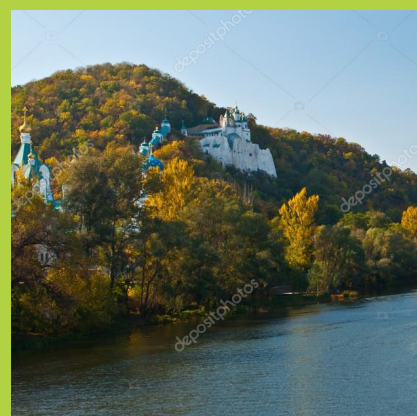


# Map of the actors in the Donbas conflict: **LOCAL ACTORS**

▣ Yuriy Boyko's group

▣ Serhii Shakhov's group

▣ Rinat Akhmetov's group







This analytical review of the actors of the conflict in Donbass was prepared in the framework of the "Map of Conflict" subproject of the CivilM+ civil society platform.

The overall goal of the work on the "Map of Conflict" is to identify the actors and groups involved in the conflict in Donbass at various levels, as well as their influence, mutual relationships, interests, fears, and expectations. It is assumed that this analysis will help identify possible ways of influencing various stakeholders in order to resolve the conflict.

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# 1. Luhansk region

## 1.1. Yuriy Boyko's group



### **1.1.1. Yuriy Boyko — Member of Parliament of Ukraine, leader of the OPZZh party**

The leader of the Opposition Platform — For Life (OPZZh) party Yuriy Boyko comes from Luhansk region, where he established himself as a specialist and from where he began his career as a high-ranking official. In the past, he headed large enterprises of the chemical industry located in the region — Zarya plant in the city of Rubizhne and Lysychansk refinery. The chemical industry of Luhansk region is concentrated in the so-called 'chemical triangle' — the cities of Sievierodonetsk, Lysychansk and Rubizhne, which are located in the territory controlled by Ukraine. These cities can be considered the patrimony of Yuriy Boyko. Boyko has connections and staff representing his interests there.

In Rubizhne, Yuriy Boyko controls Zarya chemical plant that produces a wide range of chemical products, including explosives. The plant actually is owned by the state and is a defense industry enterprise. However, the structure controlled by Yuriy Boyko (NPP Zarya LLC) rents the most profitable workshops of the state-owned plant, and thus actually parasitizes on the strategic state-owned enterprise. It is especially worth noting that Boyko's plant produces explosives for military needs, thus, Boyko himself who criticizes the Ukrainian authorities for making money in the war, de facto profits from the war.

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Yuriy Boyko's group is the most influential in the region. The politicians who are part of the group regularly manifest their pro-Russian sentiment, and want the occupied regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (ORDLO) returned under Ukraine's control, as they count on the pro-Russian voters.

Yuriy Boyko, like the OPZZh party as a whole, advocates for direct negotiations with representatives of the so-called "LPR" and "DPR," and the reintegration of Donbas on Russia's terms (that is, with granting these regions broad autonomy within Ukraine).

*"We are in favor of direct negotiations, for our prisoners to return home. And we will do all this, because we are not afraid for our ratings ... Having won the elections, we will first of all strive for the inclusion of parliamentary representatives in the negotiating group in Minsk. We will initiate the start of direct negotiations in Kyiv — Donetsk — Luhansk — Moscow quadrangle,"* Boyko said before the 2019 parliamentary elections.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that it is the OPZZh party and Yuriy Boyko who will personally benefit most from the return of the uncontrolled territory under Ukrainian control, since they are interested in increasing the number of the pro-Russian electorate.

<sup>1</sup> <https://interfax.com.ua/news/political/593693.html>





### 1.1.2. Oleksandr Chernetsov — Director of Zarya plant (Rubizhne)

Yury Boyko controls the NPP Zarya LLC through his manager Oleksandr Chernetsov.<sup>2</sup>

Chernetsov is not only the director of the plant, but also a member of Yuriy Boyko's political team. In the past elections, Chernetsov ran for parliament from the OPZZh party in the 112<sup>th</sup> single-mandate constituency in the city of Rubizhne. But despite the support from Yuriy Boyko who personally came to the city and campaigned for Chernetsov, the latter lost.

Oleksandr Chernetsov's attitude towards the conflict in Donbas does not differ from the attitude of Yuriy Boyko and the OPZZh party. Chernetsov emphasizes that in a war, Donbas cannot develop normally and advocates peace at the price of concessions to Russia.



### 1.1.3. Serhii Dunaiev — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (OPZZh)

Unlike Oleksandr Chernetsov, Serhii Dunaiev while being a member of Boyko's team, can be considered a completely independent actor.

Serhii Dunaiev comes from the criminal circles of Lysychansk. He is a businessman who controlled several large enterprises in the city, which he later brought to bankruptcy. In the mid-2000s, Dunaiev leased the integral property complex of Lysychansk glass factory named Proletary, but by 2013, he had accumulated large debts and brought the enterprise to bankruptcy. The plant is currently not working and is being dismantled for scrap.

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In 2009–2012, Dunaiev was the mayor of Lysychansk. Since 2012, he is a Member of Parliament. Currently, he is a member of the OPZZh faction. Dunaiev's standing in Lysychansk is still strong, as he controls the majority in the City Council, as well as the local TV channel Accent.

Dunaiev's attitude to the conflict in Donbas corresponds to the position of the OPZZh party. He is in favor of direct negotiations with representatives of the so called "L/DPR."

