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Kyiv Post

UKRAINE'S GLOBAL VOICE

25th year!

How to overhaul Ukraine's judiciary



Opinion

Mikheil Saakashvili

It is believed that, similar to other countries with a Soviet heritage, Ukrainians are incapable of creating institutions that are intrinsically not corrupt. However, the work of

the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the High Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine has proved that is not the case. The lack of resources has not prevented these

two institutions from being effective, successful, and, most importantly, independent. They are two islands of justice in Ukraine and success models that we can implement across the board.

As much as we form our initial impressions about strangers within seconds after meeting them, so foreign businesses and investors get a glimpse inside our country's

governance based on our justice system. But even more importantly, we ourselves are sick and tired of corruption and inefficiency in courts. Structural changes are no longer sufficient – we need a complete restart. A set of reforms prepared by the Office of Simple Solutions & Results is a feasible solution to the justice crisis.

Some of the most recent sur-

veys found that over 75 percent of Ukrainians have no trust in the court system and only 2 percent of Ukrainians believe that the justice reform has been completed. Corruption and wealth inequality – which gets especially explicit in court cases where low-incomes are not able to effectively defend themselves

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Tug Of War

As Ukraine and West fret, China moves decisively to take control of Motor Sich

Kostyantyn Chernichkin



Motor Sich aircraft engine manufacturer showcases its latest developments at an exhibition in Kyiv on Oct. 11, 2018. The Zaporizhzhia-based company, which has fallen on hard times, has become the centerpiece of a difficult tug of war between the United States and China.

See story on page 2

Misto Bank's collapse shows how corruption works in Ukraine

Opinion



Sergii Leshchenko
mail.pravda@gmail.com

Yet another bank went bankrupt in Ukraine: Misto Bank. It was not in the top of the market and was mainly involved in servicing the owners' related business.

The Dec. 14 news about Misto Bank's insolvency was buried under other events – such as the confrontation between Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and President Volodymyr Zelensky's face-off with the Constitutional Court.

However, behind the headlines of Misto Bank's collapse is a whole web of connections. And if you can get through it, you have a chance to better understand Ukraine's corruption.

Firtash's role

The case of the Odesa-based Misto Bank is complicated, but it is worth looking into.

Earlier this year, the bank lost control of one of its primary assets – a soybean processing plant in Kherson Oblast worth Hr 271 million (\$9.5 million), almost 17% of the bank's total assets. The

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Employees of Ukrainian aircraft engine manufacturer Motor Sich assemble a helicopter in Zaporizhia, a city 550 kilometers southeast of Kyiv where the company is based, on Oct. 14, 2014.

UNIAN

Chinese investors go on the offensive for Motor Sich

By Igor Kossov
and Bermet Talant

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It's one of independent Ukraine's dominant paradigms: being pulled between more powerful forces.

For a quarter-century, Kyiv swung between Russia and the West. In 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump tried to use it as a political bludgeon against his Democratic competitor, former Vice President Joseph Biden.

Now, Ukraine finds itself at the center of a battle for Motor Sich, a strategic aircraft engine manufacturer. A Chinese company wants to buy it. The United States opposes that sale.

The Ukrainian government has blocked the deal for over three years, but has few good options to extricate itself from this confrontation.

The country now faces a \$3.5-billion arbitration brought by a group of Chinese investors in their renewed effort to claim Motor Sich. Backed by a local partner, Chinese firm Skyrizon launched international arbitration in early December, accusing the Ukrainian authorities of expropriating its investment and violating its rights by arresting

shares of Motor Sich and freezing its acquisition.

This may be Skyrizon's best chance to take hold of the troubled aerotech company. The sale's most vocal critic, the U.S., is in the midst of a presidential transition. Once Biden, who won election last month, takes office, he will have other urgent priorities.

Ukrainian leaders have not yet responded publicly. But they are in a difficult position.

Continuing to block the deal will anger China, Ukraine's largest trading partner, and could incur enormous losses to the Ukrainian budget.

But allowing it could be worse. Ukraine could lose its engine technology to China, thereby spoiling its relations with the U.S., a vital ally against Russia.

Blocked deal

In May 2017, the deputy prime minister of Ukraine touted Motor Sich and Skyrizon's plan to build a plant in the Chinese city of Chongqing and jointly manufacture engines. Soon, however, the Ukrainian officials learned that this was not simply international cooperation. Rather, a majority stake in Motor Sich, hidden behind a flurry of offshore compa-

nies, had been sold to the Chinese.

The Security Service of Ukraine, better known as the SBU, began to investigate what it alleged was a conspiracy to destroy a strategic enterprise by transferring technology abroad.

Chinese investors are still trying to unfreeze the 56% of Motor Sich that a Ukrainian court arrested in 2017 at the SBU's request. The arrest was renewed in September, although no one has been charged in the case so far.

Moreover, the Anti-Monopoly Committee blocked the acquisition of 56% of shares. The investors attempted to unblock it last year by offering a 25% share to state defense conglomerate UkrOboronProm. That failed. UkrOboronProm pulled out, citing "too many unanswered questions about the conditions of the Chinese."

A Ukrainian anti-monopoly official, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to talk to the press, said this was likely an excuse to draw out the stalemate.

Then, in August 2020, the Chinese investors found a new, vocal partner, Kharkiv magnate Oleksandr Yarovslavky and his DCH Group, and adopted a more aggressive and public strategy.

China's chances

After unsuccessfully prodding the Anti-Monopoly Committee for action this fall, the Chinese investors launched arbitration proceedings, claiming \$3.5 billion in damages.

The Ukraine-China bilateral investment treaty lets investors appoint their own arbitrators who have free reign over how to run the procedure, according to the law firm Vasil Kisel & Partners partner Oleg Alyoshin and associate Vsevolod Mazurenko.

Before arbitrations decide whether Ukraine is in violation, Skyrizon will have to prove it is a private company, that it owns the shares, and that they were legally acquired.

"In some investment disputes, Chinese investors were so closely affiliated with the Chinese government, that the claims brought by such investors were held to be disputes between two governments," they wrote to the Kyiv Post.

Proving the chain of Motor Sich's ownership may be messy as well, as neither former owner Vyacheslav Bohuslayev nor state enterprises have been eager to reveal the company's arcane offshore holding structure.

If the Chinese investors overcome these hurdles, they potentially have a strong claim for expropriation, Vasil Kisel wrote. But the damages claimed are "likely exaggerated" as Motor Sich is not in great shape, they added.

Private business?

The Chinese investors argue that this is a private business deal — the investors are private businesspeople and Motor Sich is a privately owned enterprise that was removed from the list of strategic enterprises. Therefore, the actions of the Ukrainian regulators and security services are unlawful, they wrote in a letter sent to Ukrainian lawmakers on Sept. 16. They asked the parliament to create a commission to protect their rights as investors.

In their rare comments on the issue, top Ukrainian officials have been vague, saying that, indeed, the state can't interfere in a private business deal, but Motor Sich is a strategic enterprise, so it's good for the national interest if the company

A Year Unbundled: Results, Risks and Opportunities on a Road to Europe

2020 was a landmark year for Ukraine's gas sector – the country's first with a successfully unbundled gas transmission system.

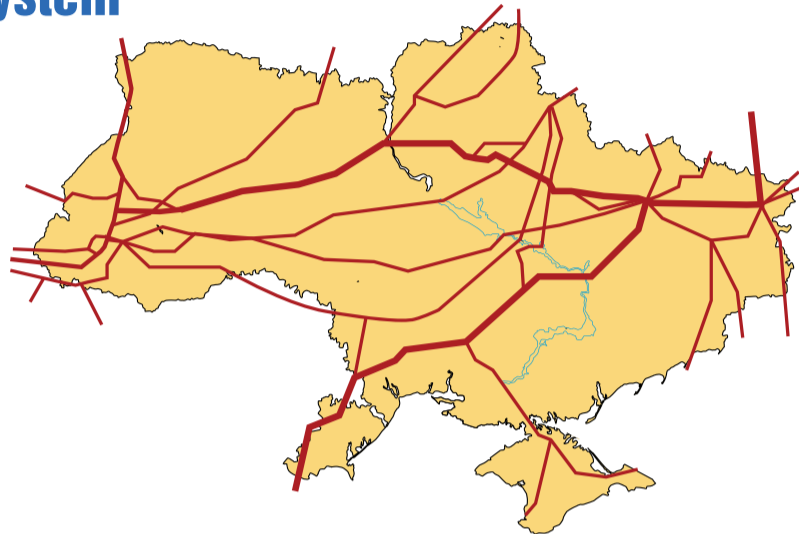
The separation of gas transit from trading and production activities – commonly known as unbundling – was a long-awaited reform. The process started all the way back in April 2015 with the adoption of a new gas market law, but only came into effect in December of 2019.

Gas transmission system of Ukraine

33 thousand km of pipelines

281 Entry capacity bcm

146 Exit capacity bcm



It was this issue of unbundling, specifically, that held Ukraine back from successfully integrating with the European energy market. It is a requirement of the so-called Third Energy Package, a series of laws aimed at creating an efficient single market for gas and electricity in Europe, that no supply or production company can be a majority stakeholder in the transmission system operator.

To bring the country's energy system in full alignment with the European Union's regulations a new company, fully independent from Naftogaz was established – the Gas Transmission System Operator of Ukraine (GTSOU).

A successful and fully independent transit system operator
“The unbundling of Naftogaz – the separation of the gas transmission system, placing it under the management of an independent operator – has become the most successful reform in Ukraine's energy sector,” announced Deputy Minister of Energy of Ukraine Maksym Nemchynov during the online expert discussion forum Energy Inside.

According to the European Energy Community, Ukraine's energy sector is a top performer in terms of delivering reforms, implementing 84% of planned measures in 2020. This has given a boost to investor confidence in the gas market and brought in new players, increasing competition.

Gas market reform has been also pivotal for unlocking Western financial support, as well as for the economics of the gas sector itself. Perhaps most importantly – successful unbundling was key pre-condition for signing a new transit contract with Gazprom on market terms.

While noting there was still progress to be made, particularly in terms of governance and the transition to green energy, experts point to Ukraine's unbundling experience as genuine transformation of great significance.

