

# Right Sector

## AT A GLANCE

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## HOW TO CITE

Mapping Militants Project (MMP). “Right Sector.” Last modified June 2022.

## OVERVIEW

Right Sector is a far-right nationalist organization based in Ukraine. Formed by a coalition of far-right militant organizations amidst the broader Euromaidan protests of 2013, Right Sector became notable for its violent confrontations with Ukrainian police and security services before the downfall of President Viktor Yanukovich. Since 2014, Right Sector has also operated a military wing on the frontlines of the conflict in Donbas, which became formally incorporated into the Ukrainian armed forces after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022.

### A. SUMMARY

**Formed:** November 2013<sup>1</sup>

**Disbanded:** Group is active.

**First Attack:** December 2013<sup>2</sup>

**Last Attack:** 2022<sup>3</sup>

### B. NARRATIVE SUMMARY

#### *Maidan and the Origins of Right Sector*

Right Sector (*Pravyi Sektor*) formed in November 2013 during the Ukrainian Euromaidan protest movement against Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions government ruling Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> Originally, the group consisted of an agglomeration of relatively marginal far-right nationalist groups and football ultras. Among them were Carpathian Sich, Tryzub (Trident) UNA-UNSO, Social-National Assembly and its

associated paramilitary organization, Patriot of Ukraine (predecessor organizations of the Azov Battalion), and White Hammer. In general, scholars categorize this array of groups into two primary tendencies: the national conservative paramilitary groups such as Tryzub and UNA-UNSO, and the more radical social nationalist or neo-Nazi organizations such as Social-National Assembly and their paramilitary wing, Patriot of Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> Although these groups had frequently feuded over political influence and ideological differences, they were brought together by a shared interest in deposing Yanukovych and the Party of Regions government through “national revolution” and were willing to use physical force to carry out the task.<sup>6</sup>

Originally, Right Sector’s activists physically present in the streets were likely only a few dozen or few hundred in number.<sup>7</sup> The Euromaidan movement was ideologically heterogeneous and included many groups and tendencies Right Sector activists opposed politically. According to an activist who later became their press secretary, the group chose the name to distinguish themselves from the leftists, anarchists, liberals, feminists, and LGBT activists who had also joined the protests.<sup>8</sup> Unlike many of these groups and the mainstream opposition, Right Sector was less concerned with integration into the liberal European Union than they were with deposing what they perceived as a pro-Russian government through national revolution. Right Sector’s predecessor organizations had called for the overthrow of such an “internal occupation government” long before the Maidan protests.<sup>9</sup> In November, Right Sector militants harassed and beat leftists and activists present at the Maidan.<sup>10</sup>

Despite their disdain for more moderate opposition figures and sometimes violent hostility towards fellow protesters on the left, Right Sector activists still saw themselves as dedicated defenders of the protest movement. On November 30, riot police violently attacked hundreds of peaceful protesters, arresting dozens.<sup>11</sup> Right Sector activists drew on their experiences with paramilitary activity, football hooliganism and political street violence to share tactics for confronting the police. On December 1, Right Sector militants, and others adopting the tactics they promoted, attempted to break through the government forces’ line at the Presidential Administration building on Bankova street and fought with the Internal Affairs ministry’s Berkut riot police, which had led the controversial November 30<sup>th</sup> attacks on protesters. The few hundred militants, some of them prominently wearing the symbols of Right Sector-aligned groups such as Social-National Assembly, used melee weapons, threw smoke bombs, flares, and Molotovs, and even commandeered construction equipment.<sup>12</sup> As other members of the opposition labeled them provocateurs promoted by the state to discredit the protesters, some Right Sector activists embraced the label. When opposition politician (and former far-right activist) Andrii Parubiy organized the Maidan Self-Defense, Right Sector activists joined the formation even as they pursued their own agendas within the context of the protest movement.<sup>13</sup>

