

The Buried Maidan Massacre and Its Misrepresentation by the West

The new Ukrainian government is faced with reopening an inquiry into evidence of an organized mass killing in Kiev that Poroshenko stonewalled. Ivan Katchanovski investigates.

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Five years ago, the Maidan massacre in Kiev, Ukraine, of Feb. 18-20, 2014, was a watershed event, not only for the politics and history of Ukraine but also for world politics generally. This mass killing in downtown Kyiv set the stage for the violent overthrow of the pro-Russian government in Ukraine and a new Cold War between Washington and Moscow.

Therefore, it is remarkable that five years after this massacre shook the world, no one has been sentenced for any of the Maidan killings. This was the best documented case of mass killing in history, broadcast live on TV and the internet, in presence of thousands of eyewitnesses. It was filmed by hundreds of journalists from major media in the West, Ukraine, Russia, and many other countries as well as by numerous social media users. Yet, to this day, no one has been brought to justice for this major and consequential crime.

From the start, the dominant narrative promoted by the Ukrainian and Western governments and mainstream media has placed the blame for this tragedy firmly on the Yanukovich government. It contends that forces loyal to former

President Victor Yanukovych— either snipers and/or the Berkut, a special anti-riot police— massacred peaceful Maidan protesters on the direct orders of Yanukovych himself. Such charges against Yanukovych, his ministers and commanders and a special Berkut unit—whose five ex-members were tried for the murder of 48 Maidan protesters on Feb. 20, 2014 – are generally taken at face value. With some limited exceptions, challenges to this narrative are treated dismissively.

For the most part, mainstream news media in the U.S. and other Western countries ignored trial evidence, public statements by officials and politicians and scholarly studies that put the standard narrative under question. This includes non-reporting about my own academic studies of the Maidan massacre.

Killing Protesters and Police

My work found that this was an organized mass killing of both protesters and the police, with the goal of delegitimizing the Yanukovych government and its forces and seizing power in Ukraine. Oligarchic and far right elements of the Maidan movement were involved in this massacre. For this reason, the official investigation was fabricated and stonewalled. I presented studies to support this as well as several [online video appendixes](#) with various evidence at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association in [San Francisco in 2015](#) and [Boston in 2018](#), the 2017 World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities in [New York in 2017](#), and a joint conference by the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala University and the British Association for Slavonic and East

European Studies in 2018, and published their summary in an [academic press volume](#).

The prosecutor general of Ukraine recently announced that the investigation of the Maidan massacre is complete. He cited reconstructions of the Maidan massacre by a New York architecture company, working with a team of Ukrainian “volunteers” to provide a 3D model, as definite evidence that the Maidan protesters were massacred by the Berkut police and that snipers did not massacre the protesters.

This model was featured by *The New York Times*, in its May 30, 2018, report [“Who Killed the Kiev Protesters?”](#) as a proof that the Berkut police massacred Maidan protesters.

However, no expert knowledge or familiarity with the Maidan massacre or Ukraine is needed to see blatant misrepresentation of elementary data in that 3D model.

The wound locations of the killed Maidan protesters in [the 3D model](#) do not match the wound locations in the forensic medical examinations of the bodies. The reports of those examinations were used in this simulation to determine the locations of the shooters. They are published in Ukrainian and English on the linked website. According to one such [report](#), Ihor Dmytriv was shot in the “right side surface” and the “left side surface” of the torso “from the right to the left, from the top to the bottom, and a little from the front to the back” with the entry wound 20.5cm (8 inches) higher than the exit wound. However, in the simulation, his wounds have been moved to the front and the back and made nearly horizontal.

A Maidan lawyer [visually confirmed](#) at the Maidan massacre

trial that these wounds locations of were in the right and left sides. In the [video](#) of their examination of Dmytriv right after his shooting, Maidan medics also indicate such locations of his wounds with no wounds visible in the front area, contrary to the 3D model. The forensic medical [reports](#) also state that Dmytriv was wounded in his right shoulder from bottom to top direction, with this entry wound 5 cm lower, but the 3D animation also misrepresents this direction.

The wound locations of the other two victims have been similarly altered. The 3D model moved the exit wound location from around the middle line of the back of Andriy Dyhdalovych's body in [forensic medical and clothing examinations](#) significantly to the right. It also changed a similar large vertical angle from a top and bottom direction and 17 cm difference in height of entry and exit wounds to nearly horizontal level.