The Director of Energy Community Secretariat, Janez Kopac, summed it up: “In spite of this year's challenging conditions, several Contracting Parties managed to leap forward. This goes in particular for Ukraine, which had successfully unbundled Europe's largest gas transmission system at the end of 2019.”

Creating an “energy visa-free regime”

A prosperous unbundled gas transmission system operator is a boon for both the market overall and Ukrainian taxpayers specifically.

“We successfully operate and earn about UAH 6.8 million of income for the country every hour. We will pay nearly UAH 13 billion of taxes to the state budget for this year,” noted Sergiy Makogon, CEO of the GTSOU.

By integrating Ukraine in Europe's energy system, unbundling has enabled a kind of “energy visa-free regime,” in the words of Makogon, which allows for the convenient operation of international players and cooperation among neighbors. It has also created opportunities for Ukraine to earn revenues on the European market and create new value propositions for its European partners.

One of the most important is so-called short transit service or “short-haul” – an instrument for traders that leverages interconnection points via Ukraine of gas players in neighboring countries like Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Short-haul essentially turns Ukraine into a logistics bridge between several important countries in the EU's eastern flank – and one with very attractive tariffs compared to alternatives (e.g., Poland to Hungary via Czechia and Slovakia can be more than 25% more expensive than the route through Ukraine). Moreover, Ukrainian routes have greater capacity, leading to discussions about further integrating the region's networks, for example with a Trans-Balkan pipeline.

Other services, such as renting out Ukrainian underground gas storage facilities, have also gained in popularity. As of early November, foreign traders stored 10 billion cubic meters of gas in the so-called Customs Warehouse mode – 4 times more than at the same time in 2019.

Internal threats

As is often the case with reforms in Ukraine, any move forward results in backlash from those who had comfortable arrangements under the previous system or other interests in maintaining the status quo.

“After the unbundling reform passed, 47 deputies, led by Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Medvedchuk, challenged the constitutionality of unbundling in the Constitutional Court of Ukraine,” explained Deputy of Ukraine Andriy Zhupanyyn.



“Although the case has not yet been considered, such a lawsuit poses risks to energy security and the economy, experts say. Therefore, the parliamentarians prepared a comprehensive position of the Verkhovna Rada in favor of the legality of unbundling,” Zhupanyyn added.

This is but one of many challenges faced by the “reformist” reform-minded actors on Ukraine's energy sector. Following a series of attacks faced by Naftogaz over the past couple of months, experts noted that the national gas company was essentially facing sabotage. Indeed, this even led to the resignation of supervisory board member Amos Hochstein, who complained about growing opposition to reform and political interference.

“Naftogaz has faced undue political pressure on numerous occasions during the past six years since Ukraine first committed to radical gas market reform,” energy expert Dr. Aura Sabadus commented in an article for the Atlantic Council, adding that Russia-linked Ukrainian political factions were currently trying to “(re)gain control” of Naftogaz's lucrative assets.

Untapped opportunities, threats of diversionary pipelines

Internal reforms of the gas market, like the unbundling of the GTSOU, will only get Ukraine so far – even if internal challenges to reform are overcome. The bottom line is that the newly independent system has to be fully utilized, and that is currently not the case.

“Our system is running half-empty, and the GTSOU is dependent on Gazprom for most of our revenue. This situation is untenable, so we have to find ways to utilize existing transit capacities better. We've already started to intensify trade with our existing partners and offer new services. In the longer term, we need to diversify our transit and develop capabilities to transport decarbonized gases,” warned Olga Bielkova, Director on Government and International Affairs of GTSOU.

The reason for the lack of usage is the ongoing campaign of Russia to circumvent Ukraine and marginalize it on the European gas landscape. Ukraine has the biggest transit system connecting “production in the East” (large reserves located in Russia and Central Asia) and “consumption in the West”.

Despite the availability of this land bridge with transit capabilities of over 146 bcm, Russia has pushed for diversionary pipelines. The Nord Stream I (already operational) and II (planned but facing legal challenges and likely to be halted), connect Russia and Germany via the Baltic Sea. Meanwhile, TurkStream II (planned) would connect Russia and Turkey in what has been dubbed a “Trojan horse under the Black Sea.”

Some experts have spoken out against what they describe as “geopolitical projects” without any commercial rationale. For Nord Stream II, in particular, American sanctions and support from various European partners, have pushed the project to the brink, leading many to believe it will be cancelled (although construction work is still ongoing in the German sector).

“Since the establishment of an independent transit operator in Ukraine, our partners and supporters in the West have demonstrated tremendous leadership in pushing back against diversionary pipelines,” said Olga Bielkova. “The full cancellation of Nord Stream 2 now almost certain.”

Explaining the Ukraine's gas transmission system had under-utilized capacity, Olga Bielkova added: “We must continue to work with our US and EU partners to open up access to our transit network to suppliers other than Gazprom, be they Russian energy majors like Lukoil and Novatek, or gas exporters from Central Asia.”

EDITORIALS

Motor Sich stall

If Ukraine has a strategy in the current tug of war over strategic engine manufacturer Motor Sich, it is to bury its head in the sand and stall for its life.

For three years, it has blocked the enterprise's sale to Chinese firm Skyrizon.

Motor Sich desperately needs investors. But the Ukrainian government fears that, by allowing Skyrizon to acquire a controlling share in the company, it will allow precious intellectual property to pass into Chinese — and later, potentially, Russian — hands.

The United States, one of Kyiv's most important partners, appears to have similar concerns. It has long opposed the sale.

But now Skyrizon and its Ukrainian partner DCH have gone to arbitration. They want to force the Ukrainian government's hand and make it choose which global superpower to anger: the U.S., its close ally, or China, its largest trade partner.

It is understandable why Ukraine is stalling. In this international controversy, it finds itself without good options.

But the struggle over Motor Sich also demonstrates the limits of American support for Ukraine. Washington has provided substantial aid for the country and supported it internationally. But even a country as wealthy and powerful as the U.S. cannot push a private investor to purchase a majority stake in a Ukrainian company riddled with problems and facing multiple legal challenges.

China — where the government and business are more closely entwined — can offer much more.

So what is Kyiv to do? The options aren't great. Still, there may be a few strategies that could benefit Ukraine.

Ukraine can place Motor Sich back on the list of strategic enterprises and pass a law outlawing offshore holdings and mandating transparent ownership for such enterprises. More drastically, Ukraine can try to make Motor Sich partly state-owned by partially buying out or even nationalizing the enterprise.

This could help a U.S. buyer finally commit to investing, as they will know whom they are buying from. It would also help determine how the original deal with China took place and whether it was illegal.

Meanwhile, Skyrizon could at least get back the money it paid for the enterprise. While the Chinese side will not be happy with this arrangement, saying it already invested \$180 million into a plant back home, this would at least serve as damage control.

Ultimately, Ukrainian-Chinese trade would survive such a resolution to the conflict. Moreover, Ukraine's political partners in the West would understand Kyiv's decision and realize that few of their companies could ever pose the threat that Chinese ownership of Motor Sich does.

Journalism's bad year

Leaving aside the coronavirus-induced financial nightmare that was 2020 for most in the journalism world, the profession remains dangerous for those of us who strive with modest resources to inform the public and keep the flame of democracy alive. With the White House occupant setting the tone for hostility and giving cover to autocrats, journalists were savaged for simply trying to tell the truth and hold leaders accountable.

The U.S. Committee to Project Journalists reported on Dec. 15 that a record number of journalists were imprisoned in 2020 and that at least 274 of them remained in jail as of Dec. 1. Protests and political tensions were the cause of many arrests, with many made in China, Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, according to a Reuters report, citing CPJ. In Belarus, the numbers also rose as the revolution to oust dictator Alexander Lukashenko continues. Globally, 34 journalists were jailed for "false news" in 2020, the advocacy organization reported. Shockingly, no charges were disclosed in nearly 20% of the cases.

Meanwhile, 30 journalists were killed in 2020, reports CPJ, mercifully none in Ukraine. The most dangerous spots: Mexico (5), Syria (4) and Afghanistan (4).

The International Federation of Journalists has slightly different numbers. The IFJ says that 42 journalists and media workers have been killed in 2020, while another 235 are in prison.

The London-based Guardian newspaper quoted Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary: "They are our friends and colleagues who have dedicated their lives to, and paid the ultimate price for, their work as journalists. We don't just remember them but we will pursue every case pressing governments and law enforcement authorities to bring their murderers to justice."

Committee to Protect Journalists Executive Director Joel Simon said "the record number of journalists imprisoned around the world is President (Donald) Trump's press freedom legacy."

In Ukraine, CPJ counts 13 journalists murdered since 1992, the most recent coming on May 4, 2019, when investigative journalist Vadym Komarov was beaten to death in Cherkasy, the city of nearly 300,000 people located nearly 200 kilometers southeast of Kyiv. The Kyiv Post's "Dying for Truth" project, supported by the Justice For Journalists Foundation, counted 50 journalists either killed or whose deaths were suspicious since Ukrainian statehood in 1991.

But Ukraine's journalists face a constant barrage of assaults, ranging from harassment to illegal surveillance, and respect for the profession has never been high among Ukraine's politicians and law enforcers.

The Georgiy Gongadze Prize is one of many initiatives to support the profession — and press for investigations into unsolved murders, the most famous of which is the Sept. 16, 2000, killing of Gongadze. Additionally, in 2018, the Washington Post launched the Press Freedom Partnership to help.

While most citizens probably don't have the time or interest to get involved, all citizens can do the basics: Send the strong and clear public message that independent journalism is important by supporting news organizations with subscriptions and advertising, as well as signaling to politicians and law enforcers that the lives and livelihoods of journalists are vital to this fledgling democracy.



NEWS ITEM:

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has criticized Ukraine's main 31-meter Christmas tree after decorators put a sorcerer's hat on it — they were trying to create the atmosphere of a fairy forest. The priests said the artificial tree is installed on a holy site and that the hat looks weird on the backdrop of the 1,000-year-old crosses of St. Sophia's Cathedral. Soon after, the hat was removed. Instead, decorators will put a star on the tree.