### *Escalating Violence and the Overthrow of Yanukovych*

Although a distinct minority within the overall movement, the Yanukovych government’s unwillingness to make concessions and its increasingly repressive response to the protests

provided an opportunity for Right Sector to wield outsized influence. Despite the stated unwillingness of pro-Euromaidan politicians to countenance violence even in the face of increasing police violence, Right Sector activists remained willing to confront the police even when the mass of protesters were reluctant to do so. On January 19 of 2014, days after the Yanukoych government passed laws to criminalize protest, many members of Right Sector arrived with improvised armor and weapons and marched on parliament, resulting in clashes with police on Hrushevs'koho street. After the January 19 clashes and the subsequent walk-back of anti-protest laws, Right Sector and its leader, Tryzub's Dmytro Yarosh, became increasingly well-known in Ukrainian and international media.<sup>14</sup> Right Sector's willingness to confront the authorities during the crackdown and the increasingly repressive behavior of authorities increased their influence within the protest movement.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Right Sector leaders continued to adopt an uncompromising stance, making clear that anything less than Yanukovych's departure was unacceptable and that "prolonged guerrilla warfare" would result if necessary.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to battling riot police in Kyiv, Right Sector activists in central and western Ukraine helped widen the geographic scope of the protest movement and intensify confrontations with the regime. In late January, Maidan protesters began using tactics observed and honed in Kyiv across Ukraine.<sup>17</sup> Within days, protesters stormed and occupied 10 of Ukraine's 27 regional state administration buildings.<sup>18</sup> In southern and eastern Ukraine, where the local population and elites were less supportive of the Euromaidan movement and consequently unable to generate the same kind of large scale popular or civil society support, the Euromaidan movement was even more dependent on the organizational structures and resolutely anti-Yanukovych stance of far-right groups such as Right Sector and the Svoboda party.<sup>19</sup> The smaller size of Euromaidan protests in these areas and greater presence of anti-Euromaidan activists, some of which also engaged in street violence further contributed to Right Sector's value.<sup>20</sup>

Right Sector largely adhered to a tentative truce between the authorities and the militant opposition established in late January, but it also openly advertised its possession of firearms and willingness to continue the fight against the "internal occupiers" if necessary.<sup>21</sup> On February 7, an individual claiming to be a Right Sector supporter dropped off a parcel at the occupied Trade Unions House in Kyiv. The parcel contained a bomb which maimed two Right Sector militants upon detonation.<sup>22</sup> When violence in Kyiv escalated during the February 18 protests, killing nine police officers and over a dozen protesters, Right Sector urged armed protesters to convene and fight back.<sup>23</sup> During the storming of the Party of Regions central offices, militant Maidan supporters openly used firearms for the first time.<sup>24</sup> Police gunmen fired live ammunition, sometimes indiscriminately, during their efforts to clear protest areas.<sup>25</sup> In response, protesters increasingly used hunting rifles and other firearms, with 13 police officers dying and dozens more suffering wounds from February 18-20.<sup>26</sup> Right Sector was present during the final police retreat from Maidan, when clashes involving a heavily armed Berkut unit led to dozens of protester deaths.<sup>27</sup> Yarosh also claimed to have reiterated his threat to wage guerrilla warfare directly to Yanukovych during a personal meeting days before he fled office.<sup>28</sup>

Right Sector activists were heavily involved in the diffusion of violence outside Kyiv in the last days of the protests, when protesters stormed the Interior Ministry and other state security and administrative buildings, attacked the Communist Party and monuments to Lenin, and set fire to Party of Regions offices.<sup>29</sup> Right Sector and other far-right organizations took part in these occupations, seeing a valuable opportunity not just to show solidarity with protesters in Kyiv but to displace state power and seize weapons in anticipation of a potential escalation to guerrilla war.<sup>30</sup>

