedness in terms of FG and poor performance in FE. Authoritarian political culture meant that the military was physically and cognitively unprepared for war with Russia. Further, issues of centralized FE mean that Command and Control was confused and ineffective.

Reform Efforts in the Critical Juncture

Will to reform

With Crimea annexed by the Russian Federation, the Donbas War erupted and occurred through the May election. In Poroshenko's inaugural speech on June 7th 2014, he stated:

For peace to become lasting, we must get used to living in constant combat readiness. We have to keep the gunpowder dry. Army and its re-equipment by means of national military-industrial complex is our top priority. Moreover, state orders for military-industrial enterprises will give a boost to reindustrialization of the economy. Those who grudge money for the armed forces feed foreign army. Our army must become a true elite

⁶⁶ These include a failure to take ground at Saur-Mogila (Lavrov 2015), inefficient targeting of high-profile targets such as Strelkov, surrender and loss of weapons by the 25th Airborne at Kramatorsk. Other factors include, a lack of mass at Ilovaik and Debaltseve (Sanders, 2017), lack of armour and infantry coordination (Butusov, 2015, August 21), demoralized fighting spirit (Shtogrin, 2019 February 27).

of the Ukrainian community. The word "general" must be associated with the word "hero", not with the word "corruption". We must do ourselves everything to ensure lasting peace and security of Ukraine. Our most reliable allies and the best guarantors of peace are our army, fleet, the National Guard and professional special forces!

Nobody will protect us until we learn to defend ourselves (Kaylan, 2014 June 8th)

Within the excerpt of Poroshenko's speech several themes are noted: a commitment to provisioning the military, the creation of strong military forces and an ethic of self-help, and these elements will be unpacked throughout this chapter. The theme of changing the public image of the military will be discussed in chapter 7.

Poroshenko's rhetoric demonstrates political will to reform, and it appeared to ignite Ukrainian military success in the east in May/June 2014. For example, on May 26th, 2014, Ukrainian forces retook Donetsk airport (Day, 2017, March 9) and by July dislodged the Russian Military Intelligence Colonel Igor Strelkov organizing the DNR (Donetsk People's Republic) and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) resistance movements from Sloviansk. However, on June 14th, Ukraine suffered a mass casualty event when separatists shot down a Ukrainian IL-76 troop transport plane in Luhansk Oblast (BBC, 2014, June 14). Later in August the Ilovaisk tragedy occurred with Ukraine suffering massive losses. The Minsk Accord in September 2014 permitted the Ukrainians to reconstitute and rebuild forces. The Second Battle of Donetsk Airport however raged between September 2014 to January 2015 where Ukrainian resistance defended heroically.

Military Mindset

Echoing Poroshenko's speech, voices throughout the period note that war preparations and self-help attitude were required. A November 2014 roundtable discussion of defence experts argued that a diplomatic response to Russia would be insufficient, Western assistance would be paltry and that the only solution "preparation for war and every possible demonstration of this readiness" (Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies (CACDS), 2014, November 12).

The above quote correctly speculated that Western Forces would not militarily intervene to defend Ukraine. The Minsk II Accords would force Ukrainian concessions to an unacceptable point for the Ukrainian leadership (Arel, 2022, January 26) and the 'critical juncture' narrowed options to a binary choice of fight or surrender. During this window of opportunity, a united will was displayed by the Poroshenko and Zelensky administrations, military and societal actors on the need to fight and necessity to develop a strong military. Defence commentator Butusov stated: "the Ukrainian troops themselves must become peacekeepers. That means we have to fight" (Butusov 2015, March 13). After the initial shock of Russian aggression, the Officer corps recognized that partnership with the Russian Federation was no longer available. A NATO document observed that "the majority of Officers want to go West, realizing that Russia is no longer a friend" (Pacek & Solis, 2016, p.47). Perspectives of realism from the Officer corps demonstrate the Huntingtonian conservative military mindset, which holds that military strength is required due to the nature of the Russian adversary.

However, some discrepancy between the political and military leadership can be seen in that both the Poroshenko and Zelensky presidencies had attempted to propose cooperative settlement with Russia at various times. In the early days of the Donbas war during June 2014, Poroshenko provided a 2-week ceasefire seeking a political settlement (BBC, 2014, June 20). Zelensky, coming to power in 2019 also campaigned on a platform of seeking a diplomatic settlement with Russia (President of Ukraine, 2019, May 20). However, MND Poltorak warned that any negotiation with Russia would not be in good faith (Romaliiska 2019, May 22). This discrepancy is natural given the different responsibilities of political leadership and requirement to think about holistic societal welfare. This sentiment remained constant, with several voices anticipating that additional war with Russian was inevitable. Demonstrating the Huntingtonian military mind, Commander in Chief Muzhenko stated in 2017: “I can say one thing - we are seriously preparing for different scenarios, in particular for full-scale aggression by the Russian side.” Muzhenko also stated “to put it militarily - we work to the full depth of the tactical and strategic construction” (Day, 2017, March 9).

With retroactive awareness of the 2022 invasion, the importance of this mindset developing is important. Ukrainian commentators. - military and civilian - noted ways the military needed to improve. Serhiy Bondarchuk⁶⁷, in an April 2014 op-ed (Bondarchuk, 2014, April 28)

⁶⁷ Bondarchuk was CEO of Ukrspetsexport (2005-2010), Member of the Expert Council in the Field of National Security. Source: (Bondarchuk 2014, April 28).

notes the importance of the professionalization of an NCO corps, development of a SOF capability, de-coupling from reliance on Russian war supplies and to ensure merit dictated military appointments. Defence commentator Yuri Butusov called for a host of priorities: increased funding, the need to acquire war supplies and massive improvement to training to develop combined arms cooperation (RNBEE, 2014 August 3). Butusov points out the overreliance on minimally trained recruits meant a skill-gap for effectiveness in 2014 and like Bondarchuk calls to develop an NCO corps with stricter requirements and higher quality instructors (RNBEE, 2014 August 3). The recognition of need was clear, but the state had little money.

At the level of political guidance, Poroshenko moved to update security policies submitting a Draft Law to Parliament to revoke the non-aligned status in December 2014. The preamble of the Law stated “Ukraine's non-aligned status... enshrined in the Law of Ukraine "On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policy," proved ineffective in protecting the state from external aggression” (European Truth, 2014, December 18). The Poroshenko regime subsequently published the National Security Strategy (NSS) in May 2015 with Russian aggression the primary external focus (President of Ukraine, 2015, May 6, 3.1).⁶⁸ With the NSS, Ukraine’s security policy

⁶⁸ Within the National Security Strategy (NSS) threats include Russian Aggression (3.1); Inefficiency of the Security and Defence Sector (3.2); Corruption (3.3); Economic factors (3.4); Energy Security (3.5); Information Security (3.6); Cybersecurity (3.7); Critical Infrastructure (3.8); Environmental Factors (3.9). President of Ukraine (2015, May 6).

now prioritized Russian aggression and could identify pre-emptively the pan-domain threats of Russia's 'hybrid warfare', a concept which rose to popularity after the annexation of Crimea. Internally, the NSS notes internal problems = a lack of coordination between security services was noted (3.2.), "institutional weakness, unprofessionalism, structural imbalance in the security forces", and a "lack of resources and efficient use of resources". The NSS also mentions the inefficiency of the public administration across the state (3.3) including "corruption".

The fact that the NSS document attributes internal responsibility as a cause of error for 2014-2015 defeat, demonstrates a level of improved professionalism from a Soviet culture of blame, setting the stage for a substantial reform effort.

The NSS gave direction for "reforming the defense forces with a focus on creating highly effective combat-ready units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations" (4.3) and to achieve "full independence from Russia in the production of weapons and military equipment" (4.3). The NSS provided a strategic task, the: "restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine...reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories" (4.1). The NSS also details specific points of improvement for combat capability (4.3), summarized in figure 6. This massive list of complex factors testifies to the scale of the reform task within the defence domain, most of which are complex and require significant time and resource expenditure.

Figure 6 - Specific Aspects for the Armed Forces from the National Security Strategy

(NSS), section 4.3.

Revision of Structure	Elimination of Structure between the MOD and General Staff Centralization of Command in a Joint Operational Headquarters Development of Special Operations Command (SOF)
Improvement of Personnel and Capabilities	Skills adopted to NATO Standards in: -communications -intelligence -electronic warfare -specialized intelligence (aerospace data) -counter-intelligence -Missile Troops -Artillery -Air defence -Naval Capabilities
Improvement of Management and Training of Troops	Use of NATO standards -medical -electronic accounting of equipment
Improvement of Weapons	-Replenishment of Stocks -Cooperation with NATO on specifics

Figure 6 Specific Aspects for the Armed Forces from the National Security Strategy (NSS), section 4.3.

Importantly, the NSS identified admission to NATO and EU as state policy goals, committing to an alignment of security and defence reforms to a NATO standard.

The priority task is to achieve full compatibility of the security and defence sector with the relevant structures of NATO member states, which should ensure the possibility of future membership in the Alliance to obtain effective guarantees of state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine (President of Ukraine, 2015, May 6, section 4.7).

Later in 2015, a new military doctrine was released in September which updated the 2004 Military doctrine. The number of objectives listed in the MD, again testifies to the enormity of the reform task. Point 17 of the MD called for the military to “achieve operational and technical compatibility

with the armed forces of NATO member states” (Parliament of Ukraine, 2015). Together, the 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS) and Military Doctrine (MD) provided direction for the military and represented concrete expressions of political will that provided the military a coherent plan of action. Reforms could thus be stable and deeply rooted, rather than ephemeral.

Most importantly, the NSS and MD enshrined what had already become obvious – defining Russia as a threat. Military preparation could be oriented to the immediacy of the war, and longer-term improvement tasks in consequence. The NSS and MD also formalized the renewed relationship with NATO that had already begun when the interim Turchynov government had requested assistance from NATO member countries (AP 5, 2022, January 13). The goal of interoperability with NATO became a clear objective, a source of knowledge and technical definitions of capabilities in all military domains. The 2018 National Security Law further enshrined the objective of admission to NATO.

In May 2016, The Strategic Defense Bulletin (SDB) came into existence (President of Ukraine, 2016, May 20). The SDB was a more precise roadmap for reforms progress for the defined period of 2016-2020 highlighting elements of military professionalism. For combat capability, the ambition of the 2016 SDB was lofty – “if we manage to achieve all the objectives stated by the SDB, this would lead to a new modern army, which will be combat ready according to the standards of the leading global countries” (Zagorodnyuk, 2016, July 11). The SDB, lasted until 2020, and a defence review occurred, and in 2021, a new SDB was launched (Office of the President of Ukraine, 2021, September 17). The 2020 Defence Review used the NATO “Capability-

based” planning methodology, demonstrating an entrenchment of learning (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2021), p. 5). Ihor Kabanenko, retired Admiral and former Deputy Minister in the MOD former describes several notable weaknesses of the 2020 version. Importantly, that it does not declare what is to be done should Ukraine be attacked, nor detail how to regain maritime waters lost to Russia (Kabanenko, 2020, September 24). These comments note a healthy culture of critique for improvement.

Improvement in Military Command and Control

In the wake of mass defection in the spring of 2014, the loyalty question was a concern for Canada and other allies. Although not publicly branded as such, Op UNIFIER intended to bypass an untrustworthy or dysfunctional senior officer Corps, where a 5th column was suspected (AP 5, 2022, January 13). As the period of the critical juncture progressed, loyalty became less of an issue as officers motivated to defect had already made their move in 2014-2015 (AP 1, 2019, January 11). Demographically, there were less officers who could internally block or shirk reforms out of a concealed loyalty to Russia. Instead, immense patriotism was propelling Ukrainian reform efforts (AP 1, 2019, January 11; AP 16, 2022, 30 March 2022; Berthiaume, 2022, May 13). Several interview respondents mentioned that the NGU appeared much more Ukrainian in political loyalty versus the AFU (AP 16, 2022, 30 March 2022).

Political appointments of key command positions made by Poroshenko (2014) and Zelensky (2019) provide a glimpse into the improvement of command-and-control. Theoretically, competence of military officers can be judged by career experience and reputational standing amongst peers. Poroshenko’s inaugural appointments to key positions in 2014 were met with

criticism. Former MND in the Yushchenko government, Grytsenko insinuated that Poroshenko appointments were indicative of personal loyalty rather than of merit (Grytsenko, 2014, July 3). This included the appointment of a fellow billionaire Yuriy Kosyuk, to oversee areas of military procurement. Another appointment was Valeriy Heletey as Minister of National Defence (MND). Grytsenko noted Heletey's law enforcement rather than military career and tersely wrote: there were "50 candidates for the head of the Defense Ministry, more powerful and professional than Heletey" (Grytsenko, 2014, July 3). Defence analyst, Butusov also criticized Heletey's appointment, as one signifying a personal loyalty to Poroshenko (BBC, 2014, July 4. Heletey did have combat experience, having led a SOF unit near Slovyansk on May 14th 2014, but was criticized for the defeat at Ilovaik. Butusov described Heletey, not as disloyal: "a good person, I guess. But he is absolutely incompetent and has neither professional nor organizational skills" (Charter97.org, 2014 November 3). While Poroshenko's appointments did not represent disloyalty, it appeared that the Soviet legacy of political authoritarian culture was continuing. However, Poroshenko quickly replaced Heletey in October 2014 with General Stepan Poltorak, commander of the National Guard who was popular amongst troops (Kates, 2014, October 13). The selection of Poltorak demonstrates a move toward merit and his tenure for the remainder of the Poroshenko term (May 2019) provided stability.

Organizational Changes

In the period, the military's organizational structure was redeveloped. A first step was to re-establish the naval command and training establishments lost in Crimea in Odessa (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015).

Another important development was the establishment of a Special Forces Command. Special Forces had already been attempted by an initiative by Minister of Defence Grytsenko in 2007, but had dwindled in the Yanukovich years (Kuplevatska, 2017, November 16). Poroshenko fast-tracked the creation of a SOF command in 2014 via Presidential decree and General Serhiy Kryvonos' command appointment continued a selection by merit (Kuplevatska, 2017, November 16). By the end of 2016, legal changes established the Special Forces command, including a new training center (Kuplevatska, 2017 November 16; Day, 2017, March 9). This meant the SOF Command became a separate Force Employer providing ground based and maritime forces who contained a multitude of skill sets, providing great flexibility for their employment (White, 2022, March 4). Ukrainian SOF was apparently developed domestically (Ageev, 2022 January 3rd), demonstrating the self-help attitude. However, experts from NATO militaries accompanied the process. Journalist Kuplevatska (2017) reported that NATO experts vetoed a Ukrainian proposition to combine Special Forces and Air Mobile forces, which to her demonstrated continued "ineffectiveness of Ukrainian public administration" (Kuplevatska, 2017 November 16). However, the advice was heeded and the relationship between the developing Ukrainian SOF and Western SOF community represents an enormous benefit for Ukrainian improvement through receipt of multiple sources of top-level instruction. Without the united will of the political and military leadership to openly embrace Western expertise, the old trajectory may have won out. Although Op UNIFIER, did not have a formal SOF component, there were connections to Canadian SOF in the period. Although the content of the SOF engagement is not public, my experience and analysis

of the available information leads me to conclude that there is likely to have been a free-flowing exchange of information.⁶⁹ Ukrainian SOF thus received highest quality instruction, tactical know-how and best-practices of NATO countries (Armed Forces of Ukraine, 2021 December 1; White, 2022 March 4th). By 2017, Muzhenko noted that SOF were already performing offensive actions in Donbas (Day 2017, March 9).

Another form of Ukrainian organizational improvement was via the September 2014 establishment of the Lithuanian – Polish- Ukrainian Brigade (LITPOLUKRBRIG).⁷⁰ LITPOLUKRBRIG is composed of an infantry battalion from each country (Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, n.d.). The Common Soviet and cultural heritages provide a background for cooperation. Additionally, the brigade represents a permanent venue of information sharing, where NATO soldiers can demonstrate a NATO standard (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10). This exposure undoubtedly serves as an example to Ukrainian soldiers that change from the Soviet legacy is possible.

Education and Training

From the outset, initiatives to improve training and education were apparent. Merit became more pronounced for a new officer assessment program called *Saber* put in place in 2014

⁶⁹This opinion is formed from several interactions the author has had with the special operations community.

⁷⁰ However, the 2013 White Book on Defence mentions LITPOLUKRBRIG and work on legislative cooperation, meaning the organization had previously been under construction (Ministry of National Defence of Ukraine, 2014 p. 52).

(Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015, p. 38). Additionally, “combat experience was actively introduced into the educational process” (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015, p. 41).

This point was later stressed by Glen Grant (2018) who urged that experienced Officers be retained, Officer education be more practical and field oriented and merit be used exclusively for command promotions. Operational Commanders also required authority (Grant, 2018, January 31).

A co-authored article from former defence Minister Zagorodnyuk, former head of the Reforms Office Favorska, Norwegian Defence Attaché, Hans Petter Midtunn, and former Ukrainian Colonel Olexander Pavliuchyuk argued that military reform would not be complete prior to the establishment of a new military education system (Frolova et al., 2021, December 23). MND Taran announced that Officers would receive a new curriculum focused on learning NATO standards beginning in September 2021 (WordandDeed. 2021, June 19). This is highly significant as, previously, the Officer cadre had significant learning from Soviet or Russian sources. Learning from international partners materialized in many other forms including NATO’s Defence Engagement Education Program (DEEP) which became more active in Ukraine post 2014 (AP 25, 2023, January 25).

The length, depth and type of training a mobilized or contracted service member receives also influences combat effectiveness. Another point of improvement was the increase of military training opportunities which began immediately (Ministry of Defence, 2015, p.30). This included a Command-and-Control exercise called (Spring Thunderstorm) obviously named in anticipation of

a Spring 2015 offensive (Ministry of Defence, 2015, p.30). Ukraine also increased participation in US-bilateral and NATO exercises the primary goal of which was the “promotion of trust of the international community to Ukraine” (Ministry of Defence, 2015, pp.32-32). 600 exercises occurred in 2016 (Kiryukhin, 2018, August 17). The number of exercises conducted in 2017 was 238 (White Book 2017, p. 12). What is remarkable is that these exercises occurred in addition to the ongoing war. By 2019, Poltarak when leaving the post stated.