NEWS ITEM:

There are currently over 360,000 active coronavirus cases in Ukraine, while the total number of cases in the country reported since the start of the pandemic is nearly 1 million. Every day, the Health Ministry reports about 10,000-15,000 new cases, while the government plans to impose another full lockdown after the New Year and Christmas holidays. People over 65 are at especially high risk from the virus.

NEWS ITEM:

Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Fatou Bensouda has called for a full-scale investigation of crimes in eastern Ukraine and in Crimea. Although this is positive news, the move is long overdue: Russia started its war in Ukraine and annexed Crimea back in 2014. It took the ICC prosecutors six years and over 13,000 lives to "announce that the statutory criteria for opening investigations into the situation in Ukraine are met."

NEWS ITEM:

Kyivans have recently survived several days of freak weather conditions. On Dec. 14, the capital of Ukraine saw rain that froze immediately after it touched the ground. As a result, the city was covered with ice and many people had to "ski" to get to places, often falling down. The conditions were especially tough for those trying to climb Andriyivsky Descent, a steep street connecting Kyiv's upper town neighborhood and the historically commercial Podil neighborhood.

See these features online at kyivpost.com

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Friend

Fatou Bensouda, head prosecutor of International Criminal Court
Fatou Bensouda has called for a full-scale investigation of war crimes in eastern Ukraine and in Crimea. Although long overdue, it is an important step to finally condemn Russia for its war on Ukraine since 2014.



Foe

Sergey Aksyonov, Crimea's Russian 'prime minister'
The Russian occupation authorities of Crimea spearheaded by Sergey Aksyonov have illegally sold Ukrainian winery Masandra to the Russian firm Yuzhny Proekt. The Ukrainian side considers the sale of Masandra as a war crime.

Feel strongly about an issue? Agree or disagree with editorial positions in this newspaper?
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Vitrenko's rejection as energy minister is a shameful event



Bohdan Nahaylo

Today, the Ukrainian parliament rejected the appointment of the former ace economist and manager behind Naftogaz's recovery, modernization, and triumph over Gazprom, Yuriy Vitrenko, to the post of first deputy prime minister and minister of energy of Ukraine. His nomination, made by Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, but clearly at the behest of President Volodymyr Zelensky, was supported by 186 members of parliament, short of the required minimum being 226 votes.

This is a blow to the cause of reform. It also seems to have thwarted the president's new impulsive move to restore confidence in his administration and strengthen his hand in dealing with relentless oligarchs and their auxiliaries, particularly in the critical, but so lucrative an area as the energy sector.

Oligarch fiefdom

The Energy Ministry is a major prize for all the oligarchic sharks feeding in Ukraine's fertile economic waters. Since May 2020 it has been headed by Olha Buslavets, regarded as an associate of Ukraine's richest oligarch and energy baron, Rinat Akhmetov.

It is unclear why at this stage Zelensky decided to try to place Vitrenko, who considers himself to be a maverick not allied to any particular oligarch or political force, in this sensitive position. After all, Vitrenko, who after his remarkable record at Naftogaz, was being discussed at the beginning of this year as a strong candidate for prime minister, was suddenly "laid off" in May.

Internal jealousy, differences over how Naftogaz should be run, and the Zelensky administration's appar-

ent reluctance to pursue further claims against Russia's Gazprom in international arbitration, ostensibly for fear of jeopardizing the prospects for reaching a peace agreement with Russia – these are among the factors that can be gleaned from Vitrenko's subsequent writings.

Of course, not only Akhmetov, but others, who have had their snouts in the feeding trough that is Ukraine's energy sector, would hardly welcome a strong, independent professional with a record of integrity in this post. Even Zelensky's supposed political partner, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Dmitry Razumkov, who has recently been distancing himself from the president and is believed to have political ambitions of his own, signaled he was not in favor of Vitrenko being empowered in such a way.

Defeat for Zelensky

Whatever Zelensky's motives, he clearly did not do his homework properly to ensure that Vitrenko's candidacy would be supported.

What we saw in the parliament today was in fact quite shameful. It was a display of ingratitude in the style of today's corrupt Ukraine still dominated by oligarchs and business interests that overshadow national ones. You would think, in just about any other decent country, Vitrenko, the technocrat who masterminded and oversaw Ukraine's amazing victory over Gazprom in international arbitration last year and was so instrumental in ending the country's dependence on Russian gas, would be regarded as a national hero and economic guru.

Yet for the enduring unholy alliance of cynical exploiters of Ukraine's economic potential and their representatives in parliament



Yuriy Vitrenko, then Naftogaz's business development director, speaks with the Kyiv Post on June 20, 2018, in his office in Kyiv.

Kostyantyn Chernichkin

allowed to evolve, or rather fester in Ukraine for so long, masquerading as a Europe-oriented democracy, has no time for meritocracy, fair play, and proper accountability. For Vitrenko is but the latest example of how the system operates and treats some of the country's best people.

His rejection today is a loss for Ukraine (and more loss of time for her). But I'm confident we will hear a lot more from Vitrenko and that he will return in more political auspicious conditions. After all, he is only 44. And there's still plenty of time to build a political career if he decides to go for it.

Sad reality

Perhaps, what happened to Vitrenko today may turn out to be a blessing in disguise for him given the opposition to what he represents from the vested interests camp which would have made his job close to impossible.

I salute him for at least demonstrating that he was ready to serve his country in such difficult conditions, as well as Zelensky's courageous initiative to nominate him for the post. And I congratulate the hero of the war with Gazprom for at least finally winning this week on the issue of the compensation owed to him.

So, in a nutshell, today's decision concerning Vitrenko gave us a graphic snapshot of reality at the end of a very trying 2020. In 2021 it seems we are destined to continue for a 30th year to keep wandering in the wilderness relying on good Samaritans to sustain our caravan's semblance of movement forward as it carries its homegrown sheikhs from oasis to oasis.

Bohdan Nahaylo is a British-Ukrainian journalist and veteran Ukraine watcher based in Kyiv, Ukraine. He was formerly a senior United Nations official and policy adviser, and director of Radio Liberty's Ukrainian Service. 🇺🇦

he is too much of a principled and capable professional, operating by Western norms of accountability and openness, and therefore a threat to them.

Smearing a reformer

To undermine Vitrenko's reputation, the ensuing attempted smear campaign minimized his achievements as an external professional trouble-shooter brought in by Naftogaz in 2014. He was after all, formally not a civil servant but an outside expert hired to do the impossible.

His detractors, including Razumkov, have insinuated that he has somehow been unreasonable in seeking to receive the bonuses for himself and his team agreed to in advance if they won in what seemed at the time to be a hopeless struggle against the mammoth Gazprom. Prize money not from the Ukrainian state, but from the billions Gazprom was made to pay in compensation.

Knows too much

Apart from his untarnished record as a reformer and patriot, Vitrenko knows too much from the inside how the oligarchic system functions

and what the real roles and interests of leading politicians, businesspeople and foreign supporters and advisers have been. He has been publishing a series of candid articles and insights on his Facebook page and created an on-line Yuriy Vitrenko Library. A book is expected shortly.

As someone who had no qualms in looking, as he puts it, Russian President Vladimir Putin in the eye at the Normandy Four summit in Paris last December, when he was asked by Zelensky to press Ukraine's case against Naftogaz with him, Vitrenko is one of the few who could be expected to stand up to Ukraine's oligarchs and populist political leaders.

It therefore not so surprising to see who voted in the parliament against his appointment along with Yuriy Boyko's and Viktor Medvechuk's pro-Russian Opposition Bloc – For Life. Surprise, surprise – Tymoshenko's Fatherland, and Poroshenko's European Solidarity factions. Plus, a significant number of Zelensky's Servant of the People party.

It's not only a pity, but a disgrace, that the "system" that has been

Kyiv Post in its December 24 issue will focus on

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020

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Sergii Leshchenko: Banks gone wild show why investment will not come

page 1 →

National Bank of Ukraine said this is the main reason for Misto Bank's insolvency.

But I know this story from a different angle.

When I was a lawmaker I was asked to intervene in the scandal with the illegal seizure of this soybean processing plant. This plant was established by Vadym and Ilya Segal, Ukrainian-American twin brothers, who come from the southern city of Kherson. They are former owners of another Ukrainian bank that famously collapsed – Nadra Bank.

The key figure in this story is exiled oligarch Dmytro Firtash, co-owner of RosUkrEnergo and Group DF, who now lives in Vienna. For the past six years, Firtash has been fighting extradition at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice, which is investigating him as a founder of a "criminal group."

But there were times when Firtash was riding high. In 2008, his pockets were full of money earned by his company RosUkrEnergo, an unnecessary gas trading intermediary between Ukraine and Russia. To make his financial transactions quick and low-key, the oligarch bought Nadra Bank from several groups of owners.

Those former owners went on to have different fates. One ex-owner, a member of parliament, died after falling from a horse. Another fled from Ukraine to Russia, escaping prosecution. And the third party that owned Nadra Bank was the Segal brothers.

When he bought Nadra Bank, Firtash also took over the Segal brothers' newly-built soybean plant in Kherson Oblast – which was collateral on a loan. The brothers claimed that they paid out the loan to the bank, but the bank both kept the money and seized the factory. The brothers accused Firtash of a raider attack and sued.

After the EuroMaidan Revolution that ended Viktor Yanukovich's presidency, Firtash – with the help of the still-unreformed Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) – created problems for the Segal brothers.

Then-SBU head Valentyn Nalyvaichenko stepped in to help the oligarch. When one of the Segal brothers arrived at Kyiv Boryspil International Airport in 2014, the



A man walks by the National Bank of Ukraine headquarters in central Kyiv on Dec. 10, 2020. Just days later, on Dec. 14, the National Bank declared an Odesa-based Misto Bank insolvent.

border guards denied him entry to Ukraine without giving a reason. And when the lawyers began to inquire regarding their client's ban on entering Ukraine, the SBU refused to name the reason, calling it a state secret.

This American citizen was denied entry because Firtash seized one of his businesses, and the SBU helped the oligarch eliminate a competitor by blacklisting the Segal brothers. Later, Firtash even managed to bring charges against the Segals and put them on the international wanted list, which didn't last long. To secure his ownership of the soybean factory, Firtash transferred it to an affiliated company, which then pledged it to Misto Bank as collateral, and finally the bank became the owner of the soybean factory.