### *Post-Yanukovych Politics and Activism*

After Yanukovych fled the country following the February 21 agreement with the opposition and an impending impeachment vote, Right Sector leader Yarosh sought but ultimately rejected several offers for positions within the new Ukrainian government.<sup>31</sup> Despite new opportunities afforded by its role in the Maidan, Right Sector also found itself at odds with the new Ukrainian government and grappling with internal disputes. Right Sector split with White Hammer under unclear circumstances. One of Right Sector's leaders for western Ukraine, UNA-UNSO militant Oleksander Muzychko, died in a shootout as the Ministry of Internal Affairs attempted to apprehend him for criminal activity and threats to the government.<sup>32</sup> In response, Right Sector activists picketed and attacked the Verkhovna Rada on March 27, demanding the resignation of interior minister Arsen Avakov and prosecution of the former defense minister.<sup>33</sup> On March 31, a member of Right Sector drunkenly opened fire near a restaurant in Kyiv, wounding several people and prompting a crackdown on the group's local headquarters.<sup>34</sup>

Despite these political controversies, anti-Maidan demonstrations, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and separatist activism gave Right Sector's ability to mobilize street-level militancy continued relevance. Andrei Biletsky, who left pretrial detention for an alleged Lenin statue bombing plot in February of 2014, and other activists from Patriot of Ukraine and SNA, mobilized as Right Sector East to help suppress separatist efforts in Kharkiv, killing two pro-Russian activists in March.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, Biletsky, along with Patriot of Ukraine and SNA would split with Right Sector and form the Azov Battalion, which enjoyed a much more cooperative relationship with Avakov and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>36</sup> Right Sector activists were involved in the spring 2014 clashes in Odessa, culminating in a May confrontation and fire at the Trade Unions House which killed as many as 40 pro-Russian activists.<sup>37</sup>

Right Sector had also begun more concerted efforts to expand beyond its roots in militant protest tactics. Already in March, Right Sector promised that it would register as a political party and that Yarosh would run for president.<sup>38</sup> In May, Right Sector registered and merged with Ukrainian National Assembly, the political wing of Right Sector founding organization UNA-UNSO.<sup>39</sup> Yarosh's presidential campaign concluded with extremely marginal results.<sup>40</sup> However, Yarosh, along with Right Sector's unofficial spokesperson Boryslav Bereza, managed to win seats in the 2014 elections for the Verkhovna Rada as independent candidates.<sup>41</sup> Both joined Ukrop, a nationalist faction whose name (translating to "dill") reappropriated a Russian slur against Ukrainians and also included Biletsky.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Outbreak of War and the Formation of the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps*

Right Sector also formed a paramilitary volunteer unit to fight pro-Russian separatists in April 2014. Originally, Right Sector activists called their unit “Dnipro-2,” in reference to the Dnipro-1 Battalion, a well-known volunteer unit funded by the billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky.<sup>43</sup> However, unlike Dnipro-1 and many other volunteer units, this unit did not participate in an initiative designed to subordinate volunteer units to the Ministry of Internal Affairs called the Special Tasks Patrol Police program. Right Sector also refused to subordinate itself to the Ministry of Defense. In June 2014, the Right Sector volunteers who opted to remain in independent units rather than transfer to registered ones reorganized themselves as the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps (DUK).<sup>44</sup>

In July 2014, Right Sector formally announced the creation of DUK, stating that the Ukrainian constitution gave them the right to participate in national self-defense even if they had yet to formalize a relationship with the Ministry of Defense.<sup>45</sup> Even as DUK troops entered combat in Donetsk, the units’ leaders continued to clash with Ukraine’s political leadership. Objecting to continued investigations, seizures of arms, and other repressive measures aimed at volunteer units attributed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and “pencil pushing police rats”, Yarosh and DUK commander Andriy Stempitsky threatened to “withdraw all our forces from the front lines... to start a campaign in Kyiv,” although they ultimately did not carry out this threat.<sup>46</sup>