We conduct a lot of joint exercises. Until 2014, there were not any team exercises planned, and there were 26 of them in 2019. Up to 20,000 of our people have been trained according to NATO standards. We'll reach these standards. But we still have a lot to do (Romaliiska 2019, May 22).

FE- Command and Control

In line with a recommendation of the Rand report (Oliker et al., 2016) and SDB objectives, the Anti-terrorist Operation (ATO) declared by Turchynov on April 6th 2014 was switched on April 18th 2018, to a joint command organizational structure (Reforms Delivery Office of the CMU, 2019, p.63). The significance of this switch of authority, was that the war came under control of the General Staff of the Ukrainian military, called the *Joint Forces Operation* (JFO) when previously the ATO was under the Ministry of Interior (MOI). The change of legal framework reflected a shift in the interpretation of the conflict from an internal one to an external one recognizing the presence of Russian regular military, whereas, under the ATO considered the breakaway LNR and DPR as terrorist entities (Ukraine Crisis Media Center, 2018, April 5). The singular command and control of the Donbas war meant avoidance of coordination and communication problems of 2014-

2015. Continual improvements to C2 occurred including repositioning sectors of responsibility and installing surveillance cameras on the front line for greater Situational Awareness (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, p.17). Western reforms also encouraged Ukraine to split military organization function between Force Generation and Force Employment, concepts that were new to the Ukrainians.⁷¹ This separation was a clear message transmitted by the DRAB (AP 24, 2023, January 05) and Op UNIFIER participants (AP 20, 2022, April 26). Canada's own conceptual and organizational distinction of FG/FE had occurred during the Afghan mission when CDS Rick Hillier, transformed the command structure and followed American developments on this issue. While the FG/FE change had occurred only the decade previously in the CAF, there was a recent familiarity with the concept amongst CAF personnel deployed on Op UNIFIER.

Op UNIFIER, Skill Development and Confronting the Soviet Legacies

As discussed in Chapter 5, the United States and Canada did not immediately provide lethal aid in 2014-2015 due to worries in part about external legitimacy and provoking Russia. A 2015 visit of international experts reveals that professionalism in the form of skill proficiency also impacted the assessment of aid provision. As expressed by a mission participant retired US Air Force General Wald, the mission's goal in 2015 was to assess whether "the Ukrainian military

⁷¹ Force Generation is a term to denote the production and sustainment of all aspects of military capability.

could handle lethal weapons if we provided them” (Kuzmenko, 2015 March 25). However, lethal aid was not provided by the Americans until 2017.

Rather than weapons, Western training focused on developing core military skills to a NATO standard. At its onset Op UNIFIER was heavily focused at the tactical level to secure the immediate need of the Donbas front. In ROTO o (zero) of Op UNIFIER, the Lines of Effort were: Small Team Training; Counter-IED; Military Police; Medical Training; Training and Cooperation (Guiney & Lavoie, 2015). In the Small Teams Training, Op UNIFIER taught NATO standard infantry skills for the UAF/NGU to become more coordinated, lethal and to increase survivability. . This training was described as “hands and feet training” and “continuation training” that progressed sequentially from individual skills (weapons handling) to progressively more complex maneuvers (pairs, fire, movement, section attacks, platoon attacks then company attacks) (AP 14, 2022, February 1). Objectives were described by CAF members who conducted the training as “to make Ukrainians harder to kill” (AP 18, 31 March 2022), and “to train Ukrainians to more effectively kill Russians” (AP 16, 30 March 2022). Strong eemphasis was put on basic soldiering skills, such as marksmanship (AP 18, 2022, March 31). With progression, the overall idea was to teach brigades how to fight together - to move and communicate effectively. One interview described it as how to “fire and move” as a coordinated unit and to integrate combined arms (AP 9, 24 January 2022). The method of instruction was emulation - Canadians would demonstrate tactics and set a standard.

we showed them what a section commander does, what a section 2Ic [second-in-command] does....what the platoon commander does in a platoon concept....They [Ukrainians] would observe, they would watch, they would see and they would try to mimic (AP 19, 2022, April 14 2022).

Challenges were overcome, such as modifying CAF or NATO tactics to Ukrainian legacy (Soviet) systems and equipment. For example, dismounting procedures from infantry fighting vehicles where the exit points were different (AP 19, 2022, April 14 2022). Health and safety challenges were addressed, for example, legacy safety issues of Unexploded Ordnances (UXO) at the IPSC and range protocols (AP 9, 24 January 2022; AP 14, 2022 February 1). Some issues, such as differences between NATO and legacy grid systems were more difficult to transition. Given the importance of deconflicting the battlespace and avoid friendly fire incidents, two systems of mapping, pose high risk for error and this difference was mentioned as a potential barrier to interoperability with NATO forces in the short term (AP 20, 26 April 2022). CAF members stressed the enormous challenge of military reform. For example, “trying to completely change how your military does things is really difficult. Canadian forces know this” (AP 20, 26 April 2022). This observation that military reform is challenging, echoes recognition of the same in SSR and SFA processes (Knowles & Matisek, 2019; Sedra, 2017). Particular to Ukraine was the massive size of the UAF (AP 4, 2022, January 13). With only a footprint of 200 personnel in most rotations, with less during COVID, the CAF felt limited in what they could accomplish, as a small presence meant fewer potential direct interactions with Ukrainian military personnel. Additionally, attrition

was a constant concern as recipients of Op UNIFIER training would retire from the military, potentially nullifying downstream benefit to the UAF's longevity (AP 4, 2022, January 13; AP 7, 2022 January 18; AP 6, 2022, January 14). This issue appeared very early in Op UNIFIER leading to apprehension as to whether recipient of the military training would be there to use it (AP 3, 2020 July 8).

In consequence, Op. UNIFIER rotations deliberately attempted to ensure their activities had broader impact (AP 3, 8 July 2020; AP 4, 2022, January 13; AP 6, 14 January 2022).⁷² This sentiment was articulated in an internal orientation document stating a desire to: “ensure the effects we achieve will outlast our eventual departure” (CJOC, 2020, p.7). This objective serves as an organizing logic for Op UNIFIER rotations. In one expression, a pyramidal concept called “enduring effects” desired training focus to move to higher aspects of reform and have “effects on the institution” (AP 4, 2022, January 13). One way to achieve lasting effect was a to move away from direct training to “train the trainer” training models (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

We were trying to get away from directly training Ukrainian Forces, so a Canadian instructor, Canadian NCO would not be laying by a Ukrainian soldier, showing him how to shoot a rifle, so that is direct training. We were trying to get away from that, so one step removed.... to “multiply effects” (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

⁷²It is logical that Op UNIFIER participants would interpret their intentions optimistically. Although I do not doubt the sincerity of this desire, I understand that intention does not equate to realization.

Within the training, there was a deliberate utilization of Ukrainian NCOs with considerable combat experience to become the trainers (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Personnel with experience from 2014-2015 directly inserted lessons learned into training of new personnel as commentators had argued for.

Op UNIFIER thus had a direct role in Force Generation focused of UAF capacities for Ukrainian capacity to defend itself immediately. It was described in the following way:

A lot of the Ukrainian Officers were like OK, what we need is...give us snipers, like train our snipers, train our engineers, we need reconnaissance...We need to like train those capabilities to fight on the front line, train medics to patch up injured soldiers. Very, very, immediate needs (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

However, it was clear from interviews, that CAF members desired to help implement lasting change described in the following way:

You're fighting this war. But we were trying to build an organization that will fight a war, not just this one.....We were trying to make them understand, OK, in the long term, having a professional force, having a very solid footing is more of a deterrent to your adversary than having trained soldiers (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

Op UNIFIER participants observed a lack of systematization in the UAF. "One of the things we observed was a lack of qualification standards, so how do you know if your trainer, your soldier is well trained, because every course is different" (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Therefore, Op UNIFIER

put emphasis on systematization in the training systems (AP 3, 8 July, 2020). Efforts of standardization remained a challenge throughout the period described by Glen Grant in 2018, as: “after three years of U.S. and UK support for the development of fighting ability, there still remains the serious issue of standardization in staff procedures, training and tactics” (Grant, 2018 January 31). Op UNIFIER was aware of this issue and focused on improvement, meaning gradual progression from basic courses, expanding to more advanced levels and establishing norms, training standards and qualifications that could provide consistency of standard (Leroux, 2019; AP 4, 2022, January 13).

Attesting to compounding success, Op UNIFIER expanded in terms of areas of functional skill areas and expanded in geographic presence, including to Kyiv as well as locations in southern and eastern Ukraine. With a strong understanding of the tactical training running since 2015, in the 2019-2020 timeframe, Op UNIFIER’s focus shifted to a more strategic focus on reforming the defence institution (AP 6, 14 January 2022).

In Op UNIFIER interviews, improvement in certain Lines of Effort stood out as more important than others. Progress in the Medical Line of Effort (LOE) was considered a great success (AP 4, 2022, January 13; AP 7, 2022 January 18; AP 23, 2022 August 12). For one reason, medical success was visible and quantifiable. Previously, the UAF did not have a dedicated medic trade and instead, combat First-Aid, was a general secondary duty. Op UNIFIER was influential in

developing this capacity, as a specialized trade and skill set which developed its own MOSID⁷³ (AP 7, 2022, January 18). To this point, the military medical system had been based on older generation of Soviet military standards, and Op UNIFIER taught an entirely new system. Although existing medical infrastructure and supplies were a limiting factor, the training progressed in complexity, for example from combat basic first aid to casualty evacuation processes (AP 23, 2022 August 12). The training was further described:

the training they [Ukrainians] got was on par professionally with what we give our own troops in Canada. In fact....we did more to ensure they understood and could replicate it and execute it, and perform it in the battlespace (AP 23, 2022 August 12).

Speculating about post-2022 results, a CAF member stated: “there’s no doubt that the care increased survivability of their troops” (AP 23, 2022 August 12).

Sniper training was a capability Ukrainians consistently desired and progressed within (AP 4, 2022, January 13; AP 11, 26 January 2022). The engineering trade was also mentioned as successful, notably the Unexploded Explosive Ordinance (UXO) capability (AP 9, 2022 January 21).

In the intelligence domain, Op UNIFIER confronted the entrenched nature of previous Soviet mentality. It was explained that Ukrainian terminology used the same word to mean both “reconnaissance” and “intelligence” whereas the NATO terminology distinguishes the concepts as

⁷³ MOSID. Military Occupation Structure Identification. A MOSID permits standardization.

related but fundamentally different (AP 20, 2022, April 26). The significance of adopting a NATO understanding, theoretically meant shortening decision cycles. In the Ukrainian system, reconnaissance meant advancing to locate the enemy and reporting the enemy's location and capabilities to the commander. However, in the NATO method, raw data of troop locations and capabilities from reconnaissance is analyzed at lower levels such that a commander would therefore receive an intelligence report about the 'so-what' of the information (AP 20, 2022, April 26). As the interviewee expanded, "we were trying to make the case that they [Ukrainians] would benefit from having someone there dedicated to analyze the red picture rather than just coordinate the reconnaissance squadron" (AP 20, 2022, April 26).

Further complicating the matter was that the Ukrainian movement of troops to the front tended to be in blocks and risked a lack of continuity in the battlespace. This meant that UAF units were both Force Generating and Force Employing and incoming units had to develop their own Situational Awareness (SA) of the battlespace (AP 20, 2022, April 26). Op UNIFIER shared what NATO standards of intelligence were, developed courseware and assisted with tracking capabilities to have better tracking of red /blue in the battlespace (AP 20, 2022, April 26).

In terms of Force Employment (FE), the instruction of operational planning procedures was a priority effort of Op UNIFIER; also an effort that confronted the Soviet legacy.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ When teaching operational planning, Canadians used the US terminology, MDMP (AP 14, 2022, February 1) which in Canada is called Operational Planning Process (OPP). While the processes are virtually identical,

Contemporary NATO versions of planning desire a high degree of subordinate responsibility, permitting iterative planning and reaction cycles to move faster, ideally faster than the adversary. To gain speed, a de-centralized decision-making structure permits subordinate commanders to act on their own accord but while ensuring to retain Commander's intent, the essence of the mission command philosophy. Mission command involves a relationship of mutual trust permitting subordinates to act freely within the best judgement of achieving overall objectives set by a commander (Storr, 2003; Shamir, 2010). As planning relies on the alignment of actions at strategic, operational and tactical levels, subordinate commanders can make independent decisions to adapt to unforeseen circumstances in order to achieve the commander's objectives. From the Canadian perspective, mission command is an "exportable expertise" (CJOC, 2020, p.6) and beyond planning, Op UNIFIER desired to embed mission command within the leadership and culture of the organization and was the most emblematic example of the difference between Western and Soviet militaries. The concept of Mission command was taught formally in planning processes but was also an engrained component of all Op UNIFIER teaching. Modelling mission command Op UNIFIER Task Force (TF) commanders had wide room for maneuver in achieving intent laid out by the force employer, Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC). Commanders

the terminology differs. However, to avoid confusion the Canadians adopted the teaching of the MDMP, to ensure one standard and continuity with the other training countries.

had freedom to pursue opportunities, resulting in Op UNIFIER expanding its presence geographically and functionally.

However, cultural-linguistic challenge was that Ukrainians did not have a word for ‘mission command’ and it proved a difficult concept to translate via interpreters (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Mission command philosophy clashed with the entrenched Soviet mentality of leadership. It was described in the following manner:

For them [Ukrainians] its very hierarchical. Top down and you don’t want to take any initiatives that would displease your boss. And if you want to do something you wait for the authorization from your boss, and then his boss, and then the boss above... (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

A lack of freedom of movement for lower and mid-ranking personnel was apparent to CAF members as a Soviet cultural legacy, given that Canada’s Profession of Arms (POA) has one of the most advanced appreciations of NCO corps (AP 4, 2022 January 13; AP 6, 2022, January 14).⁷⁵ Ukrainian officers rarely included their NCO equivalents in command activities, nor representative functions. NCOs appeared to be limited to menial and administrative formalities rather than substantial roles. As one interviewee relayed, the CWO was there to make coffee (AP 4, 2022, January 13). It was described in the following ways:

⁷⁵ A note on terminology. Canada uses the term Non-commissioned member (NCM) to refer to all military members who are not Officers. The term Non-commissioned Officer refers to the rank of SGT-CWO, thus excluding Privates and MCPLs.

they [Ukrainians] had NCO academies....they did understand...the use of an NCO, but not quite on, I would say a leadership aspect, but more on a technician aspect. So the NCOs were highly skilled technicians but not as much as leaders and the way we understand...

(AP 4, 2022, January 13)

Participants of Op UNIFIER observed the under-utilization of NCOs which meant an over-reliance on officers to do jobs that in Canada would be done by senior-NCOs. It was described as:

we would see officers doing jobs that our NCOs here normally do. Like very, very....tactical stuff. No, no, you are a Lieutenant Colonel, you don't need to do the hands-on stuff. Let an NCO do that... (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

Mission command's reliance on subordinates implied the need for Ukraine to develop a more effective use of the NCO corps who as they represent a leadership cadre that supports the Officer in multiple ways. Several Op UNIFIER rotations had formal lines of effort related to the empowerment and better utilization of NCOs. The message was clearly articulated by Canadians to Ukrainian (evident in all interviews) that a strong NCO corps was beneficial on the battlefield, but also generally throughout the organization. In high level meetings, "there was a lot of pressure on the Ukrainians to adopt that type of NCO professional model" (AP 4, 2022, January 13). In the Ukrainian system, as legacy of authoritarian culture, trust in subordinates is low with information highly compartmentalized and guarded (AP 9, 24 January 2022). Canadians continually desired to impart to Ukrainians to trust their subordinates (AP 9, 24 January 2022). CAF interviewees explained that this message was well-received with younger officers and NCOs, but there was

skepticism as to how effectively the message of NCO empowerment would be implemented by higher command elements in the Ukrainian military.

Akin to demonstrating mission command, Operation UNIFIER consistently modelled Canadian utilization of NCOs - Canadian NCOs were employed as SMEs in training, often training Ukrainian officers. Further, Canadians were deployed in small teams working with minimal supervision requiring a default level of subordinate trust. This modelling was passive although CAF members remarked that their example of NCO professionalism was noticed by Ukrainians (AP 4, 2022 January 13; AP 9, 2022 January 24). This was also seen in the 'command team' model where senior NCOs appeared with the commander in highly visible settings such as higher-level meetings.⁷⁶ The visible presence of the SGM with the TF Commander, demonstrated how empowered NCOs could be used effectively (AP 9, 24 January 2022). This message was supported by multinational representatives of the partner militaries of the Joint Military Council (JMC) in coordinated visits to NCO academies. A 'for-us-by-us-format' of NCO professional development sessions occurred at NCO academies to share the NATO expectation of the NCO role (AP 9, 24 January 2022).

The lack of NCOs was a Soviet legacy that persisted through the independence period. Participants explained the non-utilization of NCO corps was due to the conscription-based system.

⁷⁶ The 'command team' is a model of leadership whereby an officer and senior NCO appear as a command team. The senior NCO provides insight, such as the morale of troops or technical knowledge to guide and assist the officer's decision-making.

This meant the Officer corps was professionalized, serving as the brain and to accommodate a massive flow-through of temporary military members - conscripts (AP 4, 2022, January 13). However, conscription produced an officer heavy organization which effectively retained institutional knowledge, but which also left inexperience at the troop level. The lack of salary for NCOs commensurate with societal employment meant that high salaries were confined to the Officer corps, although these were also paltry. Further, NCOs generally did not have military career options and were not considered military professionals. As it was explained, “if you want to stay in the military for a career you become an Officer” (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Thus, in the un-reformed Ukrainian model the lack of NCOs meant a lack of non-officer institutional expertise. However, positive steps occurred. A Concept for NCO development was published in 2017 (White Book, 2017, p.14). Legislative changes were implemented in 2019 with bill 0609 (Reform Office, 2019 November 29).