But the Segal brothers didn't intend to give up and fought for the factory that they built.

They filed a lawsuit against Firtash in the U.S., and they got lucky with their Kyiv lawyer Andriy Bohdan, who would later become chief of staff for President Volodymyr Zelensky. With the help of Bohdan, the Segal brothers won back their plant and made Bohdan a partner in their business.

The 10-year fight for the plant ended in November, when the plant formally changed ownership. Since it constituted 17% of the bank's total assets, it led to the bank going bankrupt in December.

But that's not the whole story of Misto Bank. Let's look at who is behind it. It shows how power and business are intertwined in Ukraine, and how corruption grows at their junction.

Trace of Lovochkin

Misto Bank is owned by Ivan Fursin, a former lawmaker and Firtash's partner in RosUkrEnergo.

But it is no secret that Fursin is a business partner and close ally of Serhiy Lovochkin, the former head of Yanukovich's administration and now one of 44 lawmakers with the pro-Russian Opposition Platform – For Life.

Informally, in political and business circles, Lovochkin and Fursin are perceived as the same entity. Their friendship dates back to the 1990s, when Fursin and Lovochkin worked in the same financial institution. And Lovochkin's sister, also a member of parliament from the Opposition Platform, worked under Fursin's leadership at Misto Bank

15 years ago as deputy head of the investment business.

Lovochkin is extremely careful – he always ties up loose ends. For example, it is not him, but Fursin who was listed as lending \$10 million to Paul Manafort. It was Fursin, not Lovochkin, who officially owned 5% of Firtash's RosUkrEnergo gas trading company. And it was Fursin, not Lovochkin, who was listed as a de-facto owner of the Latvian Trasta Komerbanka, which is featured in the famous Russian Laundromat investigation of money laundering schemes.

It was through Trasta Komerbanka that \$400 million was stolen from Ukraine with the purchase of "Yuriy Boyko's drilling rigs," a grand corruption scheme that took place under Yanukovich involving the former energy minister and current member of parliament, also with the pro-Russian Opposition Platform. And the notorious Trasta Komerbanka was also a shareholder in the bankrupt Misto Bank.

Bank fraud

This story is a typical example for Ukraine of an alliance of oligarchs, politicians and law enforcement agencies. If this knot is not cut, a

decent investment climate will never be created in the country.

There are many such stories.

One of those concerns a lawmaker from ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's party – Kostyantyn Bondaryev. The management of the central bank linked him to scams carried out by the bankrupt bank Veles. Just think about the scale of the fraud.

In 2015, while clearing Ukraine of phantom banks, the NBU discovered a strange transaction. Through this bank, Bondaryev tried to transfer \$460 million from Ukraine on fictitious documents, allegedly to repay a debt. When the NBU began an inspection, it turned out that the entire documentary database was forged as well as the source, the residence permit and property documents. The money was to be transferred to a company with an office in Latvia, which was founded by a Chinese citizen.

The National Bank sent an inspection to Bondaryev's bank. It turned out that more than 90% of the bank's operations were to transfer capital from Ukraine. The National Bank decided to liquidate the bank, which at that time employed three people. But then miracles happened – the liquidators simply didn't find the bank at its declared location. They were told that, just the day before, the bank terminated the lease agreement and left with all the equipment, servers and documents.

The investigation yielded no result. This spring, the notorious Pechersk District Court in Kyiv ordered the NBU to reimburse the former owners of the phantom bank about \$4 million in "property damage." Later, the National Bank successfully appealed the ruling.

Another notorious case is that of agrarian oligarch Oleh Bakhmatyuk, whom NABU accuses of stealing the stabilization loan issued by the NBU to his VAB Bank. NABU has twice unsuccessfully asked to send the documents necessary for Bakhmatyuk's extradition from Austria – but the Prosecutor General's Office is of no help.

Similarly, no one has been charged in the case of the alleged theft of \$5.5 billion from PrivatBank by its previous owners Ihor Kolomoisky and Hennadiy Boholyubov.

The only news there is that Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova has recently included herself in the group of prosecutors overseeing the case. It is not clear whether she did it to speed up the investigation or to sabotage it.

In Ukraine, the bank industry clean-up resulted in eliminating two-thirds of all banks in the past six years. Most of the banks were a tool for either pumping funds abroad or laundering them. But the only result was the sale of assets of bankrupt banks at a minimum price and the absence of any penalties, which makes any talk of an expected investment boom in Ukraine an illusion.

Sergii Leshchenko is a Kyiv Post columnist, investigative journalist, and former member of the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament. 🇺🇦



Dmytro Firtash



Ivan Fursin



Serhiy Lovochkin



Valentyn Nalyvaichenko

Rape case exposing systemic police brutality goes to trial

By Bermet Talant
bermet@kyivpost.com

Six months ago, Nelya Pogrebytska, a 26-year-old woman from a small village in Kyiv Oblast, was raped and tortured at a police station in Kaharlyk, a town of over 13,000 people located 80 kilometers south of Kyiv.

The brutal crime shocked not only the town, but the entire nation and provoked an outburst of anger over Ukraine's failed police reform.

In the following months, a probe revealed more victims of abuse during detention at the same police station. Five police officers, including the chief, were fired and arrested. Two of them remain in custody, while others are under house arrest waiting for the trial.

In early December, the State Investigation Bureau indicted the five former police officers on charges of torture, rape and forced disappearances. And, for the first time, one of them is a police chief facing a prison term for tacitly permitting brutal practices.

In Ukraine, a country where police brutality and violence against women are widespread and often go unpunished, the fact that the Kaharlyk case will reach the court is a big step forward.

"It gives hope to other victims," says Kateryna Mitieva, spokeswoman for Amnesty International Ukraine, adding that public and media attention contributed to progress in the case.

Systematic brutality

In the early evening of May 23, Nelya Pogrebytska entered the Kaharlyk police department. She had been summoned as a witness to the burglary of her neighbor's shop. She only left around 4 a.m. the next day. During the night of questioning, she was beaten, asphyxiated with a gas mask, threatened with an electric shocker and raped.

Pogrebytska later identified Mykola Kuziv, 35, the head of criminal investigations, as her torturer and Serhiy Sulyma, 29, criminal investigator, as her rapist. The two men were detained and pleaded not guilty. They now face up to 12 years in prison.

Pogrebytska lives in the village of Stavyy near Kaharlyk with her six-year-old daughter, who has cerebral palsy. She declined to be interviewed for this story.

Since that night, she has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, her lawyer says. Despite being provided with security guards, she fears that Kuziv and Sulyma might be released on bail one day and come after her.

The State Investigation Bureau probe concluded that Pogrebytska was one of five victims of Kaharlyk police officers, who used torture to coerce confessions to crimes such as theft.

The victims were illegally detained, beaten, tortured with electric shockers and left handcuffed to a radiator overnight. The police officers put a



Mykola Kuziv, former head of criminal investigation at Kaharlyk police department, covers his face with sheets of paper while standing in the defendant's dock during a hearing at the Holosiivsky court in Kyiv on May 26, 2020. In early December, Kuziv and four other police officers of Kaharlyk police department were charged with torture, rape, and forced disappearances of detainees.



Nelya Pogrebytska has been publicly outspoken since accusing Kaharlyk police officers of rape on May 23, 2020.

gas mask over their heads, blocked the air supply until they lost consciousness and fired live ammunition over their heads.

The true number of people who suffered from police brutality in the Kaharlyk police department is likely higher.

In the past, numerous people have filed complaints about unlawful actions by Kaharlyk police officers. There was even one pre-trial investigation, according to the National Police's response to an inquiry by lawmaker Andriy Osadchuk.

Back in January, Oleksandr Saliy filed a complaint that the police officers Sulyma, Kuziv, and Yaroslav Levandyuk had burst into his apartment at night, beaten and tortured him and his friend, Oleksandr Tkach. The two men are now victims in the Kaharlyk case.

Had it not been for Pogrebytska, their story might have never become known or reached a court.

Levandyuk and another police officer implicated in torture, Yevhen Trokhymenko, are under house arrest and face 10 years in prison. So is former Police Chief Serhiy Panasenko.

Prosecutors claim he turned a blind eye to rampant brutality.

Combating brutality

Police brutality is an endemic problem in Ukrainian law enforcement. Women are at higher risk of being abused during detention, according to a recent report by the Kharkiv Institute of Sociological Research.

The reason is impunity at the heart of the law enforcement and justice system, says Denys Kobzin, who leads the institute. Police, prosecutors, judges and attorneys view themselves as one team, so they are reluctant to prosecute or testify against each other.

In 2017, Ukraine launched the State Investigation Bureau, which was tasked with investigating top officials, judges and law enforcement officers. After finishing the pre-trial investigations, it sends cases to prosecutors.

"Everything is locked down inside the system. Prosecutors have to prosecute the police officers, who are their colleagues. If a person is beaten by the police and goes to the hospital, doctors have to report to the police, and the police pass the information to the State Investigation Bureau," Kobzin said. "No state body considers investigating cases of police brutality and involving independent organizations or representatives of the victim."

Ukraine's police reform, which began in 2015, has not yielded the expected result, he said. Little has changed in the police's procedures, performance assessments and processes for investigating police brutality. Even the police officers themselves — 58.5% of them, according to a survey by Kobzin's institute — consider the reform a failure.

Mitieva of Amnesty International gives credit to law enforcement for their quick response in the Kaharlyk case — the prompt arrest of the suspects and the ensuing probe that uncovered widespread torture at the

same police department. This, she said, indicates some progress in the reform.

The National Police say they are taking measures to fight brutality in their ranks. On July 31, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov ordered the installation of Custody Records software for monitoring the handling of detainees in all police departments across the country.

"In the nearest future, Custody Records will be installed in the police departments of Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Kirovohrad oblasts," Ruslan Goryachenko, head of the police's human rights compliance department, said.

However, the software is costly. The National Police is seeking co-financing from an international organization or the local authorities, he added.

Custody Records software has already been installed in all 133 detention centers, but only six of them have it integrated with video surveillance.

Against the system

Olena Sotnyk, one of four lawyers representing Pogrebytska, has some concerns about the upcoming trial.