DUK forces played a major part in the prolonged second battle for the Donetsk airport that began in the fall of 2014.<sup>47</sup> Among the defenders of the airport dubbed “cyborgs” for their tenacious resistance, Right Sector volunteers reported difficulty raising funds and securing equipment because of their continued lack of registration with a Ukrainian government agency.<sup>48</sup> DUK withdrew from the airport itself in November as regular Ukrainian forces took on a larger share of the fighting.<sup>49</sup> They remained engaged in positions around the airport until it ultimately fell to separatist forces in January 2015.<sup>50</sup> Right Sector, alongside other volunteer units, also took part in controversial checkpoints that blocked humanitarian aid shipments into separatist-controlled territory, claiming it would be used to aid separatist military efforts.<sup>51</sup> Human rights observers accused DUK of taking civilian hostages to extort funds from families in Donbas along with other abuses.<sup>52</sup>

In spring and summer 2015, DUK participated in fighting in Shyrokyne and other areas near Mariupol along with volunteers from Azov and other units.<sup>53</sup> In March, after the signing of the controversial Minsk II peacemaking agreements, a DUK commander claimed that he received orders to withdraw from Shyrokyne and the frontlines generally by the beginning of April.<sup>54</sup> Despite this withdrawal and the notional “demilitarization” of Shyrokyne, fighting continued and Right Sector officials claimed they continued to participate, albeit through less visible and unmarked scout, sniper, and guerrilla detachments until a more comprehensive withdrawal of forces in July.<sup>55</sup> By 2016, the number of active DUK volunteers on the front fell from roughly 2,000 to about 300, mostly involved in reconnaissance, sabotage, and other operations.<sup>56</sup>

Right Sector also clashed with rivals and Ukrainian authorities in other parts of the country. In Mukachevo, in southwestern Ukraine, Right Sector militants engaged in a shootout with a politician's security detail and police, whom Right Sector alleged was a participant in illicit cigarette trafficking. Ukrainian security services entered standoffs with both the roughly twenty Right Sector militants and other Right Sector bases in western Ukraine.<sup>57</sup> Yarosh claimed to work with the SBU to deescalate the confrontation.<sup>58</sup> In September, activists from Right Sector and the Crimean Tatar community blockaded several highways into Russian-occupied Crimea. After the blockade activists attacked infrastructure providing power to the peninsula, the government initially sent National Guard and other forces to restore the connection, but ultimately relented and endorsed the increasingly popular idea of the blockade.<sup>59</sup>

### *Right Sector After Yarosh*

In November 2015, Yarosh announced his resignation as Right Sector's leader.<sup>60</sup> He soon after announced he was leaving the movement and sought to form a political faction bringing together a wider variety of organizations, resulting in the defection of roughly a fifth of Right Sector's membership. This included several units of the DUK, which renamed themselves the Volunteer Ukrainian Army (UDA).<sup>61</sup> Yarosh claimed that this new faction would need to go beyond the strictly nationalist basis of Right Sector and include a wider array of patriotic political tendencies (but not left-wing ones) who might not otherwise support Right Sector.<sup>62</sup> Andriy Tarasenko was elected the organization's new leader in March 2016, a position he has held since.<sup>63</sup>

By the summer of 2016, relatively few fighters from DUK remained on the frontlines. One company, operating alongside the regular army's 54<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade, near the separatist-controlled city of Debaltseve, opted to join that regular unit on the condition the roughly 130 combatants could remain together as a unit. When they were eventually split up, some went on hunger strike.<sup>64</sup> However, DUK continued to operate units independently. DUK's unofficial status allowed them to recruit foreign volunteers, from both western Europe and the former Soviet Union, and participate in fighting in hotspots such as Avdiivka in 2017.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the political splits, Right Sector has collaborated with other far-right movements such as the Azov Movement's National Corps and Svoboda on documents such as the 2017 "National Manifesto."<sup>66</sup> Tarasenko, Yarosh, and Biletsky all participated in an unsuccessful 2019 electoral bloc.<sup>67</sup> Right Sector activists also played a minor role in the various 2019 protests aimed at the Zelensky administration's attempts to find a negotiated solution to the Donbas conflict.<sup>68</sup> Shortly before the full-scale Russian invasion, Right Sector activists clashed with the Azov movement's National Corps party in Sumy.<sup>69</sup>