In the case of Yuriy Parashchuk, [forensic medical examinations](#) found that his entry and exit wounds were in the back of his head on the left side. But the 3D analysis moved the entry wound location to the front area and changed its somewhat top-to-bottom direction to nearly horizontal. Frames from a [video](#) by a French photographer shows a large bullet hole in the back of Parashchuk's red helmet. How can he be shot in the back of his head by the Berkut police on a nearly similar horizontal level?

Changing the wound locations invalidates the entire reconstruction and, therefore, the conclusions of the SITU analysis and *The New York Times* article, that these and other Maidan protesters were shot from the Berkut positions.

One does not need to be a ballistic expert to see that locations of wounds in the back and on the sides and top-to-bottom directions of wounds specified in forensic medical reports and positions of these three killed protesters facing the Berkut in the videos cannot physically match with Berkut police positions located on a similar horizontal level on the ground in front of them. The forensic medical examinations conducted for the government investigation and made public at the Maidan massacre trial revealed that the absolute majority of the protesters were shot not in front and not from horizontal or near horizontal directions that are consistent with police positions. Rather, they were shot from a top-to-bottom direction and in sides or the back that are consistent with shooting from the Maidan-controlled buildings.

Government Investigation

The government investigation, conducted after the Maidan government came to power after this massacre, and which charged the Berkut police behind the barricades with killing these three protesters, raises the same concerns.

The complex medical examinations, which were published on the SITU website and which are presented by the government investigation in Ukraine as a key evidence that the Berkut police massacred the protesters, showed the same bullet trajectories as the 3D model. The text of these examinations, which are available in Ukrainian and in English translations, shows that these bullet trajectories were determined not by ballistic experts but by medical experts without any calculations or explanations.

Synchronized videos, which were used by the SITU to determine that the Berkut police behind a truck barricade killed Parashchuk, actually show that he and other protesters were in a blind spot below the line of police fire from behind a truck. It was physically impossible for the police behind the wide and tall truck to shoot at him below over the top of this truck. Dozens of other Maidan protesters who were killed and wounded around the same spot were in the same situation.

The locations of the forces of the Yanukovych government during the massacre are well known, and they are identified in my [studies](#), the government investigation charges, numerous videos, and in the SITU 3D model.

At the time of the killings of these three protesters, Berkut policemen were behind the barricades on Instytutska Street on the government side, while the protesters who were killed were in between Berkut and the Hotel Ukraina.

Forensic examinations of bullet holes by government experts described numerous bullet holes on the second, third, and higher floors and the roof of the Hotel Ukraina on the side that faced the government forces. But they did not identify a single bullet hole on the first floor on the Berkut facing side of the hotel behind these protesters. Simple [positioning](#) of the bullet hole locations described in these forensic reports clearly shows that almost all bullets from the Berkut and other positions flew above the heads of the protesters there or targeted poles, trees, and a flower box. This is also shown in vide and photos – including some I took there after the massacre – and in [videos and reports](#) of shooting at journalists in the hotel with a Google Street

View image from the first Berkut barricade.

This confirms my study findings that the special Berkut police unit and the Omega unit of snipers of Internal Troops were shooting at snipers in the Hotel Ukraina.

After five long years, the failure by the Poroshenko government's investigation to determine bullet trajectories by ballistic experts or conduct on-site investigative experiments for the same purpose – even after the Maidan massacre trial judges ordered them two years ago to do so – is therefore hardly surprising. It is impossible to bend physical reality. In a literal cover-up, large fences were recently erected on the crime scene for the construction of the Maidan massacre memorial, which would completely alter the landscape. The fences and the memorial would make it impossible to determine bullet trajectories on-site, which still has not been done by the investigation for five years after this mass killing.

The SITU reconstruction also missed bullet holes that appeared in Dmytriv's shield and in a shield of another protester in front of Dyhdalovych in videos of their shooting that were used in the reconstruction. The locations of these bullet holes are inconsistent with shooting from the Berkut barricades.

But these shields with clear locations of the bullet holes, like the helmet of Parashchuk and almost all the shields and helmets of protesters who were killed or wounded, mysteriously disappeared after the massacre, along with a lot of other crucial evidence, such as bullets and security-camera footage.

Similarly, crucial testimonies of Maidan protesters, who witnessed the killings of Dyhdalovych and Dmytriv, are ignored by the *Times'* report, SITU and the official Ukrainian investigation. Dyhdalovych's wife stated in her Ukrainian media [interview](#) that another protester told her that he saw that Dyhdalovych was killed by a sniper on the roof of the Bank Arkada. This protester was [filmed](#) following Dyhdalovych when they both went to evacuate Dmytriv after he was shot. The Bank Arkada is a tall green building in the front and to the right of both Dyhdalovych and Dmytriv, and it appears to match the apparent directions of their wounds. My Maidan massacre studies video appendices showed that it was in the Maidan-controlled area and that snipers on its roof during the massacre were reported by both numerous Maidan protesters, including [many wounded](#) who spoke at the Maidan massacre trial and investigation, and by Security Service of Ukraine commanders and snipers.