Rape suspect, former police officer Mykola Kuziv

The main one at the moment is the sdiction.

In a provincial town like Kaharlyk, the impartiality of a local court is compromised, she says, because of relations between the police, prosecutors and judges.

There is a chance, however, that if all four judges of the Kaharlyk district court self-recuse, the case will be tried in a different court.

Another potential challenge is that other victims in the case are either former convicts or are currently under investigation for minor crimes. This makes them susceptible to pressure. Moreover, they could face prejudice from the legal system and the public.

Sotnyk, a former lawmaker, says she did not plan to go back to legal practice, but could not remain on the sidelines when she heard about Pogrebytska's case. She teamed up with three other women: Zlata Symonenko, a white-collar defense lawyer, and Tetyana Kozachenko and Anna Kalynchuk, two private lawyers who used to lead the lustration department at the Justice Ministry.

Symonenko told the Kyiv Post back in October that, for her, taking this case was about breaking the silence surrounding violence against women.

"There is a tendency when women are told not to complain, not to speak up about violence," she said.

Pogrebytska, unlike many victims, went public.

The all-female team of defenders hopes that the trial could change how the criminal justice system responds to rape.

Sotnyk says investigators, who are predominantly men, are untrained to handle sensitive conversations with victims of rape, especially women, who have suffered psychological trauma. And women feel ashamed to talk to men about the personal details of rape.

She also says the existing approach to investigating rape should change. Today, a victim has to prove they were raped with physical evidence, such as bruises. But sometimes victims do not resist if they are in shock or fear of more violence.

"It is his words against hers. He says the sex was consensual. She has to prove it was rape," she said, describing rape cases in general. "The victim's words should be trusted more. They should be the key." ❦



Rape suspect, former police officer Serhiy Sulyma

Is there really such a thing as private Chinese investment?

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develops.

The letter to lawmakers was signed by Wang Jing, Xu Changsun, and three other Chinese shareholders, and did not mention any company names.

The key investor, Wang, has been known all along.

Wang, the chairman of Xinwei telecommunications corporation and its subsidiary Skyrizon Aircraft Holdings Limited, is said to have military and Chinese Communist Party connections that played a role in his rapid ascent. However, he appears to be trying to distance himself from the Chinese government by insisting he is a private businessman.

Wang is best known for his ambitious project to build a canal in Nicaragua and a plan to build a seaport in Crimea. The canal never materialized, while Wang dropped the seaport idea after Russia annexed the peninsula in 2014.

"If a company is successful and actively promotes its interests on the international scene, it likely has connections to the Communist Party,"

says Temur Umarov, a China expert at the Carnegie Moscow Center. "The fact that Wang headed projects in Nicaragua and Ukraine indicates such connections. Large international projects like these can't be independent from politics."

Moreover, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has sought greater control over the private sector by ordering it to strengthen its ties with the ruling party in a united effort for economic recovery.

Wang long avoided the media spotlight. But, lately, he has grown more outspoken about Motor Sich and his interviews have appeared on Ukrainian news websites.

"We never even had thoughts about closing the plant, let alone plans to hypothetically move the production," he said in one interview with the RBC news site. "Motor Sich will always be a Ukrainian enterprise on the Ukrainian land."

In his Nov. 26 letter to the Ukrainian president, prime minister and the parliament speaker, Skyrizon's new partner Yaroslavsky urged them to save Motor Sich from "a slow death without investment



Lawyer Oleksiy Zadoenko (second R) on Nov. 4, 2020 advances a motion in Shevchenkivsky District Court to lift the government arrest on the shares of Motor Sich.

UNIAN

and from technological degradation," and Ukraine from "severe damage to its financial position and international

reputation."

"I believe that this chance will be taken, while double standards and politically motivated prosecution of legitimate businesses will be a thing of the past," he said in the letter.

Addressing concerns that the deal could harm Ukraine's national interests, Yaroslavsky said that, by acquiring 25% of Motor Sich, his DCH Group would become the guarantor that those interests would be protected.

Ukrainian partner

Hlib Kanievsky, head of State Watch, a Kyiv-based reform and transparency watchdog in defense and healthcare, believes that Yaroslavsky is just a frontman to make the deal more palatable.

"To Ukrainians, it now looks like (Motor Sich) is being bought by a Ukrainian who has relations with the Chinese," he said. Meanwhile, Yaroslavsky will be presented to the Americans as "a private businessman, and the government can't control what he does. If he wants to buy Motor Sich, he can do so within the bounds of the law."

Little known outside of Ukraine, Kharkiv businessman Yaroslavsky gained prominence in the last decade. He grew his business empire by selling to or buying assets from some of the biggest Ukrainian and Russian oligarchs. Despite being officially sanctioned by the Kremlin, Yaroslavsky is friendly with Russian billionaire Oleg Deripaska.

Today, Yaroslavsky's DCH group renovates airports and controls a diverse portfolio of businesses in Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts that includes tractor and steel plants, a bank and a five-star hotel, among others.

In 2020, Novoye Vremya magazine ranked Yaroslavsky 15th in its list of the top 100 wealthiest Ukrainians, with an estimated net worth of \$434 million.

It remains unclear how Yaroslavsky got involved in the Motor Sich deal. But his Chinese ties and being in President Zelensky's good graces might have played a role.

Through his press secretary, Yaroslavsky declined to comment for

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Anatolii Stepanov/AFP

An iconic photograph wins recognition



Maks Levin

The Agence France Presse news agency has selected the above image as one of its Pictures of the Year 2020.

The photo depicts a Ukrainian soldier sheltering in a trench not far from the war zone city of Krasnohorivka, near the Russia-occupied city of Donetsk, as a cat looks down at him from the trench's edge on Feb. 28, 2020.

The photographer who captured the enigmatic image is Anatolii Stepanov (L), a Ukrainian freelance photo journalist who has covered the war in Donbas extensively, capturing images of the conflict and the daily struggles of Ukrainian soldiers living and fighting in the trenches on the front line. Even before AFP highlighted his photo this year, Stepanov's work was highly regarded.

The news agency selected this photo as one of over 100 pictures that illustrated 2020, a year that has featured racial turmoil in the United States, a global pandemic, natural disasters, wars and major political changes around the globe.

But the Russian-sponsored war against Ukraine, which has claimed

over 13,000 lives since 2014, seems to have remained in the global media's spotlight. "The war (in the Donbas) goes on," Stepanov said on Facebook. "This is about Ukraine."

Motor Sich history

The Zaporizhia enterprise that would become Motor Sich started as a producer of mechanical equipment in 1907, and was converted into an engine maker in 1915.

Since then, it has grown to become a cornerstone of Soviet and, later, Ukrainian aviation. Motor Sich's engines were used in pretty much every main Soviet helicopter in the Mil and Kamov series, as well as the Antonov An-124 Ruslan and An-225 Mriya planes.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia remained heavily reliant on Motor Sich to supply parts for and service its helicopter fleet. During Ukraine's independence, Motor Sich had clients in 120 countries. It produced engines and spare parts, provided maintenance services and, at its height, made annual net profits of up to \$1 billion.

Motor Sich never managed to shed its reliance on Russia and after the invasion of 2014 fell on hard times. The company was implicated in schemes of selling hardware to Russia-backed militants in Donbas.

The company is an important employer, with 27,320 people as of 2017.

Its director, Vyacheslav Bohuslayev, was once an engineer who ascended to director and bought out a majority stake in the company during the 1990s.

While Ukraine and West worry about security risks, Chinese advance their bid for aircraft engine maker

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this story.

Yaroslavsky boasts a friendship with China's richest man, Alibaba founder Jack Ma. At his invitation, Ma visited Kharkiv last November to deliver a lecture for students. During his trip, he also met with Zelensky.

When the coronavirus pandemic reached Ukraine in March, Yaroslavsky arranged for a plane to deliver a full load of rapid tests, masks and other medical supplies, which he said were procured by Ma. Zelensky publicly thanked Yaroslavsky and Ma.

In May, Chinese telecom corporation ZTE became the first resident of Yaroslavsky's new business park in Kharkiv. And, in August, DCH announced it was partnering with Skyrizon. Shortly thereafter, Yaroslavsky expressed his interest in investing \$1 billion in the Kharkiv Aviation Plant.

Global problem

But the sale of Motor Sich is now about more than Ukraine and China. It has become a major geopolitical issue, with the Ukrainian government torn between its allies and donors, the U.S. and Japan, and its largest trade partner, China.

Japan and the U.S. have advised Ukraine against the sale, wary of China's growing power and its military buildup in the South China Sea. Additionally, China has increased its defense cooperation with Russia amid the two countries' worsening relations with the U.S. Under the most recent agreements, Russia's Roctec corporation will build helicopters for China.

There are concerns that Motor Sich helicopter engines may end up being used by Russia.

The aerotech patents belong to Ivchenko Progress, the state-owned sister company of Motor Sich. Motor Sich licenses Ivchenko's technology for a nominal fee.

Ivchenko's director Ihor Kravchenko reassured the public that this unique technology would remain the intellectual property of the state enterprise and would not be sold to the Chinese with Motor Sich shares.

However, under Chinese control, the company could again do business with Russia, which is now banned. That could prompt U.S. sanctions against Motor Sich and the banks that lend to it under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), according to the Center for European Policy Analysis and other analysts.

Should Ukraine allow the Chinese to acquire Motor Sich, it could be very damaging to relations with Washington, according to Tim Morrison, a former top Russia adviser on the White House's National Security Council and a senior fellow at Hudson Institute.

"There are few things that align the Republicans and the Democrats right now. China is one," he said. "It'd be highly unfortunate if Ukraine wasn't able to work with an ally like the U.S."

No alternative

In August 2019, John Bolton, then the national security adviser to the U.S. President Donald Trump, visited Kyiv to openly warn the authorities about these risks.

Soon, Trump fired Bolton. Later, he was impeached for his attempts to pressure Zelensky to investigate Biden. Now, the impeachment scandal overshadowed U.S.-Ukraine relations, and Motor Sich fell from the agenda.

A year later, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged Zelensky in a phone call not to allow the sale of Motor Sich to China.