In contrast to the Ukrainian system, participants of Op UNIFIER described the importance of the NCO corps to the Ukrainians, which would have effects on the battlefield, in the exercise of mission command but also the day-to-day function of the organization. It was described in the following way:

what I've been able to see from the Canadian Forces is it adds depth to your command structure it makes it a lot more flexible....that having a strong NCO corps allows that non

commissioned member to step into any holes...and if you're just relying on Officers then you're a thinner system (AP 20, 2022, April 26).⁷⁷

Results of Op UNIFIER in the period

CAF members often caveated in interviews that the extent of successful transmission of military training could not be confirmed fully without knowledge of posterior application, or real-world implementation. Nevertheless, interviewees generally attested to having observed skill development across most Lines of Effort, notably in the medical line of effort, MP, engineer and planning areas. One Canadian, teaching the planning process on Op UNIFIER, testified that Ukrainian teaching staff learned the lesson plans and understood the process thoroughly (AP 14, 2022, February 1). However, success was not uniform and Op UNIFIER Lines of Effort had different levels of progress.

Some lines of effort were completely stalled. It was difficult to build something because it could be a whole lot of factors, personal factors, or even legal factors that we're trying to push too far on something that the Ukrainians say we can't do it because we're not allowed to do it because of our laws, our structures, or the way our organization is (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

⁷⁷ The expression used in this instance referred to non-commissioned members stepping into a leadership position in the case that a leadership "hole" be opened for any number of reasons, such as officer attrition. Further, the author notes that an oft-repeated cultural understanding in the CAF is for junior NCMs to continually learn the positions of the next leadership tranche and be ready to assume higher responsibility should there be a requirement.

Importantly, Op UNIFIER focused on getting out of direct training by using train-the-trainer instructional models. CAF expertise was thus captured within Ukrainian personnel retained to be used as instructors in training institutions. The establishment of qualified trainers represents the presence of an authoritative leadership cadre, often with combat experience to perform direct training. These instructor cadres were qualified to teach future cohorts and is a significant mechanism of knowledge transmission. Further, CAF members assisted in formalizing courses for the Ukrainian training system, assisting with issues of consistency, standardization, pedagogical progression, and coherence within the training system. Increased standardization and instructor cadres permitted the training of NATO standards to occur independent of the presence of Western troops. The contribution of Op UNIFIER in creating more systematised standards was important to delivering mass training rather than simply creating “islands of excellence” that had been evident in other SFA, for example in Iraq (Knowles & Matisek, 2019).

In addition to political level speech acts, observations from Op UNIFIER offer a glimpse of the Ukrainian military’s will to fight from the ground up. Overall, interviews consistently noted high motivation to fight and enthusiasm for Canadian expertise. One CAF member relayed a joke circulating amongst CAF members on mission, that exemplified Ukrainian desire - “if we had offered an underwater knife throwing course” the Ukrainians would reply “yes, that’s good, it’ll kill Russians, give it to us” (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Ukrainians were insatiable in terms of desiring additional knowledge but also needed to be reined in at some points (AP 15, 2022 February 15). One participant described:

the ambition and the motivation of the Ukrainian Armed forces is so strong...You want to do this deliberately and you can't rush to failure....It's almost slowing down the progress to be more deliberate and more evenly conducted throughout the country (AP 15, 2022 February 15).

Intense Ukrainian motivation was explained as an understandable reaction to needing to defend their homeland (AP 15, 2022 February 15; AP 4 2022, January 13). This message was echoed by a member of the DRAB who explained that Ukraine is fighting for its very existence (AP 1, 2019, January 11).

The assessment of one Canadian combat arms trainer on Op UNIFIER which classified the Ukrainians as very competent in the following passage is very important:

Make no mistake the Ukrainian armed forces are very professional and very highly trained. Its just different. I would not want to go head-to-head with them - And I am not talking attrition either. I mean, they are, they are good at what they do. They are formidable. You know, if it ever comes to it, where they need to defend, their country, they are quite capable (AP 9, 2022, January 24).

Intense motivation was observed in the NGU, interpreted as being more open and desiring of change than the UAF (AP 4, 2022, January 13; AP 16, 2022 March 30). "They [National Guard] were more receptive smaller organization, more flexible, more dynamic, and more willing to integrate the ideas that we were bringing" (AP 4, 2022, January 13). The NGU also demonstrated impressive fighting capabilities.

Results of progress on NCO development were slow, as CAF soldiers observed how Ukrainian appreciation of empowered NCOs remained in its infancy. In 2021, after considerable work on NCO reform TFC Col Lake, commented on Ukrainian progress: “the gap is not necessarily in the competence of the senior NCO,” she said. “The gap is in recognizing and then being willing to take the risk of delegating responsibility to them” (Bandura, 2019, October 13). Lake also notes the continuance of a blame culture. This testimony from LCol Lake gives evidence that the underlying cultural mindset remained a work in progress (Bandura, 2019 October 13th). However, in later rotations, the message began to percolate into the UAF leadership due to sustained emphasis (AP 4, 2022, January 13).

Empowerment of NCOs was integral to combat. This was recognized early in the period, when Yuri Butusov called for NCO empowerment, arguing that to counter Russian manpower and attritional warfare advantage “it is necessary to be proactive, to outdo the enemy in thinking speed and tactical flexibility, and to prepare clever fighters for the front lines” (RNBEE, 2014 August 3). Later in the period, Major General Volodymyr Havrylov⁷⁸ on the Jamestown panel in 2021 echoed that there remained a need to encourage creativity and initiative at all levels of the organization (Jamestown Foundation, 2021, March 25). A defence analyst Mykola Bielieskov, commented about

⁷⁸ Havrylov was the Ukrainian Defence Attaché to the United States (2015-2018) and became deputy Minister of Defence in 2022. Source: Jamestown Foundation. (n.d). Volodymyr Havrylov. <https://jamestown.org/analyst/volodymyr-havrylov/>

the war in terms of the change in mindset, “we needed to improvise to survive” (Champion & Bloomberg, 2021 October 9th).

However, Igor Kabanenko bluntly lamented that “transformation remains under the influence of the Soviet Past” (Jamestown Foundation, 2021 March 25). Grant in his 2018 op-ed addresses persistent Soviet mentalities:

The key system change required is in leadership. The Soviet mentality is in control and punishment. This needs to be replaced by delegation, motivation and reward. The power-based system is a legacy hangover from the Soviets, and is not fitting for a new modern Ukraine. It kills the Army. Officers who rely on power and control must be removed, because they will never have the mental agility or wisdom to train troops for a fast moving battle, or to fight it (Grant, 2018 January 31).

In the period there is evidence of a disconnect between front line soldiers and the General Staff. Journalist Mykhailo Vorobiev relayed the experience of a young officer, Lt.Col. Sobko who went public with frustrations of higher command. Sobko was described as emblematic of a younger, competent, combat focused Officer who ended up leaving military service due to frustration with the General Staff, what Grant described as the “dead hand of the General Staff” (Grant, 2018 January 31).

In addition to the loss of energetic and competent leadership, it was argued that replacement commanders were deployed based on loyalty (Jamestown Foundation, 2021 March 25th). Kabanenko describes this as a legacy of “Sovietism” as a continuance of a rigid system of

military command and bureaucracy that is fundamentally disconnected from the boots on the ground (Jamestown Foundation, 2021 March 25th). Even one year after invasion, Zaluzhny explained that “this Soviet army mentality lived in the Armed Forces for a long time, and there are still echoes of it somewhere, its existence is yet to fully perish within” (-51:20). While it may still linger, the trajectory away from Soviet paths was clearly charted in the critical juncture. Yet, Glen Grant, a British defence expert, cautioned that perceptions of Donbas war success were not indicative of future success:

The Ukrainian Army gets better every day, but overall it is not one of the best in Europe because it has some critical organizational flaws. Giving the army Javelin anti-tank missiles will not remove those flaws, and may even make them worse. People are confusing amazing bravery and minor tactics with operational and strategic ability (Grant, 2018 January 31).

Grant’s sobering analysis was not appreciated by the MOD given the intolerance of public critique inherited from Soviet culture. However, Grant foresaw the inevitability of the Russian invasion, stating in a 2018 op-ed: “He [Putin] continues to train for a strategic war in the west – which means Ukraine cannot escape this and will be a prime target”. Grant urged that “time must not be wasted by Ukraine” for preparation, reflecting the short duration of the critical juncture (Grant, 2018, January 31). Grant notes a long list of remaining Ukrainian combat deficiencies and

offers recommendations.⁷⁹ This frank analysis exemplifies Huntington's conservative military mindset of desiring continual war preparation. This mindset was shared by General Kryvonos⁸⁰ who cautioned that Russians only understand force, thus requiring additional military improvement for Russian invasion, which for him was a foregone conclusion. Kryvonos urged multidomain preparation, establishing territorial defence and to provide the military capabilities to perform offensive actions, alongside lobbying for diplomatic efforts lobbying for sanction (Stek, 2020 January 19). Even post-invasion, and awareness of immense losses, Zaluzhny remained absolutely convinced that military strength was required to deter continual Russian invasion and states that additional rounds of reform would be needed (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12). The change in attitude reflects a marked change from the mindset of 2014-2015.

⁷⁹ Grant notes a lack of mobility at the operational level, lack of initiative, aggression and too much passivity on the fixed Donbas line, lack of jointness (air-ground cooperation, HQ coordination between all security services) and lack of logistical capability. He then recommends permitting the battle commanders to have command of support elements, encouraging younger and battle-experienced Officers, having an Operational commander who would report directly to the President rather than General Staff. Further, that the General Staff to be focused exclusively on force generation rather than the ATO war, and urges preparing new soldiers earlier as inexperience in crisis can be deleterious to overall capability (Grant, 2018 January 31)

⁸⁰ General Kyrvonos was appointed by Poroshenko in 2019 to the National Security Defence Council. He was the Deputy Commander of the Ukrainian Special Operations force as well.

Attrition was a concern for Op UNIFIER and the Jamestown panel, as UAF veterans with combat experience in the ATO/JFO were leaving the UAF. Journalist Mykola Vorobiev relayed that in 2020, 77,000 members of the Armed Forces had left the Armed Forces representing approximately a third of the military (Jamestown Foundation, 2021 March 25th). Low comparative wages persisted as a structural barrier to the retention of expertise. However, as will be argued in chapter 7, the effect of high attrition was that the effects of the training and exposure was filtrated throughout society offering a ready base for skilled recruitment.

MOD and military leaders were aware of this issue and took measures to address it. For example, there was a new recruiting system that included electronic personnel database. In late 2021, the issue of building reserves also became more pronounced with the formation of territorial defence battalions. The idea was that trained personnel could more easily re-join in times of need.

Barriers to NATO interoperability were also mentioned in terms of language ability (AP 4, 2022 January 13; AP 9, 2022 January 24). NATO, functions essentially in English, with European members working in their second or third languages. However, Op UNIFIER participants consistently noted low ability for the UAF to function in English. This was evident in the senior ranks of the Officer corps and within the mass of the military system, although junior ranks and younger personnel demonstrated more ability.

War as teacher

An important part of the critical juncture was the political and military choice to fight. Through the war, there was evidence of independent Ukrainian improvement occurring (Butusov, 2015,

March 13). While the negative aspects of Ukraine's military performance in 2014-2015 are many, General Kryvonos stated that a core nucleus was prepared but lacked a political order to intervene.

The war for the Armed Forces began on January 31, 2014, because it was then that the Highly Mobile Airborne Troops and Special Forces units were put on alert. And we began to work out a plan to counteract the seizure of the territory of Ukraine. This option was foreseen and practiced by the General Staff" (Stek, 2020 January 19).

Reflecting on 2014-2015, Commander in Chief Viktor Muzhenko recalls that elements did respond appropriately stating: "nevertheless, we - stood our ground". There was a consolidation of commitment within the armed forces. In the words of Muzhenko: "those, who had to go into battle first, became the seeds from which grow up modern Armed Forces of Ukraine" (Day, 2017 March 9). In these battles Yuriy Kovchenko argues:

Until 2014, there was a pseudo-Soviet heritage based on the values and traditions of the Soviet army in World War II... The army was 'in itself'. It was a closed social institution, about which very little was known....If we talk about the modern Ukrainian army, it was not born on December 6, 1991. It began to be born in March 2014. Donetsk airport, Ilovaisk, the liberation of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the battles near Vuhledar, Luhansk airport - the Ukrainian army was born in these battles. It stopped being a small post-Soviet army and became a Ukrainian one (Bombela, 2021, August 24).

The Donbas war produced many examples of heroism at the commander and soldier level, a sign that the Ukrainian military and volunteer units had strong morale and will to fight.

Evidence of this can be observed in the feats of courage, self-sacrifice or capability from the 2014-2015 battles (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017). In support of Muzehenko's comments referencing the birth of a committed military, in November 2014, Poroshenko expressed confidence that the military could defend future attacks (Reuters, 2014 November 14). By the end of 2014, lessons learned were claimed by the MOD to be included in training: "the acquired combat experience has been actively implemented by all military formations of Ukraine" (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (2015, p. 30). The Ukrainian army was constantly adapting to real-world battle situations, described by Canadian DRAB representative as a 'living laboratory' (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, March 3). An important example was the development and implementation of drone technology (AP 16, 2022, March 30). However, the system was not perfect. For Havrylov, a more formalized a lessons learned system was required (Jamestown Foundation, 2021), a finding corroborated by Dyson & Pashchuk (2022).

Additionally, training conducted by Western militaries, such as Op UNIFIER occurred during the Donbas war, meaning training could be implemented immediately, beginning in 2015 and compounding annually. Commander in chief Muzhenko stressed that Ukrainians are "being taught by the armies of the leading countries of the world....And it is not only useful from the practical point of view, it morally inspires and supports the Ukrainian soldier" (Day, 2017, March 9th).

The war provided combat experience for thousands of Ukrainian troops with the ATO/JFO Donbas line that was active through the period, despite the war falling from international and

often national public attention. Former MND Zagorodnyk relayed that around 500,000 Ukrainians had spent time on the Donbas front, prior to the 2022 invasion (Champion & Bloomberg, 2022 October 9). In a rare interview Commander in chief Zaluzhny relayed the impact of the war 2014-2022 period describing it as “hardening” where: “for eight years we were at least mentally prepared and emotionally ready to kill the enemy, not to wait for him to calm down and leave us in peace” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12). Further, Zaluzhny relays that: “it [the Donbas war] was a school of life for us. In fact, one might say we have been preparing both mentally and physically for the entire eight years” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12)

The war, as one of the events of the critical juncture gave leadership opportunity to a younger generation of Ukrainian soldiers, illuminating the continued importance of generations from Soviet and Independence era literature. Reform was a challenge that was “generational” in nature (AP 9, 24 January 2022) and the Soviet legacy remained visible to Op UNIFIER in terms of generations. It was perceived that younger and more junior ranking officers were more enthusiastic and open to reform and receive Canadian training (AP 7, 2022 January 18). It was described that a “tear” line existed within the Officer corps, of approximately the Lt. Colonel or Colonel level implying that the older guard was more reticent or not that interested to reform, but that the younger generation was very much open in orientation (AP 7, 2022 January 18; AP 14, 2022 February 1). Op UNIFIER was conceived with generational aspect in mind and chose to focus on training the younger and lower ranks (AP 5, 2022, January 13). Op UNIFIER participants recalled that much of the officer corps had received its military education in Russia even during

the independence period 1994-2014 period (AP 10, 2022 January 27). Importantly, Grant adamantly cautions that Soviet raised instructors cannot teach Western style military concepts (Jamestown Foundation, 2021). In employment in the Donbas war, a Jamestown Foundation panel described that junior officers with Western training were underutilized, suffered from a lack opportunity or were sidelined by an old guard (Jamestown Foundation, 2021 March 25th).

Kabanenko proposes to overcome an entrenched Soviet military by putting Western educated Officers into key positions to create a critical mass of Officers committed to charting the organization along a Western or NATO oriented course (Jamestown Foundation, 2021 March 25). In the period the leadership of Viktor Zaluzhny became symbolic of a younger and Western inclined leader. Commander in Chief, Muzhenko, in a 2017 interview corroborated stating:

We do have an ambitious goal of achieving such criteria by 2020. Any reform is first and foremost a change in the consciousness of the people who implement it. A new generation of commanders at all levels - from platoon to brigade and beyond - is growing before our eyes. They are the driving force that is changing the shape of the modern Ukrainian army. Today's Ukrainian commanders are practitioners who understand more than anyone else that in order to win, you must constantly learn and acquire new capabilities. We have no time to be swayed. The task is set for us - we will do everything to accomplish it." (Day 2017, March 9).

Results of reform progress in the period

In the period, merit became more emphasized for political and military leadership, and strategic naivety about Russian aggression dissipated, evident in the unity between the military, state and societal actors. Further, organizational changes in the creation of a capable SOF command, and improvement to C2 occurred. Also, Ukrainian military personnel were receiving high-quality instruction across multiple functional areas from Western paradigm armies.

In terms of progress, Olesya Favorska of the PRO summarized:

from the "height" of 2017, I am well aware of how much everything has changed qualitatively in the Armed Forces. Logistics, combat training, transition to a contract army, launch of capability-based planning, adoption of strategic documents on defense sector reform with clearly defined goals and a roadmap for their implementation - even if all this is not without problems of "growth", shortcomings and delays, it is still evidence of deep irreversible systemic changes (Irena Favorska, in (Sampan, 2018 October 1).

Commander in Chief Muzhenko in 2017 similarly, expressed confidence stating:

Today we pay attention to the development of all types and kinds of troops. It is not easy during the war, but we have serious successes in many areas. The list of tasks facing the modern Ukrainian Armed Forces is much broader and more complex than the average citizen can imagine. The forms and ways of using the troops are also constantly becoming more complicated (Day, 2017, March 9).