A female Maidan medic during the massacre was pointing to the top of this green building and shouting about snipers. But her words were translated in [a BBC report](#) as referring to six protesters killed by the snipers in that area. A [Maidan protester](#) and another [Maidan medic](#), who were wounded near the same spot where these two protesters were killed, both testified at the Maidan massacre trial that they were shot from this building. Government ballistic experts confirmed this during on-site investigative experiments.

Western Press Silence

These revelations were not reported by any Western media. This includes *The New York Times*, which on April 5, 2014, [profiled](#) this wounded protester against the backdrop of an

unquestioned report by the acting government in Kiev that blaming “former President Viktor F. Yanukovich, his riot police and their suspected Russian assistants for the violence that killed more than 100 people in Kiev in February.”

It also includes CNN, which filmed the shooting of this medic and attributed it to the government forces.

The government investigation simply denies that there were any snipers there and in other Maidan-controlled buildings, and refuses to investigate them. This is done despite videos of such snipers and testimonies of the absolute majority of wounded protesters at the trial and investigation and more than 150 other witnesses about snipers in these locations.

The assumption in the 3D model that Dmytriv was shot by the single bullet is also contradicted by testimony of another protester who saw that Dmytriv was shot by “a sniper” from the Hotel Ukraina. My Maidan massacre studies and their video appendices showed that this hotel was then controlled by the Maidan forces.

The New York Times article described collaboration of the New York architecture firm with a Ukrainian “volunteer” in creating the 3D model. It did not report 2017 admissions by the prosecutor general of Ukraine on *Facebook* that his government agency funded the work of a group of anonymous “volunteers,” including this Ukrainian graduate student, in compiling and synchronizing various videos of the Maidan massacre in collaboration with a People’s Front party outlet.

Some of the People’s Front party leaders were accused by

various Ukrainian politicians and Maidan activists, such as [Nadia Savchenko](#), and by five ex-Georgian ex-military members in [Italian](#) and [Israeli](#) TV documentaries, of direct involvement in this massacre. Meanwhile, the *Times* lauds the Ukrainian government's investigation and Maidan lawyers for drawing on such analyses by these "citizen investigators" and treats a New York architect firm as providing key evidence in the Maidan massacre trial.

Brad Samuels is a founding partner of Situ Research, the New York architecture company that produced the 3D model of the killing of three protesters, which was presented by the *Times* as proof that such snipers did not exist and that 49 protesters were massacred by the Berkut police.

Samuels [said](#) in a video [start at 55:16] that "...eventually, there is a consensus that there was a third party acting. It is clear from forensic evidence that people were shot in the back. Somebody was shooting from rooftops." His striking observation was not included anywhere in the SITU 3D model report that he produced. Nor was it reported by the *Times*.

Cases of protesters, who were shot in the back, were omitted from the SITU model. But even in the deliberately selected cases of the three protesters, who were presented by this simulation as shot in front, their actual wound locations suggest that they were also shot from a Maidan-controlled building, which was located in front and to the right of them.

There was not a single report in English-language media concerning [testimonies](#) at the Maidan massacre trial where 25 wounded Maidan protesters, with whose shootings Berkut

policemen are charged, who stated that they were shot from Maidan-controlled buildings or areas.

Major outlets likewise neglected to cover the testimonies by 30 wounded protesters who said they witnessed snipers in those locations or were told about them by other protesters. This is stunning since these testimonies are publicly available in live online recordings of the Maidan massacre trial and they are complied with English-language subtitles into an [online video appendix](#) to my study. These testimonies represent the majority of wounded protesters with whose shooting Berkut was charged. They are consistent with video testimonies by about 100 witnesses in the [media and social media](#) and at the [trial and the investigation](#). But the official investigation in Ukraine simply denies that there were any such snipers in Maidan-controlled buildings, even though the Prosecutor General Office of Ukraine previously [stated](#) that snipers massacred many protesters from the Hotel Ukraina and other buildings.