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has brought a significant increase in DUK activity and changes to its relationship with the Ukrainian authorities. DUK forces participated in combat against Russian forces near Chernihiv alongside the volunteer unit of the far-right Orthodox Christian organization Bratstvo.<sup>70</sup> DUK also participated in fighting in

Barvinkove, in the Kharkiv area.<sup>71</sup> In April, DUK finally submitted itself to the Ukrainian state's chain of command, becoming a separate volunteer unit under the command of Ukraine's Special Operations Forces (SSO).<sup>72</sup> As of the summer of 2022, DUK forces were involved in combat near Svitlodarsk in Donetsk.<sup>73</sup>

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

### **A. LEADERSHIP**

**Dmytro Yarosh** (2013 to November 2015): Yarosh was leader of one of the founding organizations of Right Sector, Stepan Bandera All-Ukrainian Organization "Tryzub." Although part of the more moderate wing of the founding Right Sector organizations, Yarosh had advocated for the need for paramilitary training to overthrow a pro-Russian government in Ukraine as early as 2009.<sup>74</sup> Yarosh was wounded by artillery fire in January 2015 in the battles near Donetsk airport. He resigned as leader of the group in November 2015.<sup>75</sup> He soon after left the movement entirely along with a portion of the group's military volunteers, which became the Volunteer Ukrainian Army.<sup>76</sup> Yarosh was elected to Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada from a single member constituency in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast in 2014 and served until 2019.<sup>77</sup>

**Andriy Tarasenko** (March 2016 to present): Tarasenko was an official within Tryzub along with Yarosh before the organization helped create Right Sector. Tarasenko served as an important coordinator and leader of the organization's activity in Kyiv during the Euromaidan.<sup>78</sup> After Yarosh's departure, Tarasenko was formally elected as Right Sector's new leader.<sup>79</sup>

**Andriy Stempitsky** (July 2014 to present): Stempitsky was also a leader of Tryzub along with Yarosh and Tarasenko.<sup>80</sup> After participating in the Maidan protests as part of Right Sector, Stempitsky became commander of the group's military volunteer detachment in the Donbas, becoming commander of the DUK.<sup>81</sup>

### **B. NAME CHANGES**

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

### **C. SIZE ESTIMATES**

**November-December 2013:** low hundreds.<sup>82</sup>

**March 2014:** 5,000-10,000.<sup>83</sup>

**2014-2015:** Roughly 2,000 DUK volunteers on the frontline.<sup>84</sup>

**2016:** Roughly 300 DUK volunteers on the frontline.<sup>85</sup>

**2022:** Estimates of current sizes of Right Sector activists and DUK volunteers are not publicly available.

## **D. RESOURCES**

During the Maidan, Right Sector claimed to operate based on donations from members, supporters, and the Ukrainian diaspora.<sup>86</sup> With the outbreak of war in Donbas, human rights organizations alleged that Right Sector's DUK volunteers were extorting money from civilians in the conflict zone by taking hostages.<sup>87</sup> Because of DUK's refusal to subordinate itself to Ministry of Internal Affairs or Ministry of Defense structures to integrate volunteer units, DUK could not directly receive funding or equipment from the Ukrainian state.<sup>88</sup> DUK used donations from the diaspora to illegally smuggle weapons into Ukraine and took donations of antique weapons from military museums and battlefield reenactors.<sup>89</sup> When DUK finally agreed to integrate into the Ukrainian military it was able to receive new equipment from the Ukrainian government and Western donors.<sup>90</sup>