There was also progression in breaking the supply-chain from Russia. In 2020, Zagorodnyuk stated: "Full independence of production supplies of equipment, components and

materials from the Russian Federation were achieved” (Pavlovsky, 2018, p.21). Ukrainian assessments in the period points to progress (Kiryukhin, 2018). Lt. Gen Pavlovsky in 2018 who worked in the MOD, wrote an analysis of SDB reform progression in 2018. In it, he notes how combat capability “largely depends” on the “latest and modernized models of weapons and military equipment” (Pavlovsky, 2018, p. 16). By 2020, Ukraine had developed a wide variety of weapons systems evident that higher order capability was possible, with MND Zagorodnyuk praising the delivery of quantity and type of advanced weaponry (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10).

At the level of the Commander in Chief, Zaluzhnyi’s appointment by Zelensky can be seen as a continuation of leadership appointments being made on merit. Major General Zaluzhny, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces issued a public vote of confidence for his military, stating that a military defence of the country would be successful “we can and will do it” (Purcell, 2021, January 19). Zaluzhny gave evidence of achieving over 300 NATO standards in progressing the goal of NATO interoperability. A qualifying figure of 8 percent of the total UAF was given as evidence that a significant percentage of the force had been trained to a NATO standard (Purcell, 2021 January 19). The impact of 20,000 of the approximately 250,000 total force is likely to have impacted more than simply the figure of 8 percent as it is likely that the “teeth” end of the UAF had more exposure to training than the “tail” end, as the “tail end” of militaries are usually significantly large.

Leading up to the 2022 invasion, Illia Ponomorenko expressed confidence in Ukraine’s new armed forces from 2014 given the seven years of combat experience and acquired aid (Popular

Front, 2021, December 8). Authoritative corroboration came from a co-authored article from former defence Minister Zagorodnyuk, former head of the Reforms Office Favorska, Norwegian Defence Attaché, Hans Petter Midtunn, and former Ukrainian Colonel Olexander Pavliuchykh who similarly expressed optimism about the progress of reforms.

Conclusion: Post 2022 Invasion Results

In 2022, the Ukrainian defence was much more prepared and organized than 2014. At a general level, Russia was not able to achieve a quick victory and Ukraine has inflicted massive losses on the Russian war machine in terms of both equipment and manpower. There is evidence that Western training contributed to increasing combat capability by teaching Western military methods in all areas of military expertise, notably, command and control, military attitudes and combined arms skills. Data from Op. UNIFIER demonstrated that skill development occurred during the period of training between 2015 and 2022. My argument is that this Western tutelage is one factor that contributed positively to a more effective battlefield outcome post-2022. Evidence of decentralized battlefield leadership, or use of mission command was observed in the ambushes of the Russian advance on Kyiv, attested to by media reports (Blackwell, 2022, March 9; Champion, M & Bloomberg, 2022 October, 9) and CAF personnel (AP 21, 2022, April 29; AP 28, 2023 March 14; AP 25 2023, January 25). This finding is further corroborated by international sources, attributing credit for Western security assistance (Matisek, Reno, & Rosenberg 2023, February 8; Chinchilla 2022, March 14; Chinchilla 2023, September 10; Michaels 2022, April 13; Hertling, 2022, April 11). Zaluzhny touted evidence of decentralized command, claiming “a

sergeant will not find it difficult to call the commander in chief” to call in a strike (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12, 37:43-). Zaluzhny states having developed “a culture that has united generals and junior commanders, and most importantly soldiers....to unite around one objective, to defeat a strong enemy” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12). Improvement of combat capability is evident from the fact that loyalty in the Chain of Command was no longer a pressing concern, although the suspicion that Russia had operatives at high levels never fully abated (Choi, 2022, March 31st). Venerated General Kryvonos also speculated that a decision to de-mine exits from Crimea had permitted Russians to advance rapidly in the early phase of the 2022 war (War Translated, 2022, July 31). However, in 2022 mass defections did not occur as they had in 2014, even despite, Ukrainian military leaders receiving direct SMS messages from Russia encouraging defection. Rather, a massive swelling of patriotism was evident in the military. Zaluzhny for his commendable service, earned the nickname ‘Iron General’ (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12). Even after the toll of one year of war, in 2023 Zaluzhny concluded that there is no choice but to fight, that “otherwise they will kill us, there is no other way. It’s simple” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12, 11:35-11:39).

Another proof comes from the sophisticated Ukrainian information campaign directly targeting Russian soldiers, called “Хочу жить” [I want to live], intended to destabilize fighting capability through tactical defection. The campaign entered social media spaces attempting to induce surrender and offering

guarantees of food, medical treatment, contact with relatives and legal support.

By April 2023, it was reported that thousands of Russian soldiers had

used the service to surrender (King, 2023, March 7). “Хочу жить” appeals to

individual soldier doubt and promises an option to escape a high probability of combat death. The campaign is successful as it is not an empty veil of government propaganda but resides on combat capability and is emblematic of Ukrainian reform improvement. Evidence of Ukrainian improvement can also be seen from Russian sources. In May 2023, Igor Girkin (Strelkov) one of the most ardent Russian nationalists warned that Russia would be defeated (Tretyak, 2023).

Further, Colonel (retired), Mikhail Khodaryonok’s highlighted on Russian television the Ukrainian military’s high morale, high level of professionalism and large levels of Western support to supply high-tech weapons (McMillan, 2022, May 17). The improvement of ‘professionalism’ can be understood in part due to Western training, including Op UNIFIER but cannot be seen as the sole cause of improvement. There are many other possible contributing factors, and my argument is



Figure 7, Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. (2022, November 15). Graphic of the Desire to Live Campaign.

that external assistance was influential, positive factor that must be in the conversation. Lending credence to this claim comes in Russia's symbolic, although deadly targeting of the IPSC, the primary training location of the JMC, including Op UNIFIER, which was hit with 8 Air to surface missiles early in the invasion causing 35 deaths (Whitelaw & Kudrytski, 2022, March 13; Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2022, March 13). Reports of leadership improvement are described in a tweet by military analyst Fred Hoffman:

Unlike the Russian military, the Ukrainians have competent (and consistent) leadership, highly motivated and adequately trained and equipped soldiers, Western real-time intelligence, and the support of their people back home. The Leopards, Abrams, Bradleys, and other equipment will be difference makers, even in limited number. But what will really set the Ukrainians apart will be their ability to move faster, hit harder, and respond more quickly than their enemy (Hoffman, 2023, April 1).

Chapter 7: Internal Legitimacy

While not front and center in combat, the relationship between a society and its military is important for the state's overall military capability. Chapter 7 examines the development of this relationship in Ukraine during the critical juncture period. Societal support for a military, while less consequential in peacetime is critical in war - there is a reciprocal relationship of need. Notwithstanding that militaries have often been harmful to their own civilian populations in war, the military theoretically represents a last defence to safeguard the Maslowian base physiological needs of the citizenry. In turn, the state is dependent on society's support for recruitment of civilians into military service to provide the physical and intellectual labour the military requires, and the moral support for the war effort. Between 1991-2014, the military was a neglected institution but in 2014, Russian aggression meant that the Ukrainian military suddenly rose to great importance. In the 2014-2002 period the military needed to overcome perceptions of ineffectiveness to inspire trust with the population. The overall argument of this chapter is that despite challenges, internal legitimacy improved. The military became a trusted institution within Ukrainian society, ensuring the longevity of the war effort.

A first section of the chapter discusses internal legitimacy, as the state of the relationship in 2014 and what a locked-in relationship of Soviet legacy would predict. Section two examines the reform efforts in the critical juncture to demonstrate progress in three key areas: welfare, recruitment, and conduct. Section three analyzes societal attitudes toward the military, the Western orientations driving reform and the broader war effort. Section four examines results of internal legitimacy observed post 2022.

2014 Status and the Expectation of Locked-in Soviet Legacies

On February 21st 2014, Yanukovich and his government fled leaving the Ukrainian state in disarray. The Ukrainian military was unprepared for war and segments of the Officer corps were disloyal. The state security apparatus including the Armed Forces, although to a lesser extent than others, was widely perceived to be corrupt, a legacy of the Soviet-era authoritarian system that the Maidan fought against. In terms of societal support, prior to 2014, there was a low societal desire for the military (Glavcom, 2016, June 7). The Soviet legacy was evident in a lack of civic culture, resulting in little societal insight into the security, defence and military realms (Gerasymchuk, 2012). The Maidan also represented the continuation of authoritarianism – as the hard-handed response of the violence the Berkut demonstrated.

The experience of military service was generally miserable through the 1990s and evaded for those with means to do so (Jaworksy, 1996; Gerasymchuk, 2012). Continuation of poor welfare conditions persisted at the outbreak of the Donbas war. Soldiers attest to being sent to Donbas lacking basic items of clothing, shelter and rations (Stepaniuk, 2018). In 2014, the military supply system was in shambles and meant that front-line soldiers were missing basic items such as food, water and medicines (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017a, p. 58). The 2014 battles demonstrated that troops were often poorly motivated and suffered from low morale, which negatively affected combat capability.

Losiev (2016) argues that pre-2014, loyalty to Ukrainian identity, was not a point of emphasis for Ukrainian society, nor the military institution. Without the establishment of a unified

cultural identity to orient the military and state institutions, the old system remained largely in place: “the remnants of the “soviet” mentality, “soviet” bureaucracy, “soviet” procedures and approaches literally permeate the state institutions (and not least – the special services) of the post-Soviet space” (Mykhailo, 2021, May 18). Path-dependent lock-in would suggest that established patterns would likely continue in terms of internal legitimacy and it was logical to assume that the status quo of the society-military relationship would continue.

Reform Efforts in the Critical Juncture

While many in society viewed the military as corrupt after the exhibition of 2014 ineffectiveness, Poroshenko’s inaugural speech on June 7th 2014 carried an important message for the military’s relationship with society. “Our army must become a true elite of the Ukrainian community. The word "general" must be associated with the word "hero", not with the word "corruption"(Kaylan, 2014, June 8th, p.6).

Poroshenko’s political level signaled a desire to reverse a degradation of the military’s reputation and bring it to a high level of esteem - one of “hero” within the population. Campaigns to boost the status of military personnel began in 2014 with a range of internal activities of “moral education” including the awarding of medals to personnel, living and posthumously (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015, p. 46). Commemorative activities began immediately such as the unveiling of 55 plaques, and media presentations sought to inscribe awareness of war sacrifice into society broadly, “perpetuating the memory of the soldiers-heroes who died defending the

territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine” (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015, p. 45).

According to an official White Book:

The main efforts of MOD were focused on enhancing the prestige of military service and social status servicemen in society through the renewal of previously suspended guarantees and social benefits, granting special rights to citizens who were called up during mobilization and participate in anti-terrorist operation (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015, p. 51).

Like Poroshenko, Zelensky in 2019 called for respect of military personnel in his inaugural speech:

There can be no strong army in a place where the authorities do not respect the people who every day sacrifice their life for the country. I will do everything I can to make you feel respect. This means decent, and most importantly, secure salaries, living conditions, vocation leaves after the combat missions and your and your families’ holidays. We must not just talk about NATO standards – we must create those standards (President of Ukraine, 2019, May 20).

As is evident from the remarks of presidents Poroshenko and Zelensky, there was a unity of political will in the period. This will was bolstered by societal opinion that was overwhelmingly against Russian intervention in Crimea in early 2014 (International Republican Institute, 2014b). Importantly, guidance documents published early on transmitted will onto action, signaling that a new form of societal relationship was to ensue. The May 2015 NSS begins with a statement that acknowledges the importance of society, and the opportunity that was opened by the Maidan.

The Revolution of Dignity (November 2013 - February 2014) against the corrupt government, which, deliberately ignoring the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens, under external pressure tried to prevent the European choice of the Ukrainian people, opened up opportunities for Ukraine to build a new system of relations between the citizen, society and the state based on the values of freedom and democracy (President of Ukraine, 2015).

Welfare Issues

Society can develop opinions about internal legitimacy through citizen experiences in military service. The state's overall treatment of the military as an institution, and the military institution's treatment of its personnel are both important to troop morale and fighting spirit and combat capability. Recognition of the absence of concern for welfare in 2014-2015 was immediately visible. At the end of 2014, the MOD's White Book stressed that the "combat effectiveness of troops (forces) crucially depends on the human factor" (Ministry of Defence, 2015, p.45). A November 2014 report by the Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies (CACDS) pronounced that:

motivation of people in uniform will remain key. In the process of creating a new type of army in Ukraine, a new social policy should be developed for military personnel of the entire security sector - according to our estimates, there may be up to 20 criteria. Among them are life and health insurance, developed mechanisms for early retirement, preferential housing, education, etc (CACDS, 2014, November 12th).

Importantly, overt references to welfare were inserted into guidance documents and officialised as policy. The NSS contains references to welfare issues for: “improving military personnel policy, increasing the prestige of military service, improving financial and social security of servicemen and their families” (4.3). The Military Doctrine of September 2015 similarly calls for “ensuring social guarantees for military personnel, law enforcement officers, participants of the anti-terrorist operation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions and their families (Parliament of Ukraine, 2015, 17).

Breaking with a Soviet legacy in which society held inexistant influence on military affairs, volunteer impulses of the Maidan were formalized into state institutions. The PRO as an office in the MOD stood up in August 2015 which integrated volunteer perspectives into its work in several functional areas. A volunteer “landing committee” provided an institutional presence in the MOD’s Reform Committee. In the fall of 2014, forty volunteer associations were united in the People’s Volunteer Association within the MOD (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017a, p. 68-69). In 2014, a Directorate of Civil Military cooperation was formed in the MOD to interface with the volunteer organizations (Ministry of Defence, 2015, p.19). This inclusion of the Maidan activists in the PRO was a demonstrable effort to include societal voices into the reform process.

One of the self-described successes of the PRO was its action on food reform. Food was shown to be tremendously connected to the morale of troops on the front, affecting, nutrition and combat capability. After the execution of pilot projects, a new nutritional system was formally introduced in 2017 (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, p. 20). More vibrant menus were

phased-in, focusing on nutrition, variety of food and more flexible supply options (Kostiuk, 2020, January 9). Additionally, units were permitted more control over food procurement (Ukrinform, 2021, April 21). Special rations for troops in combat were also developed. Diana Petrenia of the PRO stated that food reforms were “the most indicative in terms of the attitude towards the soldier” (Kostiuk, 2020, January 9). Although the implementation of the new system was not fully completed, the food was appreciated at the soldier level.

Another area of welfare reform was housing. Poor housing conditions were a main grievance of the Soviet and post-Soviet period. In 2015, the expansion of housing availability increased but was modest (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2016, p. 65). In 2016 there was another expansion of housing supply (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. 2017, p. 76). The ATO/JFO meant a growing need for the state to provide housing for families of deceased servicemember who perished in the ATO. This was an important social contract the state could demonstrate improvement on. The provision of adequate housing remained, unfortunately below the required need. Housing efforts in the period were also prone to corruption, with developers not delivering on contract promises (Solonyna, 2018, July 27).

Although understandable for a state at war, living conditions on the front line of the ATO/JFO remained harsh and uncomfortable in basic field fortifications (Butusov, 2016, October 8). For Canadians on Op Unifier, the housing infrastructure at IPSC was observed to be in a very negative state (AP 18, 2022, March 31; AP 26, 2023, January 26). Welfare was a concern for the Canadian mission to ensure that the morale of Op UNIFIER personnel remained appropriate (AP

7, 2022 January 18). Canadians renovated base facilities to lodge Op UNIFIER personnel and left the facilities for Ukrainian use thereafter (AP 26, 2023, January 26).

CAF members in their training interactions observed that UAF members were experiencing combat related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), recognized through a professional understanding of common-soldiering experience (AP 4, 2022, January 13; AP 20, 2022, April 26). For veterans, whether conscript, contract, or volunteer who fought in a war of surprise, with little readiness training, an high prevalence of PTSD is understandable. Efforts to improve mental health included psychological hardening in training and service capacity for assistance. To improve service, in 2017, over 70 chaplain positions were distributed to the deployed ATO positions (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, p. 18). Additionally, a mobile diagnostic psychological field office was deployed (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2021, p. 111). There were also the establishment of training courses and rehabilitation courses at hospitals (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2021, p. 112). Importantly, operational stress injury and PTSD became officialised into institutional areas of concern.

Efforts to improve the military's medical capacity also increased. The PRO worked closely on this issue (Ukrinform, 2021, April 21). In 2017, the Main Military Medical Directorate was established in the MOD (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017, p. 13). Improvement in military medical capacity improves survivability, important for combat capability discussed in Chapter 6, but it also demonstrates the institution's care for the member important to the moral relationship between state and society. In contrast to Soviet expendability of human losses, medical attention

was oriented by Op UNIFIER and NATO standards, embodying an ethos where the individual service member matters.

In terms of remuneration, military pay was notoriously low in the independence period disincentivizing military careers (Gerasymchuk, 2012). Throughout the period pay increases occurred (Papko, 2020, March 4). In 2014, minimum salaries were increased to a level above comparable minimums in some Oblasts (Ministry of Defence, 2015, p. 52). Further, higher pay was given for service in the ATO/JFO. In 2018, the issue of welfare and pay was raised by Parliamentarians (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, July 6). Challenges remained, however, as pay not being received on time was reported, or operational pay in the JFO being suspended (Lashchenko, 2021 September 25).

Perfection was not attained in any category of soldier welfare. However, reforms were begun, with rhetorical awareness of their importance, and inclusion into guidance documents. This indicates an awareness of welfare issues, which is a big shift in mindset from the Soviet legacy of poor welfare that existed in the Independence period. Increases of pay, medical service and psychological service, represent material factors through which military personnel were shown greater respect, in exchange for assuming martial risk.

Military Culture

Military personnel are affected by institutional leadership through policies and regulations, as well as the direct leadership of their chain of command. In turn, military personnel carry forward perceptions of how attuned leadership is to their overall well-being and welfare. An example described by Op UNIFIER interviews was that Ukrainian forces sent to Western Ukraine

for training were not always happy to be there. This frustration was due to the rotational schedule that the UAF command had decided on, which was to immediately bring brigades from the front. The purpose of this rotation was to resupply and re-equip the brigades with personnel and fulfill additional readiness training. The frustration of Ukrainian soldiers was due to their inability to immediately rejoin their families after their front-line service and combat. Manifestation of this frustration was often perceived by Canadians as a negative attitude. CAF members, however, grew to understand the real reason for the frustration was not objection to Canadian training. This frustration was very understandable for Canadians, but who exercised no control over the situation as the training schedule was an internal UAF decision (AP 14, 2022 February 1; AP 18, 2022 March 31).

