

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a purple long-sleeved top, a patterned scarf, and a long, colorful floral skirt, is walking in a war-torn urban environment. She is holding a rifle with both hands, looking off to the side with a concerned expression. She has a black bag slung over her shoulder. The background shows a stone wall and a wall with red graffiti. The ground is littered with debris.

photography
Pierre Crom

WAR IN UKRAINE

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Introduction

Throughout history, many conflicts have left their mark on Ukraine. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine's independence failed to bring reform and modernisation and the country slipped away into stagnation and corruption.

In 2004, liberal reformers made an attempt to change the country's course. After failed elections, mass street protests erupted demanding for democratisation and European integration. But the elected democratic president, Viktor Yushchenko, got caught up in power politics and was unable to realise the promised transformation. Meanwhile, a gas conflict had emerged with Russia.

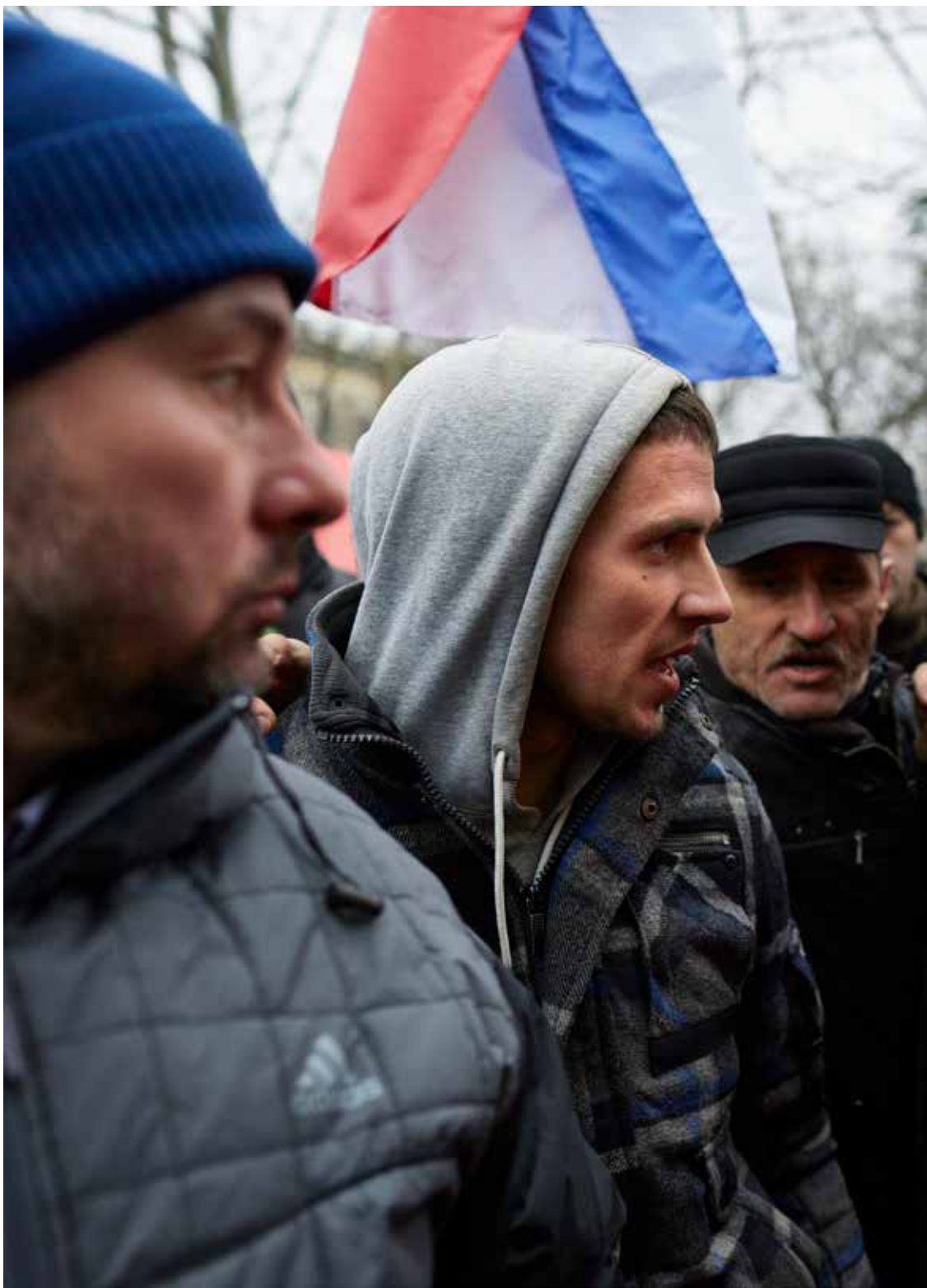
After several cabinets failed to bring stability, the pro-Russian politician Viktor Yanukovych was re-elected president in 2010. While negotiating closer relations with Europe, he also maintained close ties with Moscow and corruption marked his rule. In the winter of 2013-2014, a civil uprising unfolded as a result of Yanukovych's refusal to sign a long-awaited Association Agreement with Europe. The uprising became known as the Euromaidan or 'Revolution of Dignity'.