## **E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS**

Right Sector initially formed at the Maidan protests in Kyiv but was highly active in other regions of Ukraine during the diffusion and escalation of the protest movement.<sup>91</sup> After the outbreak of war in Donbas in 2014, DUK volunteers were active in battles in and around the Donetsk airport and Shyrokyne.<sup>92</sup> DUK was involved in fighting near Avdiivka in 2017.<sup>93</sup> Since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion, DUK forces have fought in and around Chernihiv and Svitlodarsk.<sup>94</sup>

## **STRATEGY**

### **A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS**

During its formation and participation in the protests against Yanukovich from 2013-2014, Right Sector represented a range of far-right nationalist tendencies from the fringes of Ukrainian politics. Broadly speaking, these can be grouped into two categories. First, there were the "nationalist conservative" groups, a category primarily represented by Tryzub, from which most of Right Sector's leadership emerged, as well as UNA-UNSO. These groups both invoke the legacy of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (specifically the more revolutionary faction led by Stepan Bandera, the OUN-B) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).<sup>95</sup> This legacy is polarizing both within and beyond Ukraine. The OUN's national liberation struggle also included instances of both collaboration and conflict with Nazi Germany, which arrested Bandera and other OUN-B officials after they declared an independent Ukrainian state and then released them so they could fight Soviet forces later in the war.<sup>96</sup> The OUN had an ideology influenced by fascist thought, and OUN members participated in episodes of mass violence against minority ethnic groups, both as auxiliary units of the German occupiers and as anti-Soviet UPA partisans.<sup>97</sup> Yarosh explicitly invoked Bandera's formulation when explaining Right Sector's approach to ethnic minorities: "brotherly to those who stand with us in our



struggle for statehood, tolerant of those who live here and do not oppose our fight, hostile to those who do everything to deprive us of our own country.”<sup>98</sup> This wing of Right Sector was generally less supportive of open racism and antisemitism.<sup>99</sup> Boryslav Bereza, Right Sector’s informal spokesman who won election to the Verkhovna Rada along with Yarosh, is openly Jewish.<sup>100</sup> However, much of this wing still opposed LGBT rights and feminism.<sup>101</sup>

The second wing of Right Sector in this early 2013-2014 phase was the social-nationalist wing, represented primarily by Andriy Biletsky’s Patriot of Ukraine and Social-National Assembly as well as the smaller group White Hammer. Their version of Ukrainian nationalism was explicitly linked to racial characteristics and used rhetoric that was often openly antisemitic, openly xenophobic or invoked National Socialist ideas.<sup>102</sup> Although Biletsky had once been a Tryzub activist, before the Maidan protests Tryzub and other groups had considered the social-nationalist groups too extreme in ideology and actions.<sup>103</sup> Maidan changed these calculations, as Bereza told an interviewer: “if you are going to ask me is Biletsky an anti-Semite, I would answer that he probably is, but I will also tell you that in the moment when he needed support to save Ukraine, we supported him to save Ukraine.”<sup>104</sup> Within a few months of the overthrow of Yanukovych, the organizations of this wing had left Right Sector.

What united Right Sector groups during the protests was a shared belief in the necessity of a violent “national revolution” against what they perceived as the treasonous, pro-Russian Yanukovych government, a belief that had subjected groups across the far-right spectrum, whether the nationalist conservative Tryzub and social-nationalist Patriot of Ukraine, to prior repression from state security services earlier in the Yanukovych administration.<sup>105</sup> Their vision of national revolution against the enemies of Ukraine encompassed not only efforts to overthrow Yanukovych, but also a desire to oppose what they perceived as anti-nationalist elements within the Maidan protests themselves, and many of Right Sector’s actions before it achieved fame (and broader tolerance or acceptance from other opposition groups) were directed at purging or marginalizing leftist, anarchist, pro-LGBT, or feminist activists within the protest movement.<sup>106</sup> Even integration with the European Union, the impetus for the Maidan protests, was suspect to Right Sector activists. As Tarasenko described in an interview, “joining with Europe would be the death of Ukraine. Europe means the death of the nation state and death of Christianity. We want a Ukraine for Ukrainians, run by Ukrainians, and not serving the interests of others,” without the EU’s “totalitarian liberalism.”<sup>107</sup> Although Right Sector continued to support a nationalist conservative vision, opposition to LGBT rights, and threaten armed national revolution, its role in the Maidan, and the opportunities it provided to fight separatists without the bureaucracy of formal military service, made service in DUK attractive even to more liberal volunteers who do not share many of its leadership’s political beliefs.<sup>108</sup>