CAF experiences also noted that the Soviet legacy of an Officer-centric military system meant that NCOs were not empowered, having an impact on welfare. NCOs in Western militaries are concerned with the welfare and discipline of the troop. In toto (zero), observations of low levels of NCO empowerment were linked to the issue of welfare, described in the following way: “as a result of poor NCO development and failure to empower NCO’s with authority troop welfare is neglected” (Guiney & Lavoie, 2015). Without a dedicated class of military personnel, the lowest soldiers did not have an institutional advocate to defend for their interests. Consistent advocacy for the empowerment of NCOs through the Op UNIFIER rotations meant that over time, the appreciation of NCOs became more apparent. The NCO focus can be seen as a significant contributory factor to not only combat capability discussed in Chapter 6, but also cultural

development in the UAF. The institutional appreciation of NCO development occurred over the course of the period and improved the disciplinary potential of the Ukrainian forces, as did progress in the MP trade. With an expanded disciplinary mechanism, negative cultural elements could be more efficiently tackled. Hazing, as forms of ritualized abuse as rites of passage for new entrants, exist in many military contexts. Hazing was notoriously present in the Soviet military and continued in Ukrainian Independence period. Didur (2020) writes:

The Ukrainian army, which has a significant number of officers of the Soviet era, should get rid of the lovers of bad old army traditions once and for all during the reforms and eradicate the shameful hazing, stopping the conveyor belt of lawlessness. Only a professionally trained and motivated army can do this (Didur, 2020, January 20).

One important reason for addressing hazing is its effect on societal perception of the military and the impact on the recruitment and retention. As noted by Didur:

relatives of conscripts who have suffered from ill-treatment and the community will feel disgusted with an army that maims their sons or daughters. The systematic nature of non-statutory relations creates contempt for the army in society, draft evasion, and an increase in the number of voluntary discharges from military service (Didur, 2020 January 20).

In 2020, MND Zagorodnyuk blamed the occurrences of abuse, on local commanders who were actively being changed out in the course of the period, when abuses came known (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10). On the issue of abuse, Zagorodnyuk was hopeful that abuse would be stamped out with the newer generation stating:

I met with the new brigade commanders who came to me for interviews, and we are appointing new commanders in a number of brigades, young, with combat experience, some of them even studied abroad, so to speak, a new generation of military. When there are more of these commanders, and they show their organizational skills, these phenomena will be rare or not happen at all, Cited in (Kuznetsova, 2020, February 10).

Yet, despite evidence that reformers genuinely attempted to change military culture, realistically, change occurred slowly. Butusov in 2016, notes that there remains a continuity of Soviet attitudes in the prosecution of the Donbas war:

the attitude towards people in the army is still not far removed from Soviet standards. Servicemen are treated as disposable performers for the duration of their contract. The military command treats its personnel as if it has inexhaustible human resources of experienced and trained soldiers. The most common complaints are the lack of rotations, the need to live away from their families for almost a year, the lack of rest, and the difficulty of solving everyday issues. They also complain that the command does not give them time to recover and resolve personal issues (Butusov, 2016, October 8).

Butusov's remarks coincide with Op UNIFIER observations about frustration with rotation schedules. However, in the period, there was learning on part of the military with respect to improving the treatment of military personnel. As described by Yuriy Kochenko:

The army, having realized the attention of society, began to change its approaches. Even during the training of reservists, the command's attention to this is extraordinary. They

realize that society is looking at them, society has certain expectations, and they have to meet them... (Bombela, 2021 August 24).

Alongside abusive cultural attitudes in the military, another Soviet legacy was reliance on highly bureaucratic modes of management and communication. The military was criticized in the period as being a “paper army”, archaic and slow. In 2016, Lieutenant Roman Kulyk published an op-ed describing multiple inefficiencies of the military’s system of communication including overly burdensome administrative requirements, especially for deployed units (Kulyk, 2016, March 24). The processing of personnel issues through paper requirements were noted to be slow and prone to physical destruction. Overly intrusive requirements for reporting are said to be a Soviet legacy where subordinates produce paperwork to appear busy to avoid hierarchical contempt. Realistically, unit commanders and processors of the paperwork are overwhelmed and cannot take timely decisions leading to inaccurate situational awareness and troop management. The system is also disjointed but also hard to change, sapping the motivation and good ideas of bright entrants (Kulyk, 2016, March 24). Here, the sense of rigid adherence to procedure provided a negative perception of the military as a caring institution. Inefficiency of the paper system was consequential for families in the case of death; should a paper have been lost or destroyed; the family would not receive benefits (Kulyk, 2016, March 24). Commander in Chief Zaluzhny claims to have ordered the removal of paper requirements (Lashchenko, 2021, September 25th). In 2021, it was reported that a national personnel database “The Unified State Register of Persons Liable

for Military Service” was created and efforts to digitize forms were begun (Khudyakova, 2021 April 23).

Within the institutional documents there is an awareness of the importance of welfare:

The implementation of the humanitarian strategy of the Armed Forces, provides a strengthening of the combat morale of service personnel; helps engender patriotism and loyalty to the traditions of Ukrainian people, and spiritually strengthens and increases the motivation of service personnel’s dedication to duty as well as uniting military units, to create and maintain morale and a healthy psychological climate (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017, p. 78).

Additionally, Favorska of the PRO describes that the MOD should be “an open, publicly accessible institution that operates within the framework of the law” (Sampan, 2018 October 1).

Importantly, during the period civilian control grew in importance in the public imaginary.

Bobrytska et. al (2022) demonstrate that not only was there a quantitative expansion of the number of texts pertaining to civilian control in Ukraine after 2015, but also a discernable shift in how civilian control was mentioned. This shift of tone is evidence of a greater societal desire to approach Euro-Atlantic norms (Bobrytska et. al, 2022). Civilian control was not only important to external legitimacy but can in this context in normalizing new expectations within the state’s relationship with society.

Recruitment and Retention

Ukraine in the Independence period was a conscription-based system that continued the Soviet model of universal service and gendered roles of service until stopped under Yanukovich in

October 2013 (Papko, 2020, March 4; Interfax-Ukraine, 2013, October 14). However, the mobilizations in 2014-2015 were necessary to supply necessary human resources for the war effort and conscription was reinstated with 6 rounds of conscription. This represented an intake of over 84.5 thousand personnel in 2014 (Ministry of Defence, 2015, p.20). Despite the requirement for conscription, there was desire to turn to a professional army as this was recognized as important for higher quality combat capability. Professional, all-volunteer forces potentially have a deeper commitment to military ethos, having joined voluntarily and 'opted-in' to enlist. Despite the draw of higher pay in occupational models, which was not the case in Ukraine. Service members desiring to be there, generally, have higher motivation, and can be developed to higher levels of training. Conversely, professional armies are considerably more expensive, professional soldiers are retained in part through attractive salaries (AP 6, 2022, January 14). A conscription model permits cost savings by paying salaries only when required and minimally. Mobilization permitted a great mix of talent to enter the military effort – an “inspiringly representative swath of Ukrainians from all walks of life” (Bonenberger, 2022 May 9). In one example it was stressed personnel, who had been civilians prior to the war were important to the development of the drone industry bringing in technical expertise from engineering and computer science (AP 16, 2022, March 30). “These engineers were just like building and designing and constantly refining their designs to defeat modern Russian EW [Electronic Warfare] systems” (AP 16, 2022, March 30). This aspect of conscription was positive and recruitment continued in a “mixed system” where both conscription and fulfillment of professional contracts as set out in the NSS and MD

(Parliament of Ukraine, 2015). 17). Undoubtedly, conscription was immediately needed due to unacceptable readiness posture in 2014-2015, Ruslan Garbar (2014) argued in 2014 that the need for conscription remained given the nature of the Russian threat – its geographic proximity and the nature of Russian ambitions but also the financial aspect. Garbar also praises the benefit of universal service that creates a possible reserve capacity (Garbar, 2014, December 25). A November 2014 report by the Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies (CACDS) argued for a “mobile, compact, PROFESSIONAL ARMY (!), as well as territorial defense trained through the modernization of the mobilization system” (CACDS, 2014 November 12).

Post-2014 there was a stronger move to a professional based military. For example, there were laws passed to ensure that untrained recruits were not sent to the front line and exposed to danger prematurely. In 2016, Poroshenko announced that "There is not a single conscripted soldier on the front or in the area of the antiterrorist operation" (Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 2016, November 2). Poroshenko's statement represents a rhetorical commitment to an improvement in the moral treatment of personnel, that citizens would not be used callously as cannon-fodder. However, contract soldiering was not a panacea, as high rates of attrition of trained personnel was concerning to Op UNIFIER interviewees and experts on the Jamestown Foundation panel. Between 2018-2020, more than 77,000 contract personnel left the Armed Forces (Korba, 2021, October 21). The loss of experienced personnel was a severe issue that threatened combat capability. Reasons for leaving were low salaries and frustration with the Chain of Command (Jamestown Foundation, 2021, March 25). Reforms attempted to improve

bureaucratic process to facilitate the re-enlistment of experienced personnel in times of need. Thus, there was a recognition of the value of trained and experienced personnel, and the immense loss, attrition represented. MND Zagorodnyuk mentions the improvement of a digitization of service records to streamline enlistment processes of former soldiers with combat experience (Kuznetsova, 2020 February 10). The operational overuse of combat units was a large concern where troops could be burnt-out and become physically fatigued and mentally demoralized. The ATO/JFO imposed the need for a large-scale deployed force posture continually through the period, which would be incredibly taxing on any state. In this period, discussion of the conflict being a “frozen conflict” was to Russia’s advantage by imposing on Ukraine an open wound that required constant attention and financial investment (Pifer, 2016, February 12).

From 2014, the issue of societal readiness was evident in ongoing debate about “territorial defence”. This debate became more pronounced in the media spurred on by Russian troop build-ups in the Spring and Fall of 2021. There was discussion about where the Territorial Command would fit organizationally – under the UAF command or under the MOD. Also, whether privileges of gun ownership could be extended to reservists, which was according to General Kryvonos, important to having a response to Russian aggression (Lapaiev, 2021, February 26).

For Clausewitz, the popular resistance of the citizenry can be used intelligently (Clausewitz & Heuser, 2008, pp.184-190). Prior to invasion, Commander in Chief Zaluzhny echoed a modern articulation of Clausewitz’ insight in reference to territorial defence units: “the enemy must know that every yard is a fortress (Lashchenko, 2021, September 25). In July 2021, the “On the

Fundamentals of National Resistance” was signed by Zelensky, permitting mechanisms to organize citizen resistance in the case of defence or occupation, revisiting issue of minimally regulated volunteer battalions of 2014-2015. However, by this time, the state was sufficiently organized, that territorial defence could be organized through official channels.

Cultural attitudes

In the critical juncture there was widespread desire for change evident in the Maidan revolution who extended support to the Donbas war effort through self-organized means. The size of the volunteer effort to assist the state in the Donbas war was large, with over 100k volunteers (Kyslytska, 2017, December 6). Volunteers were the backbone of the early 2014 war who greatly assisted a committed nucleus of military personnel. The volunteer effort represented a massive citizen-led effort to defend the state, not only as fighters but in a myriad of support roles: fundraising for supplies, transporting of supplies to military positions, provision of medical, psychological and legal services, recovery of human remains, training on technical knowledge of (Ministry of Defence, 2018, p. 68-69; Bombela 2021, August 24). Civic activism, patriotism and nationalism were channeled into the non-statal volunteer movements. Official channels deemed corrupt, or simply incapable of providing the requisite service, meant ironically, that the official state apparatus was bypassed to defend the larger idea of the state. There is also a sense that public pressure pushed reforms. Butusov in 2014, was highly critical of the bureaucratic process arguing that bureaucrats needed to be pushed by civil society to get them to act and fund defence seriously writing:

“I hope that public opinion will succeed in swaying the Ministry of Defense for such systemic decisions in the first place, or at least the Ministry of Internal Affairs will be able to obtain the necessary amount of ammunition from the military" (RNBEE, 2014 August 3).

Individual citizens, whether uniformed or serving in the volunteer battalions or civilian volunteer organizations are credited for what defence of the state could be salvaged. Butusov writes:

Ukraine is fighting thanks to the amazingly high level of patriotism and personal initiative of soldiers and officers at the front. The army as an institution, as a system, as a normal military organization is still absent. Patriots fight on their enthusiasm and love for the Motherland. And they fight mainly with the support of volunteers, not the state.” (Butusov, 2015 March 13)

Society placed great legitimacy in the volunteers supporting the war, especially ensuring that front line fighters could be equipped. The importance of the societal impulse was described as follows: "the new reform of the Ukrainian Army began spontaneously, not through the adoption of a new doctrine, but with the Revolution of Dignity" (Kyslytska, 2017, December 6, p. 62).

However, support of Ukrainian society for the military in 2014 is complex. Nationalist support of the Maidan was book-ended by extreme separation desires in Crimea and Donbas. Motivations for societal support intersect with questions of identity, nationalism and patriotism, which illuminate specific motivations to support the war effort. Regardless of specific motivation, the Ukrainian population supported the war effort.

The ATO suddenly meant a pronounced military visible in society. The volunteer battalions were immensely popular, seen as heroes to step up in government absence. Societal actors heroized the volunteers. One Op Unifier participant noted the immense popularity of the volunteers and perceived that the state could only exercise its will so far (AP 16, 2022, March 30). Maidan also represented widespread support for a move toward Euro-Atlantic standards. Volunteers desired that reforms be concretized to ensure gains would not simply represent a temporal reprieve from a quasi-democratic status quo that the independence period had remained. The volunteer presence was further institutionalized within the PRO Office which worked from August 2015-2020. The PRO and other forms of contact meant volunteer representation carried the zeal of Maidan and Donbas war volunteer activism into official state organs. During the period, a current of nationalism and patriotism helped boost the esteem of the military, described as: “support for the military is akin to a sacred duty for patriotic Ukrainians” (Bershidsky, 2019, February 27).

There was also a measure of accountability. The defeat at Ilovaisk and immense human loss, factored into the national psyche and commanders came under legal process that criticized their command actions (Cohen 2016, June 10; Butusov 2015, March 13). Officers were prosecuted in civilian legal processes, not in a separate military justice system.

Creation of a Ukrainian identity

Given Russian actions in 2014 and the prosecution of the Donbas war, political and military leaders were able to form new cultural reference points. There were broad de-Sovietization efforts in society, including the military. The Soviet names of bases and units were

renamed for symbolic value (Bombela 2021, August 24; Papko, 2020, March 4). Additionally, military uniforms abandoned Soviet era appearances and adopted a Western style (Papko, 2020, March 4). Within military culture, the WW2 anti-Soviet, Ukrainian nationalist slogan was officially adopted (Glory to Ukraine, Glory to the Heroes) in 2018 (Papko, 2020, March 4). As an official greeting, it replaced the Soviet greeting “Hello Comrades, We wish you health” (Visit Ukraine, n.d.). Renaming, as part of de-Sovietization and Ukrainianization was in line with societal opinions increasingly desiring Euro-Atlantic objectives. The previous constraint of military and political leadership which previously blocked Western alignment was greatly removed during the critical juncture.

A personal anecdotal experience illustrated the strength of foundational experience that forms identity. In 2012 while in Vinnytsia, my translator and driver stressed the importance of their identification as Russians, but with Ukrainian passports. Each stressed how their military fathers had been ethnically Russian and stationed in Ukraine. The fact, that their identity was so fervently Russian stood out to me, which convinces to the significance of Russian-oriented Ukrainians growing in Ukrainian identity. In the 2014-2022 period, there was an increase in societal nationalism, in the words of Commander in Chief Muzhenko, it was Ukrainian national character that “became an indestructible monolith” (Day, 2017, March 9). In this critical juncture, there was greater openness for a Ukrainian national identity to become stronger in areas where it was traditionally weak. There was a broader societal realization that Russian partnership, was a

closed opportunity akin to thinking in the Officer corps. Resultantly, attitudes in society hardened toward Russia.

Kuzio (2017) notes the growth of Russian speakers supporting Ukraine (p.343-349). UNIFIER participants also noted the pride of Russian speaking UAF members presumably from the south-east who highlighted their Ukrainian loyalty as Russian speakers. It appears that Ukrainians became more 'Ukrainian' in national consciousness (Arel, 2018), particularly in the south and east which previously were not inclined to Ukrainian nationalism as the Western oblasts.

Prestige of the military in Ukrainian Society

Battlefield courage and resilience of Ukrainian fighters at Donetsk airport between September 28, 2014 and January 21, 2015 was emblematic of a heroic national spirit where the soldiers, nicknamed "Cyborgs" resisted against overwhelming odds. Also, the 2014 parliamentary elections brought in candidates with war experience (Balmforth & Polityuk, 2014, November 27). Later in the period, Commander in Chief Muzhenko praised society and the work of the armed forces.

But, excuse me, have you ever seen such an army, which for three years has been resisting aggression under "Grads"? It resists successfully! I want Ukrainians to understand - the nation has woken up. Children and young people who voluntarily go to our military just to sing songs on holiday - they are our most valuable asset. In a few years, I am convinced they will be side by side with their brothers-in-arms. We are working daily to rearm, our talents are working to create new designs, but most importantly, it is our people who

thank us in every village where the Ukrainian army is defending itself. (Day, 2017, March 9).

In Muzhenko's eyes, there was a co-evolution of military development that was appreciated by society. The invocation of children serving in the military in the future, signifies an inter-generational support for the military. After three years of reform, Poroshenko made a speech about progress of Ukrainian nation building choosing to exit the Russian sphere of influence. He spoke about improvements and external progress the state had made.