Volodymyr Petrov

Former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton came to Kyiv in August 2019 to warn Ukraine's government of security risks if Chinese investors acquired Motor Sich, a manufacturer of aircraft engines based in Zaporizhia.

However, the true position of the State Department, much weakened under Trump, remains unclear. A knowledgeable U.S. source in the business community told the Kyiv Post that American involvement was mainly Bolton's initiative. The Ukrainian anti-monopoly official also said that, if the U.S. really wanted to keep Motor Sich out of China's hands, it would be more active than it currently is.

For the U.S. to help, there needs to be an American buyer willing to overlook the company's many problems.

Earlier this year, the U.S. government backed an alternative buyer, Oriole Capital Group, a company created to invest in Ukrainian assets, that had previously announced it wanted to invest \$150 million into the Kharkiv Aviation Plant in 2017. Its principal, Jordanian-American Nabil Barakat, is also the head of Wamar International, a service provider in aviation, oil and gas and other fields in the Middle East and North Africa.

Barakat called Motor Sich a "gem" in interviews.

Another U.S. private equity firm, Trive Capital, would also participate in the deal.

But the two companies have been quiet and reluctant to comment in recent months. Oriole's investment in the Kharkiv Aviation Plant never materialized either, raising questions about the investor among local officials and businesses associations.

Finding an alternative buyer is difficult.

Motor Sich faces numerous open court cases alleging ties to corrupt officials. Its financial compliance is also in question.

When the Kremlin illegally annexed Crimea and invaded the Donbas, Motor Sich was forced to abandon its main market, Russia. Financial difficulties then forced its owner to look for foreign investors.

In the first three quarters of 2020, Motor Sich reported a net profit of Hr 926.5 million (\$33 million) compared to over \$19 million in losses during the same period last year.

It also takes time to get potential buyers interested, Morrison said.

"Just because the U.S. government says 'Hey, this is important to us' does not mean that private investors' money is going to come in and do as we say. That's what the Chinese do," he said.

China's involvement with the company is also off-putting to potential Western investors.

Still, the company has value.

"The tech that Motor Sich has is top notch. In some ways, it rivals our own, in some ways it may be better," said Morrison.

Editor's Note: This report is part of the Investigative Hub project, within which the Kyiv Post monitors investigative reports in the Ukrainian media and brings them to the English-speaking audience, as well as produces original investigative stories. The project is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy. ☺



Wang Jing is a chairman of the Xinwei telecommunications firm and its subsidiary Skyrizon Aircraft Holdings Ltd.



Kharkiv businessman Oleksandr Yaroslavsky says he can protect Ukraine's security interests with a 25% stake.

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Mikheil Saakashvili: Courts are not capable of reforming themselves

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against wealthy counterparts – are often seen as the biggest challenges.

The only way we can succeed in carrying out a justice reform is by bringing together the president and the Verkhovna Rada around the specific goal of completely changing the judiciary to guarantee justice to the Ukrainian people.

The system won't alter itself from within as long as there are those who can exploit the current corruption and injustice to their benefit: in the Verkhovna Rada, and at various levels in the Office of the President, in the Cabinet of Ministers, and elsewhere. But in all these institutions there are also people who really want to create a better future for our country. Therefore, if we come together, we will definitely break this vicious circle and uphold a comprehensive justice reform.

No "ifs" and "buts" will stop us.

Centralize control

First, we need to centralize the court control system by creating a single body. We propose to get rid of the High Council of Justice, the Highest Qualification Commission of Judges, and the State Judicial Administration and to create a single judiciary supervisory body. Its functions would



Judges of the Appellate Chamber of the High Anti-Corruption Court converse on Nov. 7, 2019 during an appeal against a measure of restraint for lawmaker Yaroslav Dubnevych on corruption charges.

include the selection and re-certification of judges, disciplinary cases on complaints proceedings, control over judicial integrity, and ensuring

the logistics of the court system. This, we believe, would ensure that the control over the judiciary – a vital part of the justice system – isn't

overly bureaucratic and is thus more focused on delivering the tangible results. As of now, the mentioned bodies exist for the sake of existing without adding any value. Despite Ukraine's incredible economic potential, our country lacks resources to provide for corrupt bureaucrats.

Overburdened judges

Ukraine drastically lacks judges. Out of 7,000 judges that are needed in order for Ukraine to be a well-functioning state, there are only 5,000. This, in its turn, dramatically overburdens each individual judge and results in long queues thereby reducing access to justice. At the same time, there are too many courts, and we suggest reducing that number from 764 to 200.

As unresolved cases have been piling up year after year, citizens have understandably lost faith in the possibility of achieving justice. From a greater perspective, a society that feels like the costs of getting justice done – both economic and societal – are impossible to meet, loses trust in institutions, democracy, and the rule of law overall. The most successful economies in the world rest on trust, predictability, and cooperation. Our Soviet past with Cheka tribunals serving as an agonising model of the justice system has prevented us from internalizing these values as a nation. But we can move on, and we will.

Online services

In order to digitalize the field of justice, the Office of Simple Solutions & Results has suggested moving key procedures such as filing lawsuits and paying court fees online. At a time when we can get access to almost every service including healthcare via our smartphones, it is unacceptable that we cannot use them to protect our rights. It should be possible to pass evidence to the court, monitor the status of the case, and receive copies of decisions on a single click. Economy wise, time is an asset, and the more time Ukrainians

spend on engaging with bureaucratic institutions – courts in particular – the less time they spend on key economic activities and with their families. This shouldn't be the case.

More mediation

In order to unload the courts, we also suggest using alternative dispute resolution tools such as arbitration courts and mediation. The latter has proved to be especially successful in the United Kingdom and the United States. For example, in the UK, the commercial mediation market increased by 20 percent from 2016 to 2018, and in the US, most mediators report settlement figures of around 75 percent. We propose to enhance mediation, in particular in family disputes. This would allow us to unburden the courts and judges and implement the best global practices that have helped millions of people get justice done.

Additionally, if we could introduce jury practice in categories with special important and socially dangerous crimes and use English common law to solve investment disputes, this reform could be a mind-blowing success. English common has historically – and justifiably so – been associated with fairness, and embracing its core values in Ukraine would make us more attractive to investors and help shape the societal narrative of what justice really is.

Constitutional Court

Lastly, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine has been a disgrace on the country and undermined both the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. The mission of this institution per se – constitutional control – is important and much needed. However, the way it has been delivering it can hardly be seen as a matter of national pride. We propose to hold a national referendum to let every Ukrainian decide on the fate of the Constitutional Court. We either grant them mercy and come together to find a way to reform it from within, or we get rid of it altogether. There is no in-between.

The Office of Simple Solutions & Results and I personally will keep the public updated on further developments of our justice reform. However, if it doesn't go through the Rada, the president will have to address the nation and host the referendum on the topic of justice reform as such. Judges are not popular, they don't have public speakers, and they use shady ways to remain in power. I strongly advise the president to consider getting hold of the justice reform.

I have already presented this draft reform to President Volodymyr Zelensky and G7 Ambassadors at a special meeting. Although there are serious discussions going around it, I don't think they are efficient because of the enshrined special interests and different competing groups.

This is not where you can balance between these – we should make decisions. The decision should be made by the president and the Ukrainian society.

Mikheil Saakashvili, the ex-president of Georgia and ex-governor of Odesa Oblast, is chair of the executive committee of the National Reform Council.



Nasty clash

Top: Small business owners and other critics of Ukraine's quarantine measures set up tents on Independence Square in central Kyiv at a rally against lockdown and other measures meant to stop the spread of COVID-19 on Dec. 15, 2020.

Right: Police and National Guard forces struggle to restrain protesters and remove tents set up on Independence Square.

A protest against Ukraine's planned lockdown after the New Year's holiday has ended in injuries after demonstrators clashed with police on Kyiv's central Independence Square.

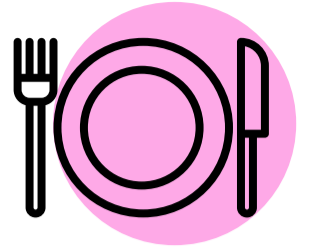
According to the National Police, around 40 officers suffered chemical burns to their eyes when protesters unleashed tear gas canisters against them. One officer received a blow to the head during the clash and lost consciousness. Demonstrators also suffered injuries.



Lifestyle

Play | Food | Entertainment | Sports | Culture | Music | Movies | Art | Community Events

Restaurants and cafes will be open until Jan. 8, when Ukraine starts another lockdown to slow the spread of the coronavirus as infections approach the 1 million mark.



Ski, thermal water resorts in Ukraine to visit this winter



Vacationers ride the lift to the top of the mountain at the Bukovel ski resort. Located in the Carpathian Mountains, the resort is the number one winter holiday destination in Ukraine welcoming visitors in 2020. Bukovel is famous for versatile slopes, developed infrastructure and picturesque mountain views.

By Yana Mokhonchuk

yanamokhonchuk@gmail.com

Winter resorts are set to stay open despite the upcoming nationwide lockdown in January.

And while travel restrictions are in force between most countries, traveling to ski or for thermal water recreation in Ukraine can be an escape plan for many. Not only are these fun activities, they are also good for one's healthy.

The Kyiv Post has picked out some of the country's best resorts to visit this winter season.

Bukovel

Bukovel is the largest and most popular resort in the Ukrainian Carpathians, located in Polianytsia village of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast at an altitude of 920 meters above sea level. Though the winter season normally lasts from November until April, Bukovel welcomes tourists all year round.

The resort is famous for its numerous versatile slopes, well-developed infrastructure and high-level hotel and restaurant sector. There are about 60 tracks of different levels of difficulty with a total length of 68 kilometers. It's also a good choice for

family vacations, since it has special-family equipped slopes for children.

In addition to skiing, Bukovel offers snowmobile riding, ice skating, dog sled trips, tobogganing, snow tubing, slope riding and the highest rope jumping site in Ukraine.

There are also snow parks for equipped winter sports and the longest trolley in Ukraine, with a length of 1,130 meters, which allows tourists to enjoy a picturesque view during a trip from the top of Bukovel Mountain to the rooftop of the trade center in the heart of the resort.

After hitting the slopes, visitors can relax in the Voda club spa area, spending time in the pools and saunas or trying massage treatments.