## **B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

After the events of the Maidan and the outbreak of war in Donbas, Right Sector’s leadership sought to establish themselves as a political party.<sup>109</sup> Yarosh ran a very

marginal candidacy for President in the post-Maidan elections of 2014.<sup>110</sup> Yarosh and Boryslav Bereza secured seats in the Verkhovna Rada from 2014-2019.<sup>111</sup> They joined the nationalist parliamentary grouping Ukrop along with ex-Right Sector participant and Azov Battalion founder Andriy Biletsky.<sup>112</sup> Right Sector has continued to participate in marginal far-right nationalist electoral efforts along with Biletsky's National Corps and Svoboda, such as the 2019 electoral bloc which failed to clear the parliamentary threshold necessary for the grouping to secure representation in the Verkhovna Rada.<sup>113</sup>

### **C. TARGETS AND TACTICS**

From 2013 to early 2014, Right Sector activists engaged in protest violence, directed at Ukrainian state authorities and political rivals. For example, on December 1, when Right Sector led protesters in clashes with riot police, militants used clubs, chains, smoke bombs, flares, and Molotov cocktails.<sup>114</sup> Like many other protest movements, Right Sector activists used a variety of improvised or captured equipment, making or repurposing shields and other protective gear, tearing out paving stones and bricks for use as projectiles, and constructed barricades.<sup>115</sup> In addition to targeting police crowd control detachments, Right Sector also participated in direct assaults on buildings, whether controlled by various organs of the Ukrainian government and security services or by Right Sector's political enemies, such as the Party of Regions or Communist Party.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, the organizations which ran Right Sector had run paramilitary training camps and also began to use firearms they had accumulated from prior stocks or captured during the protests in the final days of the Maidan.<sup>117</sup>

Although Right Sector had threatened to employ guerrilla warfare against the Yanukovych government during the 2013-2014 protests, Russian-backed separatists led to the next phase of Right Sector's militant activity. Right Sector volunteers in DUK formed light infantry units in spring 2014, where they used small arms and light weapons in battles against separatists throughout 2014 and 2015, including the intense fighting at Donetsk airport.<sup>118</sup> Although the number of Right Sector fighters on the front fell, several hundred would remain engaged in reconnaissance, sniper, sabotage, and other hit-and-run guerrilla actions for years.<sup>119</sup> Since becoming integrated into Ukrainian SOF in spring 2022 after the full-scale invasion, Right Sector units have continued to perform many of these roles, such as using mobile mortar teams to harass Russian forces, but have benefited from improved access to military equipment.<sup>120</sup>

### **MAJOR ATTACKS**

**Disclaimer:** These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

**December 1, 2013:** Right Sector activists lead assaults on Ukraine's Presidential Administration building on Bankova street, involving improvised melee and thrown incendiary weapons, as well as capturing construction equipment.<sup>121</sup>

**January 19, 2014:** Right Sector lead march on Verkhovna Rada in defiance of Yanukovych government's anti-protest laws, resulting in intense clashes with police on Hrushevskoho street.<sup>122</sup>

**January-February, 2014:** Right Sector activists participated in multiple waves of protests outside Kyiv in which protesters stormed the regional government and Party of Regions headquarters.<sup>123</sup>