During four years of the war Russia has unleashed against Ukraine we have strengthened the state. The nation was consolidated on the principles of national defense and patriotism. We have created a strong army with you. And with the painstaking work of our diplomats, we have provided international political and diplomatic support for the independence of Ukraine". President Poroshenko (Presidential Administration of Ukraine, 2018, August 31).

Support for Western Policy Directions

There was a high turnout for the Presidential election of 2014. The interim Turchynov government, then Poroshenko and Zelensky administrations held pro-Western perspectives. In 2014, Tymoshenko and Poroshenko, offering a pro-Western platform in the 2014 election representing and the voter share of approximately 56 and 13 percent respectively indicates high support for a Western direction. Excepting the occupied territories of the Donbas region (Kudelia, 2016) and the fact that pro-Russian parties in 2014 were "in disarray" (Arel, 2018, p.187), there was significant support for pro-Western orientation in the population. An International Republican (IRI) poll in March 2014 found that national support for joining NATO was 34 percent

(International Republican Institute, 2014a, p.19). Through the period the desirability of joining NATO increased. Analyst Fakhurdinva describes that:

according to numerous polls, this figure [desirability of joining NATO] has been at least 50% of the population in recent years and is unprecedented since Ukraine's independence. Even in the southern and eastern regions of the country, NATO is largely seen as a partner with whom cooperation should be strengthened (Fakhurdinova, 2021, July 13).

Ambition to join NATO was enshrined in legislation through the 2018 National Security law and Constitutional amendment in 2019. Societal support for Western oriented reforms was undoubtedly bolstered by tangible “rewards”, such as Visa-free travel to the EU (Fakhurdinova, 2021, July 13). It was stressed that the receipt of Visa-free travel was a massive factor for the population; a visible sign of reward for reform progress (AP 24, 2023 January 5). Electoral preference for continued Western support was evident in Zelensky’s win in 2019 when he carried approximately 73 percent to Poroshenko’s 24 percent in the run-off election. Combining the popularity of both Poroshenko and Zelensky as pro-Western candidates, political expression that was openly supportive of Russia in the period was marginal.

Military-Society interaction in the ATO/JFO

Beyond attitudes acquired and disseminated from direct military service, citizens form opinions of how they are treated by their military in regular life interactions. When civilians are the subject of abuse or corruption, their allegiance to the military can wane. The military may come to be seen as an enemy of internal origin, akin to an invading enemy.

In the 2014-2022 reform period, the military was highly visible throughout society. A bus shelter in Kyiv in October 2014 testifies to the visibility of the war within daily life, figure 8.



Figure 8 - Patriotic Sign on Bus

Stop Shelter in Kyiv, October 2014. Photo taken by author.

“There is my people! My people will always be there! No one will cross out my people! All the werewolves and strays will flee, the proud conquerors of the ford!” Vasyl Simonenko.

The words of a Ukrainian dissident poet (Vasyl Simonenko) recast publicly in 2014 testify to the combative spirit of Ukrainian society, early in the conflict. Physically, the war was present on Ukrainian territory in the east, leading to interaction with Ukrainian citizens living within or near the conflict zone. Citizens were affected directly by the hostilities but also indirectly by the interruptions on daily life that war wrought restrictions on mobility, economic activity and separation of families. Beyond the defence of the line of contact, military activities were involved in restoration of infrastructure, demining and delivery of humanitarian aid to provide some relief

for affected citizens (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, p. 15). In the eight years between 2014 and 2022, the population was important as a center of gravity that counter-insurgency literature implies is central. MOD efforts were principally aimed at creating a positive public opinion about the Armed Forces of Ukraine among residents in the deployment areas, improving coordination and interaction with local authorities, public associations, international humanitarian organizations and citizens in order to ensure favourable conditions for the performance of assigned missions by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2018, p. 24). Heroes of the 2014-2015 battles and ATO were publicized in official publications (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2017). The ATO museum, a modern museum dedicated to the Donbas war opened in May 2016 in Dnipro.

In the period, there was Western assistance that provided Ukraine technical expertise for managing the communications with the population. The MOD held training to adopt NATO standards for Strategic Messaging (Ministry of Defence, 2019, 41-42). The hybrid nature of the war meant that Russian/DNR/LNR leadership regularly publicized data about Ukrainian military harm to the local population. For the Op UNIFIER mission, rotational leadership were consistently aware of high stakes informational warfare at play. Initial rotations were highly cognizant of risk that Ukraine represented as a contested space with direct Russian intelligence risk; there were strict protocols on movement and visibility correspondingly and the uniform was not publicly worn. However, in later rotations, the uniform became a vehicle to demonstrate Canadian presence as a sign of international solidarity. One interview stated: “we went out of our way to

wear our uniforms at all times.....to show the Ukrainians or the Ukrainian military and the population at large that, hey, Canadians are there” (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Interview participants placed great significance on the contribution of Op UNIFIER as a visible form of international solidarity at the level of foreign policy, for the military but also for Ukrainian society (AP 4, 2022, January 13). Later rotations permitted the public wearing of uniforms, greater movement of CAF personnel. This visibility became an important contribution of the mission. Western, and Canadian accompaniment, visible or not, was very appreciated by Ukrainians as CAF members consistently relayed.⁸¹ Throughout, Op UNIFIER communications attempted to counter Russian information efforts to tarnish the Op UNIFIER mission. During the last rotation of operation Unifier prior to the mission’s withdrawal in January 2022, there was a desire for Information Operations (IO) to be less defensive in orientation and to more actively message the Russian speaking populations who could potentially be favorable to Russian positions. Here, there was a desire to respond or communicate actively in Russian language as opposed to Ukrainian (Léveillé, 2022 March 24).

Conclusion: Results after the 2022 Invasion:

⁸¹ Of course, it would be expected for CAF members to think positively of how they were received by Ukrainians, so the strength of this claim needs to be tempered. However, from professional experience, CAF members have relayed experiences in host nations where their presence was interpreted negatively, therefore, it should not be discounted entirely.

The military was required to regain trust that the 2014 inefficiencies had deteriorated. In 2023, evidence demonstrates that societal trust of the military increased during the prosecution of the war. As the invasion unfolded, the Razumkov center reported that trust had the military as the highest trusted institution in the country and an increase from 2022 (The Kyiv Independent News Desk, 2023 July 26). Another poll in 2023 indicated an extremely high trust rate in the military and state institutions (Rating Lab, 2023, February 21).

In this period, the support of the population meant a continued supply of recruits into the military system. The political level and military leader's made rhetorical and practical efforts to improve the welfare of the Ukrainian military service people and for the Ukrainian population. The support of the Ukrainian population was central to the improved defence of the state post-2014. Society was needed because society was a target of Russian information operations to destabilize it. Post-2022, the support of the population for the Ukrainian military and its war effort remained strong, even increasing – a critical factor that permitted the state the required internal legitimacy to continue the war. Commentator Aliona Hvilicvo recalled that all opposition parties united around Zelensky at the onset of the 2022 invasion (Ukraine the Latest, 2023, September 7). The political elite was unified, as was the military leadership and a vast majority of society. The 2022 invasion further consolidated that Western direction was the only direction possible - the attacks in 2022 massively affected the eastern cities in Donetsk Oblast, notably

Mariupol.⁸² Given these attacks centered in the most Russo-centric areas of the country where ostensibly potential Russophilic attitudes could survive, the destruction and indiscriminate harm to civilians meant future Russian support was in jeopardy (Shevel, 2022 January 26)

On the issue of welfare, a new understanding between society and the military was created, although the capacity to build new welfare programming was limited by funding and ability to develop the requisite infrastructure to accompany it.

At the outbreak of war in 2022, recruitment was strong. Volunteers signed up in significant numbers in Khmelnytskyi in Western Ukraine (Bolger, 2022 February 26) indicative of a population whose fighting spirit was in-tact. However, in the summer of 2023, recruitment was beginning to become an area of concern for the war effort. Despite this, there were some social media reports of conscription and some sort of security forces essentially forcibly taking citizens to recruiting offices. In the fall of 2023, worries of mobilization emerged in Ukraine (BBC World Service, 2023, November 16). However, this is entirely normal given the immense casualties, duration of war and unclear possibility of conflict resolution.

The Territorial Defence Force (TDF) was eventually formed in 2021 and permitted citizens to readily enlist with approximately 50,000 entrants by the end of February 2022 (Bielieskov, 2023, May 11). The TDFs made significant operational contributions in the first month of the 2022

⁸² See for example: (Yerushalmy, 2023 April 28).

invasion (Bielieskov, 2023). Ukrainian society resisted the Russian invasion while maintaining a combative attitude under severe duress. Citizens contributed to the war effort in widespread ways by both formal participation in the military or in support activities. Citizens who did not formally enlist also assisted the military through an electronic citizen services app “Diia”. The Diia application required the citizen to sign-in, which authenticated the user and verified identity, and citizens reported real-time events of Russian troop movements (Druziuk, 2022, April 18). With citizens serving as sensors, the application offered military intelligence another valuable source of data to help commanders defend against the invasion.

One year after the 2022 invasion began, Commander in Chief Zaluzhny gave a rare interview and thanked the Ukrainian people for participating in the war effort (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12). Zaluzhnyi demonstrates genuine sadness for the immense combat and civilian losses. A poll from 2023 indicates that an extremely high rate that of societal impact – that 17 percent of respondents had lost relatives in the war (Rating Lab, 2023, February 21).

Zaluzhny credits the ordinary members of society: “yet again I want to say that so far everything lies on the shoulders of these ordinary people” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12, 23:35-23:41). These ordinary people, representing societal recruitment, stating: “the professional military corps starts the war, and then teachers, engineers, and accountants end it” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12, 23:00-23:09).

Post-invasion, military leaders continue to commend the civilian population. Zaluzhny credits the Ukrainian people as the ones who made a successful defence. He states that the

Russians underestimated the psychology of Ukrainians desire for freedom and willingness to fight (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12). Even in September 2022, a poll indicated that a majority of Ukrainians desired to continue the war until the achievement of victory (Reinhart, October 18 2022), indicating a high level of support for the war effort. Zaluzhny further states: “we count every shell, every mine and every human life” (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12) (19:34-19:39) and “in our country, on the contrary, human life is the most precious thing” (20:32-20:34). Zaluzhny, who was not educated in Soviet military system, states his personal objective of desiring to change the military culture to value human life, a clear break from the authoritarian Soviet model. In contrast, Russian warfare post-2022 demonstrated great callous nature of troop treatment; the Russian use of lower quality troops, conscripts or convicts as cannon fodder illustrate this (Atlamazoglou, 2024, July 6). While Zaluzhny’s comments are not an aversion to use force and accept casualties in war, the attitude demonstrated by Zaluzhny is about valuing the human being to a much greater degree than Soviet, or current Russian military strategy. In effect, it is a sign of great cultural progress away from the Soviet mentality. Further, Zaluzhny claims to have tried to change the military culture “so that everyone listens to the opinion of the subordinate”... “treating your subordinate as a human being, to build normal relationships among people in the armed forces. This is where we are fundamentally different from the Soviet Army (The World is Upside Down, 2023, May 12, 34:56-35:16).

Chapter 8: Conclusion

As the thesis concludes, the war continues. While there remains much unclarity, it is clear that Ukraine's post 2022 defence against Russian invasion was markedly different from 2014-2015. As of January 2025, 35 months after the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has not been defeated. The thesis began from the observation of improvement between the two temporal periods. From this base argument, the thesis set out to explain how this substantial improvement occurred in such a short time given that reform efforts in the 1991-2014 had failed and Soviet legacies remained present in society and the military. The thesis has argued that despite the strong path dependent culture inherited from the Soviet ancestry, reforms were possible because of a critical juncture, a window of opportunity that removed constraints that had inhibited reform in the Independence period. The Maidan Revolution, fall of the Yanukovich government, annexation of Crimea and outbreak of the Donbas war, were the events that began the critical juncture. In this period an unprecedented opportunity occurred for Ukraine to change societal trajectories. It is within these broader societal changes that military and defence reform were conducted. The opportunities provided by the critical juncture were reinforced by the emergence of a united political will between the political level, military leadership, society and external community, and this in turn led to genuine learning within the Ukrainian Armed Forces. It is the conclusion of this thesis that substantial improvement occurred in three aspects of military professionalism which together help understand the substantial progress. It is imperative to re-state that the argument of improvement is not a prediction of the war's ultimate outcome.

Chapter five argued that Ukraine had to demonstrate improvement in norms of external legitimacy to ensure moral and material assistance from the Western international community during the period. Progress was not fully completed by 2022, but important changes had occurred organizationally, in legislation and in terms of military and MOD culture. While not achieving perfection, there is evidence that Ukraine's civil military relations moved substantially toward a democratic standard, leading to reputational improvement. In terms of civilian control, the Officer corps did not attempt a coup, nor attempt to take formal political control. Rather, military leadership accepted political control and agreed about objectives of fighting the war and accepted being reorganized to be more aligned with democratic standards. The military understood that Western military support was contingent on improving civilian control and cooperation attests to genuine will to do so and progress. Ukraine was thus able to receive, moral, diplomatic and material support for the war effort in 2022. Chapter five's focus on external legitimacy contributes to a temporal descriptive updating of Ukraine's civil military relations literature from the independence era (Grytsenko, 2006; Sherr 2001; 2002a; 2005; Mychajlyszyn, 2002; Sanders 2008).

Chapter six argued that combat capability was improved through aspects of Force Generation and Force Employment. The military was submitted to tutorage by external assistance through the requests of the interim government. Seeking out external assistance was at once something professional militaries do to correct combat failure but simultaneously its external imposition was an indictment that the political level did not trust the military to change

independently, and the military's reputation was tarnished by this, and no less by its poor performance in 2014-2015.

From the outset of the critical juncture, Western support was present in Ukraine, and importantly, the military agreed that Western combat power was a more effective 'paradigm' to model. Organizational changes permitted an alignment of command and control to Western military standards, and new capabilities were developed or improved, including a SOF capacity. Op UNIFIER, as one of the western training efforts taught important tactical skills to build capacity of the Ukrainian military and NGU. Western advice provisioned top-level advice through the multinational Defence Reform Advisory Board (DRAB), Op UNIFIER and other Western efforts to move away from Soviet norms at institutional, strategic and tactical levels. Increased combat capability became evident on the Donbas front, and the post-2022 resistance testified much more dramatically of a more prepared and capable battlefield outcome.

Chapter seven argued that the relationship between military and Ukrainian society improved. Progress related to welfare of Ukrainian soldiers was made a priority rhetorically and practically. Although not completed fully, welfare progress represents improvement in the treatment of military personnel. Ukrainian society in turn supported the state and the military throughout the period, and crucially after the 2022 invasion. Morally, the status of the Armed Forces remained high with strong appreciation for the soldier – an internally legitimate organization. The societal desire to turn to Western democracy, evident from the Orange

Revolution and Maidan revolution was strengthened while simultaneously, aggressive actions of Russia demonstrated to civilians that a Russian alternative no longer existed.

The first section of this concluding chapter unpacks how the findings of this thesis contribute to various literatures, in particular the analytical use of path-dependence. A second section briefly moves to put the Ukrainian case studied in this thesis into broader discussions of the future of military assistance. It argues that it is likely that military assistance projects become more important due to shifts in geopolitical stability. The final section of the chapter concludes the thesis with a more practical focus by identifying contributions of my thesis' findings to policy-oriented fields charged with implementing military assistance initiatives.

Contribution to Literature

Studying the Ukrainian reform period using the analytical framework of path-dependency, the thesis has provided a historically informed analysis, connecting the Soviet legacy to the rupture of the present reform period. The invocation of lock-in and critical juncture respectively, provide examples of how path-dependence can be applied as a theoretical mechanism within historical institutionalist approach. The path-dependence concept of lock-in explains why the Soviet legacy was such a persistent barrier to reform, ultimately leading to military defeat in 2014. In the military realm, the civil military relations construct remained Soviet in orientation. Although civilian control was present as a communist legacy, it continued to be authoritarian in nature and not democratic. In combat capability, the Soviet legacy the orientation of Force Generation (FG) and Force Employment (FE) remained unchanged from its Soviet heritage at the

organizational level. Most emblematically was a lack of initiative in command and control and leadership. At the societal level, the Ukrainian public was not involved in defence management nor military affairs. These legacies were normalized into societal understandings of the political process, within the relationship between the state leaders and the military leadership, and within the military culture itself. For this reason, a status-quo stasis was locked-in. Western oriented politicians, or societal elements from 1991-2014 were concerned with pressing economic concerns in the 1990s, or, faced internal opposition to orient towards Western models of governance by political and electoral blocs of those desiring to remain in the Russian orbit in the 2000s. In the military, the Officer corps was imbued with Soviet understandings of military professionalism as their career education and training originated from there; 1991 was not so far-away temporally in 2010, let alone 2000 – meaning the strength of the old system had not dissipated. Additionally, there was no fundamental reason threat for the Fundamental Imperative (defence of the state) to react to or mobilize change. Exposure to Western military ideas did occur prior to 2014 but was miniscule, given that relationship with NATO and other Western partners was in its infancy and opportunities for contact were not widespread. Although participation in NATO training, exercises and missions occurred, the Ukrainian military was not faced with an urgent necessity to change, nor was any incentive offered to the Officer corps to change. While pockets of Western oriented reformers existed in the military, Isolated pockets of reform effort could not make systemic, widespread or long-lasting change. Further, as the defections of 2014 demonstrate, a sizeable percentage of the Officer corps desired to remain in the Russian orbit. Lock-in therefore played an

important role in the analysis to demonstrate the strength of how the old Soviet patterns could remain in-tact within the three areas of military professionalism.

The path-dependent concept of ‘Critical Juncture’ permitted the analysis to capture the immense impact of the Maidan, annexation of Crimea and outbreak of the Donbas war. The structural changes were swift and were impactful to all three stakeholders of military professionalism – the military, the state and broader society. The entire moorings of the Ukrainian state were shook. To argue that a critical juncture occurred, Cappocia and Keleman (2007) argue that counter-factual analysis can retroactively validate whether critical junctures occurred. While ultimately speculative, the thought experiment can be taken seriously. I argued that without the critical juncture and its impact of all stakeholders, a will to fight would not have manifested. Again, the emergence of a unified will between the political level, military leadership and solidified changes toward a Western oriented security policy could ensue, unabated by spoilers – recalling that defections meant that pro-Russian officers were no longer influential within Ukraine. Without this will, it is likely that reform efforts would have failed internally through domestic opposition and the relapse of pre-existing Soviet patters, or by failing to attract sufficient external support.