Similarly, not a single media outlet reported segments of the *Belgian VRT News* video that showed Maidan protesters shouting during the massacre that they saw snipers in the Maidan-controlled Hotel Ukraina shooting Maidan protesters, pointing towards them, and asking them not to shoot. These segments were only shown to a small number of people at the Maidan massacre trial and are included in my [online video appendix](#) on *YouTube*. Other segments from this same video, however, were broadcast to some several hundred million viewers by major television networks in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Germany, France, Poland, Italy, and Ukraine, and many other countries as evidence that the government forces

massacred the Maidan protesters.

With the notable exception of an [Associated Press story](#) quoting the charismatic politician Nadia Savchenko, news agencies have ignored the [public remarks](#) of several Maidan politicians and activists who said that they witnessed the involvement of specific top Maidan leaders in the massacre.

Testimonies by five Georgian ex-military members in [Italian](#), [Israeli](#), Macedonian and Russian media and their published depositions to Berkut lawyers for the Maidan massacre trial have also been ignored. They stated that their groups received weapons, payments, and orders to massacre both police and protesters from specific Maidan and Georgian politicians.

They also said that they received instructions from a far-right linked ex-U.S. Army sniper and then saw Georgian, Baltic States, and Right Sector-linked snipers shooting from specific Maidan-controlled buildings.

Western media silence also greeted a recent [statement](#) by Anatolii Hrytsenko, one of the top Ukrainian presidential candidates, who was also a Maidan politician and minister of defense, that the investigation of the massacre has been stonewalled because of the involvement of someone from the current leadership of Ukraine in this mass killing.

In contrast, there were no such testimonies admitting involvement in the massacre or knowledge of such involvement by the Berkut policemen, ex-police and security services commanders; nor by ex-Yanukovych government officials. No specific evidence of orders by then-president Yanukovych or his ministers and commanders to massacre unarmed protesters

has been revealed by the trials, investigations or news reporting. Nonetheless, the Western mainstream media report existence of such orders as a matter of a fact.

Not a single major Western media reported that a forensic ballistic examination, conducted by government institute experts on the prosecution request with use of an automatic computer-based IBIS-TAIS system, determined that bullets extracted from killed protesters did not match a police database of bullet samples from Kalashnikov assault rifles of members of the entire Kyiv Berkut regiment. The latter included the special Berkut company charged with the massacre of the protesters. The same concerns the forensic examination findings that many protesters were killed with hunting bullets and pellets.

There are no Western media reports, at least in English, concerning the investigation by the Prosecutor General Office of Ukraine. This investigation determined, based on protester's testimonies and investigative experiments, that almost half of the protesters (77 out of 157) were wounded on Feb. 20 from other sectors than the Berkut police and that no one was charged with their shooting.

A female Maidan medic, whose wounding on the Maidan was highly publicized by Western and Ukrainian media and politicians and attributed to government snipers, is one of them. Since the official investigation determined that government snipers did not massacre the Maidan protesters, with a single implausible exception announced recently, this implies that these protesters were wounded from the Maidan-controlled buildings and areas.

There was Western media silence, including from the *BBC*, about revelations by the Prosecutor General Office that one of the leaders of far right party Svoboda, who was also a member of the Ukrainian parliament at the time of the massacre, occupied a Hotel Ukraina room from which a sniper in Maidan-style green helmet was filmed by the *BBC* shooting in the direction of the Maidan protesters and the *BBC*'s own journalists.

Similarly, there are no mainstream media reports of the visual examinations of bullet holes and their impact points by the government investigators that determined that one German ARD television room at the Hotel Ukraina was shot from the direction of the Main Post Office, which was at the time the headquarters of the Right Sector. The latter far-right group included radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations and football ultras. This bullet just narrowly missed a German *ARD TV* female producer. The government investigators also determined that another *ARD* room in the same hotel was shot at from the Music Conservatory building, which was then the headquarters of the Right-Sector-linked special armed Maidan Self-Defense company.

Likewise, nothing was reported about a forensic ballistic examination made public at the trial that revealed that an ABC News producer was shot in his Hotel Ukraina room by a Winchester caliber hunting soft-point bullet that did not match a caliber of Berkut Kalashnikovs.

Misrepresentation of the Maidan massacre and its investigation by Western media and governments is puzzling.

American independence leader John Adams once defended the

British soldiers charged with the Boston massacre in 1770. He regarded this defense as important for the rule of law to prevail over politics. He famously stated at the Boston massacre trial that “facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.” He not only won this politically charged case of a crucial massacre in U.S. politics and history but became U.S. president afterwards. The question is why this dictum is not heeded almost 250 years later in the case of the Maidan massacre in Ukraine.

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