Bukovel rents equipment sets for Hr 213-1,794 (\$7-65) for two days, depending on the skill level of the skier.

A regular ski pass for two consecutive days during high season (Dec. 17 – March 17) costs Hr 1,641 (\$58). A low season ski pass is Hr 986 (\$35). Prices for accommodations start at Hr 500 (\$18) per night, depending on the type of accommodation and the distance to ski lifts.

The distance from Kyiv to Bukovel is around 780 kilometers. There are direct buses to Bukovel for Hr 700 (\$25). A plane ticket from Kyiv to Ivano-Frankivsk, located 110 kilometers from Bukovel, is Hr 2,279 (\$81). From there, travelers can take a cab or a bus to the resort for Hr 105 (\$4).

Dragobrat

Dragobrat ski resort, the highest mountain resort with a peak point at 1,707 meters above sea level, is a suitable option for experienced skiing and snowboarding enthusiasts. It's also a great choice for fans of off-piste skiing, descending any slope that is not marked or prepared by a piste grooming machine.

The resort is located in Zakarpattia Oblast, 18 kilometers away from the village of Yasinia.

Dragobrat also has a wide choice of other entertainment, including air hockey, a Finnish sauna, snow football, winter fishing, spa treatments, baths and saunas.

The resort offers a ski pass covering 50 lifts for Hr 1,300 (\$46) for adults and Hr 650 (\$23) for children under 14.

Prices for a room in a cottage near the ski lifts start at Hr 400 (\$14) for one night. The village of Yasinia can be reached from Kyiv by bus, train or car. The price of a train ticket starts at Hr 261 (\$10). A bus ticket costs Hr 550 (\$20) or more.

Kosyno Thermal Water Health Resort

Immersing oneself in hot thermal water outside in the frigid air in the middle of winter can be a very unusual and pleasant experience. One can try it at Kosyno Thermal

City Life

With Daryna Antonuik

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Books in Russian remain bestsellers as Ukrainian-language publishers struggle to survive

For years, the Ukrainian book industry struggled to thrive in the shadow of Russian publishing houses, who dominated Ukraine's book market.

When the Kremlin launched its war against Ukraine in 2014, that started to change. The Ukrainian government limited trade with Russia and restricted imports of many goods, including books.

But while state policy squeezed many Russian publishers out of the country, Russian-language books continue to dominate the Ukrainian market.

Today, nearly 300 Ukrainian publishers must satisfy demand for both Ukrainian- and Russian-language literature on their own. But the publishers are fighting an uphill battle: There are too few investors for them to develop their industry and they face unfair competition from counterfeit Russian books, according to Bohdan Horbai, head of Ukrainian publishing house Yakaboo Publishing.

That keeps the Ukrainian book market small and leaves publishers struggling to stay afloat and keep domestic Ukrainian literature from getting lost in a sea of Russian books.

Unfair competition

The Ukrainian Book Institute, a state agency that forms government policy on publisher and promotes reading, estimated the market at \$120 million in 2018. By comparison, the book market was valued at \$10.3 billion in Germany, \$14.5 billion in the United States and \$1.2 billion in Russia.

Moreover, the competition for readers in Ukraine is stiff, especially among the country's biggest publishers — Ranok, Vivat, The Old Lion and Folio.

To stay profitable, many open their own bookstores and paper factories. They also engage in price wars.

Price is more important than quality because the country lacks a fixed price — when books cost the same nationwide, both online and in stores, according to Natalia Mospan, owner of bookstore and coffee house chain My Book Shelf.

So unlike French, German, Norwegian or British publishers, who have to abide by the fixed price rule, Ukrainian publishers can give different discounts to different stores, so the price varies. This makes competition unfair, Mospan



People enjoy a thermal water bath at the Kosyno Thermal Water Health Resort. Located in the village of Koson, Zakarpattia Oblast, the destination has seven pools, saunas, a water park and an ice cave.

Russian books, real and counterfeit, still dominate struggling Ukrainian market

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said.

"It is bad for the market," she said. "When the companies compete on prices, they do not attract new customers and do not grow."

Russia's influence

Russian publishing houses have always viewed Ukraine as part of its own market, because many Ukrainians speak both Russian and Ukrainian, according to Horbai.

Russian publishers long dominated the local market: They were cheaper and published more popular authors. Even size-wise, the Russian market is nearly six times larger. Ukraine published around 62 million books in 2019, while Russia put out up to 305 million.

Before Russia began its war against Ukraine, it controlled 70% of the Ukrainian book publishing market and exported \$30 million worth of books to the country annually, according to Oleksandr Afonin, head of the Ukrainian Association of Book Publishers and Book Sellers.

After the revolution, Ukraine banned most of the book imports from Russia, allowing only certain literature to be sold here. According to Afonin, the number of Russian books dropped to nearly \$2 million in money equivalent in 2019.

However, in Ukraine, it is still more



A customer buys a book in Ukrainian bookstore Yakaboo on Oct. 15 in Kyiv. Yakaboo is the largest online bookstore in Ukraine, it sells books in 71 languages.

profitable to sell books in Russian rather than in Ukrainian because the demand for them is higher, according to Andriy Domaransky, spokes-

person at Ukrainian bookstore chain Ye.

To continue working in Ukraine after the import restrictions, Russian

publishers opened subsidiaries in Ukraine that publish books in Ukrainian and Russian and work with local retailers, including Ye and Yakaboo, the largest online bookstore in Ukraine.

In December 2019, Yakaboo came under fire for selling books published by a subsidiary of Alpina, a Russian publishing house founded by the famous Russian publisher Alexey Ilyin.

Both rivals and members of the public criticized Yakaboo, even though the company didn't break any law.

Yakaboo, in turn, alleged that its competitors, including Ye, had launched a trade war against it. In fact, Ye also sells books published by Russian subsidiaries in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, those books that are still imported have become more expensive, meaning the competition is now a bit fairer for local publishers, according to Horbai.

"Ukrainian book retail reflects the demand on the market," Horbai said. "Readers vote for books when they buy them. To win those votes, we have to make a Ukrainian book more attractive (than a Russian one)."

But Russian imports don't hurt the Ukrainian economy as much as counterfeit books, which now make up nearly 35% of the market, according to Afonin.

To sell all Russian books in Ukraine and avoid paying taxes, some businesses publish them illegally. These are usually paperback books printed on low-quality paper — they often

have many mistakes and feature poor translation, Horbai said.

Illegal publishers do not spend money on salaries, taxes and royalties for the writers, so counterfeit books can be 50% cheaper. Although it is hard to track where such books come from, experts say they are usually printed in eastern Ukraine, closer to the Russian border.

The gray book market takes a toll on the publishing industry nationwide, but nobody is paying attention, Horbai said.

Risky business

Although the local book publishing market is growing, reading is still not a popular hobby in Ukraine, according to a recent survey by Yakaboo. Only 43% of Ukrainians — usually young people with higher education — read regularly.

Horbai believes one of the reasons is that Ukrainians do not see books as much as in the past.

There are only 222 bookstores in Ukraine, according to Iryna Baturevych, an analyst from the Ukrainian Book Institute. This is not enough for a country with a population of up to 40 million, given that Ukrainians still prefer printed books to electronic ones.

Businesses are afraid to invest in bookstores because they do not see enough demand to merit the risk, Mospan said.

Horbai agrees. People are afraid to invest in publishing because the industry doesn't bring fast profits, he says.

"To turn a book into cash" local publishers have to find a story that resonates with Ukrainian readers, Horbai told the Kyiv Post. And yet many Ukrainians will be reluctant to pay more than \$7 — even for a good book — and instead opt for stealing books from the internet.

In a country where the average salary is \$420 a month, books usually lose the battle for consumers' hard-earned cash to food, spirits and petrol, experts said.

Publishing is also expensive: The company has to pay for translation, copyright, promotion and printing. The process usually takes 12 months and a publisher can only get return on their investment in a few years, according to Horbai.

According to Afonin, publishers and bookstore owners can only survive with the government support, including tax and rent relief.

Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which delivered a heavy blow to the book industry worldwide, local businesses didn't receive much support. They are struggling to recover their losses, experts say.

For all these reasons, "this business is either for those who can invest big money or for book enthusiasts," Horbai said.

TOP 10 KYIV POST exclusives online this week

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4. COVAX to give Ukraine 8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine for free
5. NASA signs \$10 million contract with company founded by Ukrainian
6. Star rapper Doja Cat performs in daring dress by Ukrainian designer Frolov
7. Police officers, demonstrators injured after clashes erupt at anti-lock-down rally
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For health & fresh air, these four places can't be beat for winter frolicking & fun

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Water Health Resort, located in the village of Koson, Zakarpattia Oblast.

Travelers can enjoy swimming in seven pools with fresh and thermal waters that reach about 40 degrees Celsius. They also contain iron, zinc, calcium and other useful minerals.

In addition to swimming pools, there are several saunas including the salt and eucalyptus ones, as well as a water park and an ice cave.

The thermal baths are believed to be beneficial for health, especially helping improve the function of the nervous, musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems and the gastrointestinal tract.

Spending three hours in the thermal complex costs Hr 450 (\$16). An unlimited one-day ticket costs Hr 900 (\$32).

Prices for a room at the hotel Iváncsó Birtok in the Kosyno complex for two adults start at Hr 5,400 (\$192) for a night.

Kosyno resort can be reached by bus or taxi from the town of Berehove, located 636 kilometers from Kyiv. The cheapest train ticket from Kyiv to Berehove costs Hr 287 (\$10).



People ride snowmobiles in the Ukrainian Carpathian Mountains. Since travel restrictions are in force amid the COVID-19 pandemic, many Ukrainians pick the country's skiing and thermal water resorts as destinations for the upcoming winter holidays.

Eco-resort in Izky village

Located between the Carpathian valleys, the authentic eco-resort in the village of Izky offers visitors an experience of unity with nature and a getaway from the bustle of the city.

This resort has everything necessary to help visitors experience the mountain lifestyle: wooden houses, local food, saunas and traditional activities. In winter, visitors ride sledges and horse-drawn

carriages, go hiking, sledding and snow tubing or just enjoy the tranquility of the mountains. For skiing lovers, the resort offers ski slopes with lifts.