Therefore, the use of the “critical juncture” was crucial to explain how path-dependent “lock-in” can be broken, under the right conditions. The most important finding is the recognition of the importance of united will demonstrated in this case. Will to fight was consistent, at the political level, in society, as well as elites, the remaining Officer corps. Will permitted changes in civil military relations, FG/FE through the appropriate passing of updated legislation and guidance

documents to guide the military. Western assistance throughout the period could be impactful leading to multiple forms of genuine learning. This learning was provided at multiple locations – strategically and institutionally through the DRAB and at the tactical level through train-the-trainer models of Op UNIFIER that attempted to ensure systemic effects. During the course of the Donbas war which was Ukrainian led, the Ukrainian military had widespread opportunity to implement Western learning in actual practice, with lessons learned compounding on themselves cumulatively.

The overall contribution of this thesis using findings derived from the analytical application of path-dependence, may be relevant to other jurisdictions of military or defence reform where Soviet, communist, or other enduring belief systems and cultural practices inhibit change in the present. The contributions are therefore threefold: that locked-in legacies through historical occurrence are very real and challenging barriers to reform – they are not simply trivial contextual factors. Secondly, that locked-in legacies can be broken when, and likely on if, a ‘critical juncture’ becomes manifest. It is important to note that the critical juncture was mostly derived from an external source – kinetic Russian aggression that followed Maidan in the annexation of Crimea and Donbas War. Ukrainians, whether domestic reformers in the state, military or society, nor Ukraine’s Western supporters did not control, nor manufacture the events. From this case, it is therefore important to understand that the critical juncture is not something that can be easily controlled or manufactured. However, it is vitally important. In Ukraine, conditions of the critical juncture removed actors who likely could have opposed reform process. In the military, defections

to Russia of service personnel early in the conflict – during the takeover of Crimea and the early part of the Donbas war, meant that remaining personnel had decided to remain and to fight. Politically, the formation of the DNR/LNR meant that voting blocs, traditionally oppositional to Western directions, were no longer voting in Ukrainian elections and able to block the passage of key legislation. For the Ukrainian population, the manifestation of physical war in 2014 meant a hardening of attitudes toward Russia of a population more traditionally inclined to Russian partnership. In short, Ukrainian society had never been more united. The lesson here is that some of these contextual and structural events are beyond control and cannot be manipulated to occur by an external force.

Finally, the contribution of this thesis is to stress the role that united will of the stakeholders of military professionalism played. If the multistakeholder agreement for Ukraine to resist Russian aggression was not united in will, then it is hard to imagine how reform efforts to improve the military could have been successful. Building on the logic of consensus that is inherent in Schiff's (2009) concordance theory, the findings recognized that improvement occurred in three distinct but mutually reinforcing locations of military professionalism. For all actors, there was a united will - the old way, was insufficient, failed or no longer desired. Should oppositional groups within the military, or at the political level had overtly or covertly been against the overarching reform objective of improving national defence in the face of Russian aggression, the results could have been markedly different. Conversely, should Western partners

abandoned Ukraine for issues of external legitimacy, then the provision of war supplies, weapons and advice would not have been available to Ukraine post-2022.

Additionally, this thesis makes several contributions to the literature on military reform, both generally and in Ukraine specifically. Chapter five's focus on external legitimacy contributes to a descriptive updating of Ukraine's civil military relations literature that originated in the independence era (Grytsenko 2006; Sherr 2001; 2002a; 2005; Mychajlyszyn, 2002; Sanders 2008). The thesis also contributes to an overall understanding of the military and defence reforms in the 2014-2022 period as begun in the literature by (Sanders, 2017; Radin, 2020; Bukkvoll & Solovian, 2020; Dyson & Pashchuk, 2022; Sanders, 2023). These works tackle important empirical aspects of the reforms, looking at specific areas of focus. Analytically, they cover how reforms were occurring, progressing as well as questions of 'why' and 'how' they were occurring at various levels of analysis. As the reform effort was so large, my project brings additional empirical factors to the discussion. Firstly, the thesis took a holistic analysis of reforms, considering the external elements of western assistance, the internal actions of the state and military as well as the internal societal actors. The contribution here is awareness or confirmation of how battlefield success post-2022 was not simply an isolated story of the military or defence sector. This finding edifies themes in SSR and SFA literature that point to the importance of local buy-in for success project in terms of potential spoilers, but also how difficult the processes actually are (Brzoska, 2006; Sedra, 2017; Knowles & Matisek, 2019).

Secondly, the thesis included data from one of the most important Western military assistance projects in the period, the Canadian military assistance mission Op UNIFIER. Thus, it contributes awareness and description of how reform was both an internal and external process. In Sanders (2023), attribution for improvement is given to Western assistance in the 2014-2022 period. Through reliance on interview data from the actual CAF practitioners who executed the assistance, my thesis contributes to an expanded knowledge of how this occurred, especially in Chapter 6 – Combat Capability. This is a unique insight into how the reform process occurred from the bottom-up.

The future of Military Assistance in light of the Ukrainian Case

The final section of this conclusionary chapter departs from the analytical and empirical findings of my thesis of how Ukrainian improvement occurred to discuss the broader implications of the case itself. It discusses the strategic context of Western motivation that underpinned the entirety of the Ukrainian case and leaves the reader with a discussion of the future relevance of western military assistance drawing on ideas from Lummack (2023).

The case of Ukraine connects to Cold War literature on proxy-warfare, alliance politics and Cold-War military assistance, which carry objectives of building military competency. The more prepared and capable the military force (and accompanying defence and national security infrastructure) the higher the dissuasive potential the state provides (Snyder, 1960). From the perspective of Western motivation to support Ukraine, the stakes of the war in Ukraine were high for the Western community due to geographic proximity to Europe – a factor that the conflict

spillover literature advances as of critical importance (Buhaug & Gleditsch, 2008). It is also apparent that the “modernization and reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” was seen to improve “regional security and stability in Eastern Europe” (Holcomb, 2016, p. 7). In 2020, a US DOD official, Laura Cooper, speaking at a conference in 2020 stated “Ukraine is a critical partner on the frontline of Russian aggression” (Vergun, 2021, June 7). The implication is that the United States views Ukraine as a ‘partner’ within a broader struggle against Russia which is more than simply a localized event. Security assistance can be understood as a management tool - Ukraine illuminates how Western strategy was designed to change the cost benefit calculation for Russia’s use of force (Freedman, 2019, 19; AP 6, 2022 January 14).

In a previous generation, Chandler (2015) remarked that conflict was understood as an inevitable phenomenon that requires continuous management. This observation I would argue is even more relevant now, in the third decade of the 21st century. Multipolar competition is causing geopolitical shift and could point to an increased future need for military assistance projects to manage risk.⁸³ Where heretofore post-Cold war competition between great powers was confined to the economic or diplomatic realms, the Russian Federation through its invasions of Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014, 2022) testify how the use of military force for political means remains an option for states to pursue, should the cost be bearable.

⁸³ See Canada’s Defence Policy (SSE), “The re-emergence of major power competition has reminded Canada and its allies of the importance of deterrence” (Government of Canada 2019, May 31, p.50).

The rise of China is emblematic of the rise of great power competition and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken describes the American perspective in relief with the war in Ukraine: “even as President Putin’s war continues, we will remain focused on the most serious long-term challenge to the international order – and that’s posed by the People’s Republic of China” (United States Department of State, 2022, May 26). Regional powers may also be emboldened to use force under certain conditions. Concern exists over American ability to sustain war on multiple fronts and there is the potential of US isolationism expanding.

Although other jurisdictions may not be deemed as strategically relevant for SSR and SFA sponsors to become involved, it is probable that military assistance projects become more important to strengthen key allies whether for US geopolitical strategy or as a form of conflict management of the broader international community. One contemporary expression is found in the call for ‘offshore balancing’ argued by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt:

by limiting the areas the U.S. military was committed to defending and forcing other states to pull their own weight, it would reduce the resources Washington must devote to defense, allow for greater investment and consumption at home, and put fewer American lives in harm's way (Mearsheimer & Walt 2016, p.74).

Offshore balancing implies the cultivation of allies in US geopolitical strategy. As described by professor Bilal Saab:

In a period of strategic competition with China, America's global network of allies and partners is a unique advantage that should be leveraged and sustained through a better understanding of, and a larger role for, security cooperation (2023).

With military assistance remaining potentially important in an era of geopolitical unrest, the finding of this thesis that Western assistance contributed to Ukrainian military improvement becomes important for future study. The Ukrainian case stands in sharp contrast from recent cases of military assistance which were unsuccessful, notably Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali (Biddle, Macdonald, & Baker, 2018; Marsh & Rolandsen, 2021). The Ukrainian case therefore offers hope that strategies residing on the logic of military improvement can still be a useful form of security management under the right conditions.

Relevance of the thesis to Policy Discussion

Deriving from the analytical contribution, relevance for policy makers and strategists charged with designing military assistance intervention can be distilled. The emergent lesson is to think deeply about historical context of where assistance will be enacted, and how it evolved to the point of intervention. Situational awareness of the context could investigate whether path-dependence concepts such as lock-in are potentially manifest at the point of onset. This is important to pre-emptively identify historical factors that could inhibit the potential for change and chances of reform success. Additionally, an investigation of whether a critical juncture is manifest could examine whether the old systems remain entrenched, or whether they have been discredited or abandoned. This leads to the importance of identifying all relevant stakeholders of

military professionalism and a deep assessment of stakeholder will and how genuine it is. The unified will amongst stakeholders present in Ukraine was identified as being fundamentally necessary for improvement.

However, the level of stakeholder agreement observed in Ukraine is likely to be exceptional, and should be expected. Rather, highly conflictual orientations should be the default to be expected, especially owing to the locations where SSR/SFA traditionally operate – troubled states exiting conflict or authoritarianism. Quite simply, when SSR/SFA is initiated in contexts where unity of will does not exist, genuine learning may not be able to take root and compound. However, this is not to say that the presence of conflict is pre-determined to be insurmountable. As Bukkvoll and Solovian (2020) demonstrate, many heated internal debates occurred within the Navy, SBU and SOF. My analysis also revealed that squabbles and consternation existed between stakeholders on issues of external legitimacy and in relation to the assessment of Ukrainian combat capability. Additionally, there was sharp internal critique of passionate supporters.

However, these debates and critiques ultimately did not prove fatal to the overall reform project. This is to say, that reform is messy and the site of politics where internal actors jostle for advantage; envisioning reform in any other lens is naïve. A main takeaway therefore is to attempt to understand the contextual dynamics well enough to assess whether the level of stakeholder conflictivity is remediable or would be fatal to reform processes. Another contribution of the thesis is that it illuminates a discussion about how much weight should external sponsorship be attributed in cases of improvement, relative to other causal factors. Importantly, my analysis

demonstrates that western military assistance on its own would be insufficient. Specific learning derived from how Op UNIFIER was oriented could carry useful lessons for future SSR and SFA efforts, specifically, the importance of attempting to ensure systematic reach.

Another contribution to SSR/SFA literature is for SSR/SFA to temper expectations due to the enormity of change required. From my analysis there is a recognition that progress needs to be understood as incremental. Evaluation must be measured as a progression from the starting point and not as a measure of overall distance from an idealized norm, particularly for civil military relations and external legitimacy. For external legitimacy, rhetorical speech acts, organizational change and binding legislation are needed, meaning direction along with substantial follow-through actions. The expectation of established patterns of behaviour, such as corrupt practices, should unfortunately not be expected to be removed overnight. While visible and flagrant corruption was stamped out at least at a surface level in Ukraine, more hidden and deeper forms of corruption continued, although not proving fatal to reform progress. Fundamental agreement of stakeholders proved more important than the continuation of corrupt practices, although this should not be read as an attempt to excuse corruption in any form.

For combat capability, context also matters. Historically, the Ukrainian military was born from the Soviet one, which itself had been a 'paradigm army' during the Cold War. Thus, the base of military knowledge and culture was established, as was the massive military apparatus in terms of legacy military infrastructure and equipment. In jurisdictions lacking the historical base level organization and military tradition, the challenge will be much different. Additionally, successes in

aspects of combat capability may be more evident in base level tactical training than at higher levels of bureaucracies. For example, legacy Soviet systems that were more stationary, were not easily changed, such as grid systems, military terminology, and equipment. Another aspect is the recognition of demographic generations that influence thinking patterns and identify who yields power within organizations. This is important for recognizing that the building of professional forces from the ground up remains a long-term project requiring patience and sustained commitment. Finally, military assistance writ large needs to be understood as inherently challenging projects which may never actually be adequately completed. Guarantees of future success are impossible to provide in advance. Despite this, military assistance may be useful options of last resort for their potential benefits, especially to reduce greater harm, provided they are enacted with legitimate motivations.

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Anonymous Participant (AP) 2. (25 June 2020). Major-General of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Telephone Interview.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 3. (8 July 2020). Lieutenant-Colonel of the Canadian Armed Forces,

member of Op. Unifier. Telephone Interview.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 4. (13 January 2022). Chief Warrant Officer of the Canadian Armed

Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 5. (13 January 2022). Colonel (retired) of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 6. (14 January 2022). Colonel (retired), Canadian Armed Forces. Virtual

interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 7. (18 January 2022). Colonel, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op.

Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 8. (21 January 2022). Lieutenant-Colonel, Canadian Armed Forces,

member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 9. (24 January 2022). Chief Warrant Officer of the Canadian Armed

Forces, member of Op. Unifier in, Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 10. (26 January 2022). Colonel, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op.

Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 11. (26 January 2022). Chief Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces,

member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 12. (27 January 2022). Master Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces,

member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 13. (28 January 2022). Lieutenant-Colonel, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 14. (1 February 2022). Captain, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 15. (16 February 2022). Lieutenant-Colonel, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 16. (30 March 2022). Major, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 17. (30 March 2022). Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 18. (31 March 2022). Sergeant, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

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Anonymous Participant (AP) 21. (29 April 2022). Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 22. (13 June 2022). Colonel, Ukrainian Armed Forces. Physical interview.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 23. (12 August 2022). Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces, member of Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 24. (05 January 2023). Member of the Defence Reform Advisory Board.

Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 25. (25 January 2023). Chief Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces.

Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 26. (26 January 2023). Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces. Virtual

interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 27. (26 January 2023). Brigadier-General, Canadian Armed Forces.

Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP). (14 March 2023). Chief Warrant Officer, Canadian Armed Forces.

Physical Interview.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 29. (June 2023). Chief Warrant Officer, Georgian Armed Forces. Physical

Interview.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 30. (27 September 2023). Sergeant, Canadian Armed Forces, member of

Op. Unifier. Virtual interview via MS-Teams.

Anonymous Participant (AP) 31. (28 September 2023). Former NGO worker in Ukraine. Virtual

interview via MS-Teams.

Annex A - Ukrainian Armed Forces Personnel 1991-2022

Ukrainian Armed Forces Personnel 1991-2022	
<p>Compiled from: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance. (n.d.) Armed forces personnel, total - Ukraine. World Bank. Retrieved 2024, September 1. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1?locations=UA</p>	
Year	Number of Personnel (thousands)
1992	430,000
1993	380,000
1994	350,000
1995	518,500
1996	466,800
1997	453,400
1998	449,400
1999	428,000
2000	420,400
2001	419,800
2002	414,800
2003	403,000
2004	271,000
2005	273,000
2006	215,000
2007	215,000
2008	215,000
2009	214,825
2010	214,825
2011	214,850
2012	214,850
2013	121,500
2014	204,000
2015	256,000
2016	292,000
2017	297,000
2018	297,000
2019	311,000
2020	298,000
2021	*Data not available as of 2024, September 1.
2022	

ANNEX B – Inference from Different Document Sources

Press releases from government sources helped provide a historical record of reform activities but were usually short and limited to brief summaries and contextual linkages. A challenging issue experienced was that Ukrainian government press releases often disappeared as URLs changed over time, or articles were deactivated. This became apparent particularly after the 2022 invasion, as the Ukrainian MOD website was updated continuously with live reporting of the post-2022 war. On several occasions I was unable to re-locate an article. Longer government documents such as annual White Papers or policy documents were much more detailed and illuminated concrete government objectives and strategies designed to enact them. I was aware that Ukrainian government communications were intended for the Ukrainian population and external donor community during an active war. These audiences required the Ukrainian government to convey professionalism, confidence, progress and success and I was very aware of the possibility of government bias when reporting on their own reform actions, especially during times of war. Therefore, governmental authorship was a known possible limit to objectivity. Government sources were used generally, as trustworthy sources of facts (training X occurred on this date) and to provide baseline statistics to understand what occurred empirically. Further, government statements of intention in policy document, were taken as fact of intention. However, it was understood that policy intentions and tangible actions are different realities.

Media articles that featured reform experts on defence and military themes via in-depth interviews, op-eds or detailed analyses were particularly useful. Non-government sources also

provided descriptive data to help verify the historical record, but their primary utility was the provision of an external opinion about the reform processes offering the possibility of blunter criticality. Governmental experts and stakeholders quoted or referenced or via authorship also carried critical tones, particularly those identified as enthusiastic reformers, providing what appeared to be transparency and candor, although it was impossible for me to know definitively (being unable to access knowledge of the inner workings of the Ukrainian state). I also valued soldier, particularly veteran voices, and considered them trustworthy, particularly useful for describing ground truth of experience. This was undoubtedly shaped by my career experience.⁸⁴ Regardless, opinions from military members speaking frankly were critical and used to balance government claims with lived realities. Another important venue for critical assessments of reform efforts were social media posts, used by both government organizations and individuals. Notably, military leaders or defence experts in Ukrainian society or common soldiers would provide individual level accounts. Social media was described to me as important source, as Ukrainian society generally distrusted established media organizations and known oligarchic ownership biases. Social media held the potential for more capturing emotion of individuals who could hold insider perspectives, important to uncover sources from “the non-official, the informal, the un-institutionalized forms of influence and interaction” (Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014, p. 142).