In a chain of events, the violent clashes between pro-European demonstrators and government forces in Kiev resulted in the Russian annexation of Crimea and a separatist conflict in Ukraine's easternmost Donbass region.

Between 2014 and 2016, French photojournalist Pierre Crom travelled many times to the conflict zone to document the events in Ukraine.

'War in Ukraine' is the result of those journeys. It provides an unnerving account of the escalation of social-economic discontent into military conflict. A visual documentary, the images in this book bring us closer to those people who got trapped in the chaos of war.

In the midst of this turmoil, one particular event stands out: Crom's documentation of the downing of the MH17, on 17 July 2014, in Eastern Ukraine. Two hours after the drama Crom arrived at the crash site. His photographs of the burning wreckage have been published by media world wide. In 2014, Crom received the "Zilveren Camera" (Silver Camera), a prestigious Dutch award for photojournalism.





Simferopol, February 26, 2014 - Clashes erupt outside the Regional Parliament between pro-Russian separatists and pro-Kiev protesters.



Simferopol, February 28, 2014 - Pro-Russian militias gather outside the Regional Parliament.



Simferopol, February 28, 2014 - A Russian military column drives by a referendum campaign poster.



Simferopol, February 28, 2014 - Russian soldiers without insignia take control of the international airport.



Perevalne, March 02, 2014 - Russian forces without insignia surround a Ukrainian military base.



Lubimovka, March 04, 2014 - Unarmed Ukrainian soldiers await the end of negotiations on their seized airbase.





Lubimovka, Belbek military base, March 04, 2014 - Ukrainian officers await the end of negotiations after Russian forces took control of the military airbase.



Lubimovka, March 05, 2014 - A Ukrainian officer holds hands with his wife through the fence of a military base.



Lubimovka, March 05, 2014 - A Ukrainian soldier stands guard inside a military base as Russian forces take control of Crimea.



Simferopol, March 02, 2014 - A couple kiss on Lenin square.



Simferopol, March 16, 2014 - Voters wave flags on Lenin square during the referendum.



Simferopol, March 16, 2014 - Poll workers wait for voters.



Simferopol, March 16, 2014 - Pro-Russians celebrate the results of the referendum.



Simferopol, March 16, 2014 - Fireworks light up Lenin square during the referendum's celebrations.



Grabovo, July 17, 2014 - Flight MH17, traveling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile from an area under control of Russian-backed separatists. None of the 298 passengers and crew members survived.





Grabovo, July 30, 2014 - Imprint left on the grass after remains of a victim were recovered.



Grabovo, November 11, 2014 - Frozen sunflowers remain unharvested at the crash site.



Grabovo, November, 18 2014 - Dutch forensic experts recover a shoe believed to have belonged to a MH17 victim.



Grabovo, November 18, 2014 - Workers recover a large part of the MH17 fuselage.



Uglegorsk, August 13, 2014 - Ukrainian forces regain control of Uglegorsk.





Nikishyne, May 5, 2015 - Residents receive potatoes from the authorities of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.



Donetsk, May 17, 2015 - Nameless graves are marked with numbers in a pro-Russian military graveyard.



Pervomaisk, July 11, 2015 - Russian-backed Cossacks attend a swearing-in ceremony for new recruits.



Pervomaisk, July 11, 2015 - A new recruit kisses a Cossack sword.



Zholobok, July 12, 2015 - Members of the Russian-backed Prizrak (Ghost) brigade travel to the frontline in an armored vehicle.



Zholobok, July 12, 2015 - A member of the pro-Russian Prizrak (Ghost) brigade climbs out of a trench on the frontline.



Zholobok, July 12, 2015 - A Russian-backed separatist cleans his weapon on the frontline.



Luhansk, July 11, 2015 - A child plays in a destroyed Ukrainian tank tagged with a propaganda slogan by Russian-backed separatists.



Luhansk, January 02, 2016 - The remains of Ukrainian soldiers still rest under the rubble of Luhansk's airport.





Avdiivka, January 08, 2015, A Ukrainian serviceman rests in an abandoned residential building on the frontline.



Pisky, January 07, 2016 - A machine gun belonging to Ukrainian forces is ready to target Russian-backed separatists on the frontline.



Avdiivka, January 08, 2016 - A Ukrainian serviceman stands guard in a trench on the frontline.



Pisky, January 07, 2016 - A resident rides his bicycle through a Ukrainian roadblock on the frontline.

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Journalist Eva Cukier wrote the texts for 'War in Ukraine'. She holds degrees in Slavic languages and political science and has extensive working experience in Ukraine and Russia.

Currently she works as Eastern Europe Editor for the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad.