The local trails, up to 200 meters

wide and a maximum of 3 kilometers long, are of medium difficulty. And there are training skiing lessons available upon request. So both beginners and experienced skiers and snowboarders are welcome at Izky.

In addition, the resort produces environmentally friendly soap, which is handmade from natural ingredients, right on its territory. It also has a pottery workshop, cheese factory, apiary and yoga club.

The cheapest double room at Izky Hotel costs Hr 1,260 (\$45) for one night. During winter holidays, from Dec. 28 till Jan. 9, a one-day pass for skiing costs Hr 800 (\$29) for adults and Hr 500 (\$18) for children. On other dates, it's Hr 600 (\$21) and 500 accordingly. The resort rents ski equipment packages for Hr 150 (\$5) per day or Hr 390 (\$14) for three days.

Izky can be reached by train or car. The complex is located 18 kilometers from the railway station in the village of Volovets, Zakarpattia Oblast. A train ticket from Kyiv to Volovets costs Hr 247 (9\$). The resort offers a transfer from Volovets to Izky for Hr 100 for adults and Hr 80 for children. ☺



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UN calls for increased participation of women in Ukraine's peacebuilding

By Asami Terajima

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Including women in peace negotiations brings better outcomes, according to the United Nations. It generates greater buy-ins, improves team performance and makes peace more durable.

Despite women's critical role in peacebuilding, they are often left out of political and negotiation processes all around the world. The problem is persistent in Ukraine. But UN Women in Ukraine is determined to change that.

The entity has launched the "Women Are Key to Peace" campaign throughout November to raise awareness of women's role in peacebuilding through personal stories of women who found effective solutions during Russia's war in Donbas to help others.

"Despite all the challenges, these women managed to not only fundamentally change their own lives for the better, but also to help others in need," reads a statement on the UN Women in Ukraine's campaign site.

The campaign marks the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 — a groundbreaking step for gender equality in peace and security.

The project was funded by Norway, Sweden, Canada, Denmark and the European Union.

The agenda

Resolution 1325 marks the first time the UN's Security Council emphasized the importance of changing the idea of the women's role from victims of conflict to a participant of conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations on an equal basis as men.

This led to the creation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, with eight additional resolutions falling under a single umbrella.

The adoption of Resolution 1325 was a significant step for gender equality. There has been a substantial increase in the frequency of gender-sensitive language in peace agreements and the number of women serving as official negotiators, mediators or signatories.

But the progress is slow and women are still under-represented in all peace processes. Today women comprise only 3% of mediators, 4% of agreement signatories and 13% of negotiators worldwide.

In 2016, Ukraine became the first country to adopt the five-year National Action Plan 1325 during an armed conflict. The second National Action Plan for the term 2021–2025 with new goals and objectives were approved by the government last month, but appropriate funding and human resources will be needed for its implementation.

"Ukraine is still at the beginning stages of creating formal networks of women-peacebuilders across the women's groups," Svitlana Zakrynytska, UN Specialist in Women, Peace and Security agenda, told the Kyiv Post.

Zakrynytska said that there are many active women human right defenders and peacebuilders who already facilitate peace dialogues in their communities in Ukraine, and



Ukrainian war veterans who fought at Russia's war in Donbas and the members of the Ukrainian Women Veteran Movement pose for a selfie at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, on March 8, 2019. In Ukraine, women make up 14% of all combat-ready military personnel, however, they are under-represented in the peace negotiation process.

their work should be acknowledged.

Overlooked stories

Throughout November, nine video stories of Ukrainian women who were at the epicenter of war were broadcast on popular Ukrainian TV channels and shared on UN Women and partner websites and social media.

Heroines of these stories are internally displaced military veterans, doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, civil activists and leaders of self-help groups and social rehabilitation centers. These leaders actively participate in rebuilding their communities and advocate for their rights.

Kateryna Lytvynenko, Advocacy and Communications Specialist of UN Women in Ukraine, says that women's contributions are overlooked, but it is often their work that brings communities together and helps those in need. UN Women launched the campaign to serve as a platform to amplify these voices.

The campaign starts with the story of Liudmyla Bileka, a former volunteer nurse at the frontline of Russia's

ongoing war against Ukraine. After leaving the war, Bileka suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression returning to civilian life.

Playing a role in "Atlantis," a post-war drama about a veteran trying to rebuild his life in near-future Ukraine after it came victorious in Russia's war, has helped to get back on her feet. Bileka now commits to helping other veterans heal from the trauma of the war.

Another story spotlights Olga Martynenko, head of the infectious disease department at the central hospital of Druzhkivka in Donetsk Oblast. After repeatedly getting ignored, Martynenko finally convinced the local government to provide personal protective equipment for the hospital workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to her efforts, the hospital received 50 protective suits from the government. The entire city now relies on her clinic in the fight against the coronavirus.

Another heroine is Andriana Arekhta, a war veteran who has served in an attack aircraft at the frontline. She was ranked as junior

sergeant and left the battlefield during her pregnancy in 2015.

Upon return, Arekhta realized that female veterans face many challenges: post-traumatic stress disorder, family issues, economic challenges, sexual harassment, ageism and public condemnation.

So in 2019, along with fellow women veterans, she co-founded the Ukrainian Women Veteran Movement, an association to defend the rights of women soldiers and veterans as well as to support each other. The organization was initially supported by the UN Women and the Swedish Embassy, but it is now independent.

"Our mission is to make sure that Ukraine is in a better condition than we have inherited for the future generation," Arekhta told the Kyiv Post.

The association is dealing with the consequences of the war. But in order for Ukraine to restore integrity and independence, the country needs to develop long-term strategic planning. And Arekhta says women need to be part of it.

"We want our voices to be heard in the peacebuilding process," Arekhta said.

Building peace in Donbas

Women have been joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine since 1993 but employment discrimination is no stranger to the military. It was only in 2018 that Ukrainian parliament Verkhovna Rada finally adopted the law to equalize the rights of women and men in the army — opening combat roles like snipers and grenade launchers to women.

Recent data shows that there are nearly 30,000 women serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which makes up 14% of all combat-ready military personnel. Representation of women in defense has been

increasing consistently with global development trends.

However, despite women's crucial role in peacebuilding, only two of the seven Ukrainian delegates in the Tripartite Contact Group are women. The group consists of representatives from Ukraine, Russia and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who have been meeting regularly since June 2014 to find a peaceful settlement of the war in Donbas.

Ukraine's long-term partner and internationally-famous advocate for equal rights, Sweden, is dedicated to help Ukraine achieve better results.

As the number one country in the EU's gender equality index, Sweden provided financial support for the "Women Are Key to Peace" campaign.

The Swedish Ambassador in Ukraine, Tobias Thyberg, says that negotiation teams should consist of women and men on an equal basis because otherwise "agreements will at best be partial, with a high risk that they soon fall apart."

Regularly consulting women's organizations is another important asset in creating a gender-equal society, but the ambassador says that such consultation will never substitute for women's meaningful participation that all formal negotiating teams need.

"Impacts of conflict are seldom gender-neutral, which is why it is extremely important to understand the different ways that the conflict affects women, men, girls and boys," Thyberg told the Kyiv Post.

"I would welcome an explicit commitment from Ukraine's leadership to women's meaningful participation in efforts to resolve the conflict in Donbas and restore Ukraine's territorial integrity — both eastern Ukraine and Crimea," he added. 🇸🇪



Swedish Ambassador to Ukraine Tobias Thyberg speaks with the Kyiv Post at his official residence above the Swedish Embassy in Kyiv on Aug. 12, 2020. Sweden is a long-time supporter of Ukraine and a dedicated international advocate for gender equality.

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Pitching and writing stories for the Kyiv Post newspaper and website.

Breaking exclusive stories. Discovering the underlying trends driving Ukraine's political life and reporting on them.

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Requirements:
Excellent command of written and spoken English. Fluency in Ukrainian and/or Russian languages.
Deep understanding of Ukraine's political life; background knowledge in Ukrainian politics.
Ability to write journalistic stories in English. Commitment to Western journalism standards and democratic values.
Experience in media or English-language writing is preferable.

For consideration, send a CV, three story ideas and a cover letter to deputy chief editor Olga Rudenko at rudenko@kyivpost.com.

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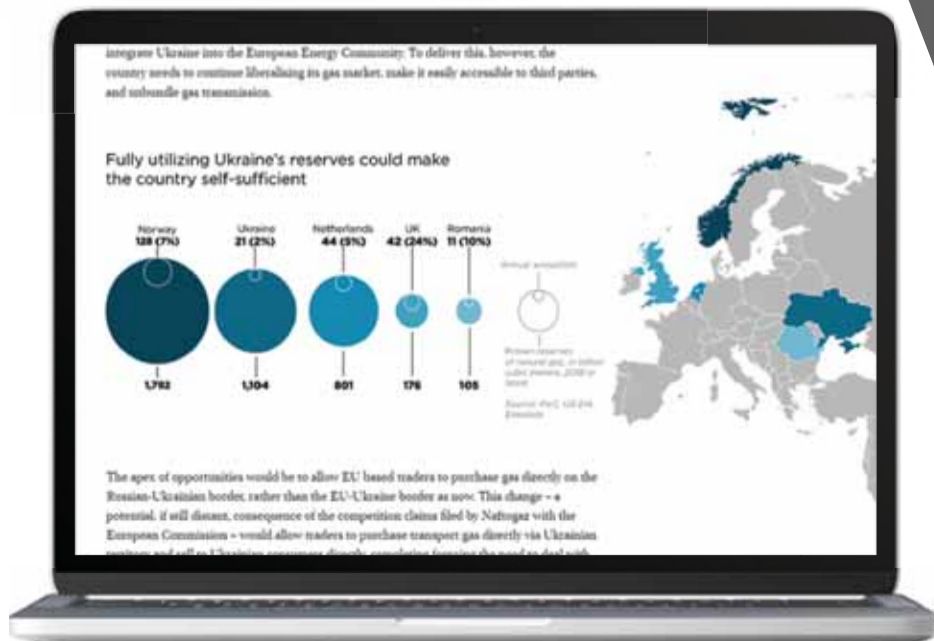
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