⁸⁴ The author has worked in Professional Military Education (PME) for the CAF since 2009, predominantly at the Osside Institute.

In terms of linguistic difference, sources in the English language were generally general in orientation, often devoting significant coverage to repeating the contextual situation of the critical juncture events (Maidan Revolution, annexation of Crimea and Donbas war). English language 'Think tank' or Institutional Organization (IO) or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) sources often included op-eds from experts, or assessment reports and provided invaluable insight. Despite exceptions, most deep analysis in English came from Ukrainian experts sharing their expertise in broader venues. Domestic Ukrainian media, whether in Ukrainian, Russian or English offered much more nuanced and local information and highlighted domestic political issues to a much greater extent. This more granular information was essential for appreciating the backstory of the local context which was generally skeletal within international level media sources.

Publications from governments supporting Ukraine's reform process were useful to contrast similarities and differences across experiences in assistance, assessments of progress and points of national emphasis. Government reports provided facts for a historical record amongst other things, but it was understood that supporting governments could mute criticism under the logic of not wanting to publicize Ukrainian challenges. NATO governments were keenly aware of the challenge of Russian information warfare which would capitalize on public critique from Western supporters. Based on my research, I am aware that frank and honest criticism from supporting states was delivered behind closed doors directly to Ukrainian authorities and generally not made public. External governments also desired to appear successful to their own domestic populations to ensure continued support for their respective assistance projects to

Ukraine. Non-governmental or Institutional Organization documents contained information about the historical record, but also about their strategic objectives and their identification of challenges as well as their emphases and definitions. A source of documents included Op UNIFIER end of tour mission reports and associated documents.

Annex C – Interview Process

Interviews lasted on average 90 minutes although some were shorter or longer. A structured script ensured consistency of questions asked, with specific scripts for Op UNIFIER Commanders, Non-Commissioned Members (NCM) and other experts respectively. A semi-structured interview format permitted a free flow of information (Ferguson, 2016). The highly unique experiences of CAF members meant that the conversation most often expanded beyond the standardized script. The two-way interaction between myself as researcher and the participant was most useful, a feature impossible with documents. In terms of the sequencing of questions, interviewees often began speaking of topics, issues or themes that subsequent questions were designed to ask. Rather, than interrupt respondents, I would permit the interviewee to conclude their thoughts to ensure a flow within the progress of the conversation. To avoid repetition, I would re-prompt the interviewee to elaborate if desired.

Face to face interviews had been desired in the research design to build rapport, establish trust to ensure the participant would feel at ease and share honestly. However, due to COVID restrictions, interviews occurred primarily via a virtual method. Regardless, I desired that participants would feel at ease during the interview, and I attempted to build trust virtually. Prior to formal questioning, I ensured a pre-amble section of the interview, where I could introduce myself, explain my research, the consent process, and where participants could freely ask questions. A natural advantage of the virtual format was its cost-savings, permitting interviews with CAF members from across Canada and alleviating costly travel. The video-conferencing

software MS Teams was employed as it was a security-vetted platform that CAF participants had access to and experience with. MS-Teams also permitted, interviewees to connect via a hyperlink even if they did not have access to MS-Teams themselves.

Interviews were arranged through various methods. As a first step, I cold-called Task Force Commanders of Op UNIFIER via email. Other methods of acquiring interviews occurred through snowball word of mouth, for example, at my place of employment at the Osside Institute.

Annex D – Interview Scripts

Interview moderator’s guide

Section A: Research Title

Ukrainian Defence Reform in the post-Donbas War era

Section B: Participant Time Required

Length of Interview - 30 - 90 minutes	
Break(s) – None, unless extraordinarily asked for by the participant.	
Total Time Required – 30 – 90 minutes	

Section C: Introduction

Below is a general guide/script for conducting an interview that you may adapt, as necessary.

- Welcome participant and introduce self

My name is Robert Lummack and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa, under the supervision of Dr. Rita Abrahamsen. I also work at the Chief Warrant Officer Osside Institute for the Profession of Arms.

Thank you for volunteering to participate!

- Explain the general purpose of the discussion/interview and why/how the participants were chosen.

Op. Unifier is a capacity building program operationalizing one part of Ukraine's defence reform in the post-Donbas war era. The purpose of the research is to uncover the learning experiences of CAF members as they interacted with Ukrainian soldiers in Op. Unifier's capacity building mandate. This data will contribute to a broader analysis of the significance of external security intervention and why Ukraine has been reluctant to reform its military.

This interview is completely voluntary and is not remunerated. You were chosen because you participated in Op. Unifier in either Roto 0-10 and have significant interaction with Ukrainian troops in some capacity (training, teaching, mentoring, negotiating) and you volunteered for the interview. The contents of the interview will not be shared with the Chain of Command.

- Explain the presence and purpose of recording equipment (*if appropriate and give the option to opt-out of a recording session*).

As specified on the consent form, this interview is being audio recorded for the sole purpose of verifying statements after the interview so I (principal researcher) do not misconstrue or omit any part of your responses. The interview is being recorded by Audacity. I will write also take some notes during and after our discussion. Immediately following the conclusion of the interview I will share my screen on MS-Teams and you will have the opportunity to ready my notes. You will have all the time you need to do this.

- Outline general ground rules and interview guidelines such as participants can end the focus group session at any time they want or exercise their right to not answer any question(s).

This project may involve some psychological and emotional discomfort. You have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions. If at any time you experience emotional, or psychological discomfort please let me know and we can stop or reschedule the interview.

- Review break schedule and where the restrooms are (if time goes beyond 2hrs, provide a scheduled break).

This interview is intended to run continuously for between 30 and 90 minutes. If you need a break during the interview please let me know and we can pause the interview.

- Address the issue of privacy and confidentiality.

Interviews are anonymous and participant privacy will remain confidential, although it is possible that others may know you have participated through information you may divulge. At all times, I will take all measures to ensure your anonymity. The data collected is going to be analyzed as a whole and participants' names will not be used in any analysis of the discussion. It will refer anonymously to rank/rank group, gender, or roto but not more than one criteria at any time and never in combination.

Please do not share classified information or any information that may compromise the Op. Unifier mission or the privacy and anonymity of yourself or others. Please do not divulge names but instead refer to ranks. Any information that is classified or could compromise the Op Unifier mission will be redacted.

Please note that I am not seeking to uncover classified or legally incriminating information about yourself or others. I will ask you to tell me all that you are able to completely and honestly, taking care to not incriminate yourself or others. Should you report having committed or witnessed a criminal offence I will be required to report it to the relevant authorities, such as the Military Police or Ukrainian authorities.

Section C: Informed Consent:**Conduct the informed consent process before the focus group or interview questions begin**

1. Review the informed Consent with participant

Verbally: Thank you for having signed and returned the Consent Form. Do you still consent? You will be given a chance to review your consent at the end of the interview.

2. Have participant sign forms (or verbally document informed consent if conducting session remotely).

Verbally: Please sign the Consent Form now and send it to me via email or reply that you consent. I strongly encourage you to sign the consent form.

3. A) Gather documents

Wait for the Consent Form to be collected in email.

Ok, I have received the consent form. Thank you, we can begin...

4. B) Explain procedure for participants who are expressly not desiring to sign a consent form (only if applicable).

Although I encourage you to sign the consent form, you expressly desire to not sign the consent form. I respect your wishes. However, I do need to know that you consent. I am verbally asking you now, do you consent? Please note that answering interview questions implies that you are providing your consent.

(If Yes): Thank you, we can begin....

(If No): I am sorry we cannot continue as I require a written consent form or a verbal acknowledgement that you consent. I am sorry we cannot continue with the interview. Thank you.

Section D: Interview Guidelines (Suggested Script)

This interview will consist of (11 or 8) structured questions. During the interview I may ask you additional questions to further clarify or elaborate your answer. You may choose not to answer a question, in that event please feel free to inform me. I reiterate that I am not seeking to uncover classified or incriminating information. Please tell me all that you are able to completely and honestly, although do not incriminate yourself or others. Should you report having committed or witnessed a criminal offence I will be required to report it to the relevant authorities, such as the Military Police or Ukrainian authorities.

Your answers and any information identifying you as a participant of this research will be kept confidential.

Just a reminder that the interview is audio recorded exclusively so that I can verify your statements at a later time. Additionally, I will take notes during the interview. Should you desire, you will have an option to review my notes in two ways, 1), immediately at the end of the interview I can share my screen on MS-Teams to review my preliminary notes. You can have as long as you need to do this. 2) You can review my developed notes taken in consultation with the audio recording at a later time. Should you desire to see these notes I can email them to you directly via DWAN at a later time.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Let's begin.

Section E: Interview Questions (Commander) – List all prepared interview questions and probes
1. Please tell me which roto you commanded?
Follow-up questions:
What was the strategic context at that time considering internal (Ukrainian politics / external factors (geopolitics)?
2. In your understanding, how was Operation Unifier connected to broader defence reforms?
Follow-up questions:
How did you come to have this understanding? – CAF briefings, self-study, media reports?
Do you feel Op. Unifier actions fit mainly under political, structural or personnel reforms?
Did you get the sense that there was coordination between defence reforms and Op. Unifier activities?
3. Were there any challenges that needed to be overcome, please elaborate, how were they challenges?
Follow-up questions:
4. What influence do you think the war has had on the necessity of the UAF to reform?
Follow-up questions:
From your experience, how do you feel the war affected reform processes, for example – the political will to reform, the morale of the UAF, the priorities of the UAF, force generation/force employment, or any other ways?

Were there any stresses with respect to cooperating/coordinating with any part of the UAF, Defence Ministry or broader government?
5. Please tell me more about the Ukrainian leaders you were working with
Follow-up questions:
Which leaders (ranks) of which troops (National Guard, Army, etc...) were you interacting with?
6. Did Ukrainian leaders have the same vision of the objectives of Op. Unifier?
Follow-up questions:
Were there points of contention between the Canadian vision and the Ukrainian vision? If so, what were they?
Did any Ukrainian leaders demonstrate resistance – direct or indirect toward Op. Unifier objectives?
How important was rank for decision making/negotiation?
Did you receive mixed messages between any different levels of UAF command?
7. In your opinion, what was the significance of Op. Unifier to defence reform?
Follow-up questions:
How lasting do you think Op. Unifier's impact will be?
8. To what extent do you think Op. Unifier changed the Ukrainian military, were there any key successes/challenges?
Follow-up questions:
Would you say you could see progress in skill development, personal relationships and trust? If so, was this witnessed at the individual level or at unit/system levels?
Did the CAF contribute to this success, how so?
9. Do you think defence reform is impacted by the Soviet past?
Follow-up questions:
In what ways did you experience this, can you provide an example?
Do you think these legacies are negative or positive?
Do you think any Soviet legacies live on in the UAF today?
Did any Soviet legacies affect Op. Unifier during your command?

10. Do you think that the concept of ‘agency’ manifests differently within UAF and western forces?
Follow-up questions:
How were the Canadian concepts of empowering lower ranks and transformational leadership appreciated by the UAF?
Did Op. Unifier have an impact on teaching/modeling a different version of agency?
Did Op. Unifier have an impact on the appreciation of lower ranks?
11. What was your biggest learning or take-away, or memory from your experience working with the Ukrainians?
Follow-up questions: Is there anything more you would like to tell me?

Section E: Interview Questions (NCMs) – List all prepared interview questions and probes
1. Please tell me which roto you were on and what job you had while deployed.
Follow-up questions:
Was your job while deployed linked to your trade?
Did you have any experience with Ukraine prior to deployment on Op. Unifier? If so, did this help you?
Had you worked with foreign militaries before in a capacity building situation? If so, did what expertise did you transfer?
2. Please tell me about your experience working with the Ukrainians – what happened, what types of activities occurred?
Follow-up questions:
Were there any challenges? If so, were they related to anything in particular, such as linguistics, attitude, cultural values, etc...?
What improvements did you notice?

3. Were there any challenges experienced related working with Op. Unifier's goals?
If so, what examples describe this? For example, were there differences between Op. Unifier's stated goals and your experience on the ground?
4. Please tell me more about your Ukrainian counterparts – which troops (National Guard, Army, etc...); what ranks?; were they conscripts or professional or previously volunteer soldiers?
Follow-up questions:
Had the Ukrainian troops you worked with have experience in the Donbas war? Do you know in what capacity? If so, did they discuss their participation in the war, and if so, do you know which battles? Did they mention anything in particular such as about tactical issues/impacts in their war experience?
5. What was your understanding of how your role was connected to defence reforms?
Follow-up questions:
How did you come to have this understanding? – CAF briefings, self-study, media reports? Do you feel you adequately understood the purpose of your role and why it was important?
6. To what extent do you think Op. Unifier changed the Ukrainian military, were there any key successes or challenges?
Follow-up questions:
Would you say you could see progress in skill development, personal relationships and trust? If so, was this witnessed at the individual level or at unit/system levels?
7. Do you think defence reform is impacted by the Soviet past?
Follow-up questions: In what ways did you experience this, can you give a specific example?
8. What was your biggest learning or take-away, or memory from your experience working with the Ukrainians?
Follow-up questions: Is there anything further you would like to say?

Section F: Closing

Suggested Closing Remarks:

- Summarize purpose – Paraphrase overall themes of conversation
- Thank the participant

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with me. Overall, we have discussed a number of points about capacity building that are very interesting and I really appreciate your willingness to share.

- Reiterate privacy and confidentiality considerations

Please be assured that that I will follow security protocols to ensure your confidentiality and privacy and anonymity.

- Remind participant of any follow up activity as applicable

N/A

- Ask participant if they anything to add

Is there anything more you want to say about anything related to your experience in Op. Unifier?

- Ask participant if they have any questions

Do you have any questions?

- Ask participant if they still consent

Do you still consent at this time after we have completed the interview?

I will give you the opportunity to review my notes and check for accuracy of meaning and potential quotes (determine if something was missed / meaning was misunderstood / desire to add

or edit out after reflection). I will share my screen now to review my notes. You can take as much time as you need.

- Distribute DND/CAF contact numbers (if appropriate).

Here are some resources to discuss with should you have psycho-social or emotional needs. I will email them to you now.

Thank you again!

Annex E – Key Positions

Key Positions 2014-2024				
Month-Year	President	Minister of Defence	Chief of the General Staff of Armed Forces	Commander in Chief (Created March 2020)
Jan-2014	Viktor Yanukovych	Capt. Pavlo Lebeydev	Col. Gen. Volodymyr Zamana	
Feb-2014	Viktor Yanukovych / Oleksander Turchynov (Interim)	Capt. Pavlo Lebeydev / Col. Gen. Volodymyr Zamana / Adm. Ihor Tenyukh	Col. Gen. Volodymyr Zamana / Admiral Yuriy Ilyin / LGen. Mykhailo Kutsyn	
Mar-2014	Oleksander Turchynov (Interim)	Adm. Ihor Tenyukh / Col. Gen. Mykhailo Koval (25 March)	LGen. Mykhailo Kutsyn	
Apr-2014 – May 2014	Oleksander Turchynov (Interim)	Col. Gen. Mykhailo Koval	LGen. Mykhailo Kutsyn	
Jun-2014	Oleksander Turchynov (Interim) / Petro Poroshenko	Col. Gen. Mykhailo Koval	LGen. Mykhailo Kutsyn	
Jul-2014	Petro Poroshenko	Col. Gen. Mykhailo Koval / Col. Gen. Valerii Heletey	LGen. Mykhailo Kutsyn / Viktor Muzhenko	
Aug-2014 – Sept 2014	Petro Poroshenko	Col. Gen. Valerii Heletey	Gen. Viktor Muzhenko	
Oct-2014	Petro Poroshenko	Col. Gen. Valerii Heletey / Gen. Stepan Poltorak	Gen. Viktor Muzhenko	
Nov-2014 – Apr-2019	Petro Poroshenko	Gen. Stepan Poltorak	Gen. Viktor Muzhenko	
May-2019	Petro Poroshenko / Volodymyr Zelensky	Gen. Stepan Poltorak	Gen. Viktor Muzhenko / LGen. Ruslan Khomchak	

Jun-2019 – July 2019	Volodymyr Zelensky	Gen. Stepan Poltorak	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak	
Aug-2019	Volodymyr Zelensky	Gen. Stepan Poltorak / Andrii Zagorodniuk	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak	
Sep-2019 – Feb-2020	Volodymyr Zelensky	Andrii Zagorodniuk	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak	
Mar-2020	Volodymyr Zelensky	Andrii Zagorodniuk / Andriy Taran	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak / LGen. Serhiy Korniychuk	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak
Apr-2020 – Oct 2020	Volodymyr Zelensky	Andriy Taran	LGen. Serhiy Korniychuk	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak
Nov-2020	Volodymyr Zelensky	Andriy Taran / Oleksii Reznikov	LGen. Serhiy Korniychuk	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak
Dec-2020- June 2021	Volodymyr Zelensky	Oleksii Reznikov	LGen. Serhiy Korniychuk	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak
Jul-2021	Volodymyr Zelensky	Oleksii Reznikov	LGen. Serhiy Korniychuk / LGen. Serhiy Shaptala	LGen. Ruslan Khomchak / Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi
Aug-2021-Aug 2023	Volodymyr Zelensky	Oleksii Reznikov	LGen. Serhiy Shaptala	Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi
Sep-2023	Volodymyr Zelensky	Oleksii Reznikov / Rustem Umerov	LGen. Serhiy Shaptala	Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi
Oct-2023 – January 2024	Volodymyr Zelensky	Rustem Umerov	LGen. Serhiy Shaptala	Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi
Feb-2024	Volodymyr Zelensky	Rustem Umerov	LGen. Serhiy Shaptala / MGen. Anatolii Barhylevych	Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi / Oleksandr Syrskyi
Mar-2024- Sept 2024	Volodymyr Zelensky	Rustem Umerov	MGen. Anatolii Barhylevych	Oleksandr Syrskyi