**February 18-21, 2014:** During the final phases of the protests against the Yanukovych government and in response to increasing use of live ammunition by government forces, Right Sector called for bringing firearms to the Maidan and returning fire against security force gunmen. 13 police officers are killed and dozens wounded, while dozens of protesters are also killed by gunfire.<sup>124</sup>

**January-May 2014:** Right Sector militants play an active role in confrontations between Maidan and anti-Maidan supporters, culminating in the May 2<sup>nd</sup> clashes and fire at the Odessa Trade Unions house. Dozens of anti-Maidan activists die in the fire.<sup>125</sup>

**September 2014-January 2015:** DUK forces are heavily involved in the second battle for Donetsk airport. They are among the Ukrainian defenders dubbed “cyborgs” for their stiff resistance in the face of increasingly superior separatist firepower.<sup>126</sup> They remained engaged in positions around the airport until it ultimately fell to separatist forces in January 2015.<sup>127</sup>

**July 11, 2015:** Right Sector engages in a shootout with the security detail of an allegedly corrupt local politician, resulting in three dead, two of them Right Sector activists. The incident results in other confrontations between Right Sector and Ukrainian security services.<sup>128</sup>

**February-July 2022:** DUK volunteers participate in defense against the full-scale Russian invasion, including fighting in the areas of Chernihiv and Svitlodarsk.<sup>129</sup>

## **INTERACTIONS**

### **A. DESIGNATED/LISTED**

Russian courts designated Right Sector and several constituent organizations, such as Tryzub and UNA-UNSO, as extremist and banned them within Russia.<sup>130</sup>

### **B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Although the vast majority of Euromaidan protesters did not share Right Sector's ideology, Right Sector's commitment to resisting Ukrainian police and security services

and their higher perceived tactical efficacy won them support across the political spectrum of protestors.<sup>131</sup> However, Right Sector was unable to convert its influence within the protest movement or its exploits on the battlefield into widespread support within Ukrainian society. 2016 surveys showed Right Sector polling about 1% as a party.<sup>132</sup>

### **C. RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS**

Although the social-nationalist wing, namely Social-National Assembly and Patriot of Ukraine, left Right Sector, Right Sector continued some forms of strategic collaboration because of shared enemies in both domestic politics and the frontlines of combat against Russian-backed separatists. Although SNA and PU split from Right Sector to create the Azov Battalion in 2014, combatants from Right Sector and Azov fought together in the Mariupol area.<sup>133</sup> Yarosh and Bereza also joined the same nationalist parliamentary grouping as Biletsky, even though Bereza, who is Jewish, had stated in an interview that Biletsky was likely antisemitic.<sup>134</sup> Right Sector continued to collaborate with Biletsky's National Corps and other nationalist parties such as Svoboda on their 2017 "National Manifesto" and failed 2019 electoral bloc.<sup>135</sup> However, these instances of high-level coordination are sometimes belied by local conflicts between activists, as the February 2022 clashes in Sumy between National Corps and Right Sector demonstrated.<sup>136</sup>

The transnational neo-Nazi network Misanthropic Division has previously stated its support for volunteers within DUK.<sup>137</sup> Misanthropic Division members were previously among the SNA/PU activists who formed the short-lived "Right Sector East" movement that fought against pro-Russian activists in Kharkiv in 2014.<sup>138</sup> However, Misanthropic Division also denounced Right Sector as a political organization because of its acceptance of Jewish and Chechen Muslim members.<sup>139</sup>

### **D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**

In April, 2022, DUK finally submitted itself to the Ukrainian state's chain of command, becoming a separate volunteer unit under the command of Ukraine's Special Operations Forces (SSO).<sup>140</sup> When DUK finally agreed to integrate into the Ukrainian military it was able to receive new equipment from the Ukrainian government and Western donors.<sup>141</sup>

### **MAPS**

- Global Right-Wing Extremism

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