*"Against the background of daily reports on the number of cases of the virus, for some reason they forget about the number of deaths from the war in the east of the country. It comes from the fact that the authorities simply forgot about them and do not seek to enter into dialogue with the uncontrolled territories in order to reintegrate Donbas and restore peace. All decisions of the current government are aimed at meeting the requirements of the International Monetary Fund,"* Dunaiev said in a statement on the website of the OPZZh party.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.zaryachem.com/ru/press-centre/759>

<sup>3</sup> [https://zagittya.com.ua/news/novosti/sergej\\_dunaiev\\_vosstanovlenie\\_mira\\_bylo\\_i\\_ostajotsja\\_glavnym\\_usloviem\\_razvitija\\_ukrainy.html](https://zagittya.com.ua/news/novosti/sergej_dunaiev_vosstanovlenie_mira_bylo_i_ostajotsja_glavnym_usloviem_razvitija_ukrainy.html)



#### **1.1.4. Yulii Yoffe — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (OPZH)**

An 80-year-old veteran of Ukrainian politics, a 'red director' who headed the mines back in Soviet times.

He is a long-term political and business partner of Yuriy Boyko. Enterprises connected with Yoffe have repeatedly won large tenders for public procurement during the period when Yuriy Boyko was in power.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, Yulii Yoffe is a Member of Parliament from the OPZZh party.

His attitude towards the conflict in Donbas generally corresponds to the position of the party. But the MP himself almost does not give interviews and rarely makes statements.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://far.chesno.org/case/834/>



## 1.2. Serhii Shakhov's group



### 1.2.1. Serhii Shakhov — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (Our region (Nash Krai), electoral district 114)

Serhii Shakhov and his group are the main competitors of Yuriy Boyko's group in the struggle for influence in Luhansk region. Shakhov's influence increased sharply after the outbreak of hostilities and the occupation of a part of Luhansk region. As a result of the loss of part of the territory of Luhansk region and the collapse of the Party of Regions, the political situation in the region has seriously changed, and many groups of influence have lost their power (for example, the Yefremov's group). The resulting vacuum is what the Shakhov's team seeks to fill.

Shakhov's group operates in the Luhansk region under the brand of the party Our region this party does not actually exist as a single all-Ukrainian force, and is something like a franchise. In different regions, local influence groups operate under this franchise.

The Shakhov's group, unlike Boyko's group, does not adhere to a certain ideology and mainly uses populist slogans, and also engages in bribery of voters. Before the 2019 elections, Shakhov and his affiliates openly distributed sugar and cereals to the pensioners. In this regard, the fall in the standard of living in Luhansk region as a result of hostilities played into the hands of the politician, as poor people are easier to bribe.<sup>5</sup> This tactic is paying off. In 2019, it helped Shakhov and his affiliates win elections in four out of six single-mandate districts of Luhansk region.<sup>6</sup>

In the local elections in 2015, Shakhov's team was also able to bring their factions to the local councils of the cities of Luhansk region and claim control over the current regional center — Sievierodonetsk. In this city, Shakhov is fighting for influence with a group of local businessman Ihor Butkov.

Shakhov, unlike Yuriy Boyko and the MPs from the OPZZh party, takes a strong pro-Ukrainian position. According to him, he provided assistance to the Ukrainian army and volunteer battalions.<sup>7</sup>

Serhii Shakhov considers Russia to be a party to the conflict in Donbas and believes that it is possible to end the war through direct negotiations with Vladimir Putin.

*"If I were President, I would fly to Russia and talk directly with Russia — without any intermediaries, because we are an independent country and can engage in a dialogue on our own behalf,"* Serhii Shakhov said in 2019.<sup>8</sup>

5 <https://daily.rbc.ua/rus/show/sergey-shahov-moskva-goda-unichtozhala-ugolnyy-1430158415.html>

6 <https://delo.ua/economyandpoliticsinukraine/vybory-v-radu-pobedu-po-mazhoritarke-v-lugansk-356454/>

7 <https://daily.rbc.ua/rus/show/sergey-shahov-moskva-goda-unichtozhala-ugolnyy-1430158415.html>

8 <https://ukranews.com/news/640074-nardep-shahov-schitaet-cto-dlya-mira-na-donbasse-nuzhen-pryamoj-dialog-s-rossiej-smi>



### **1.2.2. Serhii Velmozhnyi — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (Our region, electoral district 112)**

Unlike the actors from Yuriy Boyko's group, Shakhov's affiliates are not independent actors and do not enjoy influence apart from their leader. In this sense, the Shakhov group resembles the Servant of the People party of President Zelenskyi where the party's rating is based on the authority and influence of the leader.

Three MPs from the Shakhov's group — Serhii Velmozhnyi (district 112), Oleksandr Lukashev (district 113) and Oleksandr Sukhov (district 107) — won in their single-mandate districts thanks to the massive distribution of food (that is, indirect bribery) rather than because of original agenda and achievements in any industry. Their biographies are scarce and little is known about them.

Serhii Velmozhnyi is the owner of Velmozhnyi and Partners law firm, and before the election he worked as an assistant to the MP Serhii Shakhov. His attitude to the conflict in Donbas generally coincides with the attitude of Serhii Shakhov himself.

Serhii Velmozhnyi believes that Ukraine must first take control of the border between the ORDLO and Russia, and only then hold elections in the uncontrolled territory in accordance with the Steinmeier formula. At the same time, all IDPs who were forced to leave the region must participate in the elections.

*"The Steinmeier Formula is the way to peace in Donbas. It is necessary in order to take control of the borders of Ukraine, after which to hold elections in Donbas according to the laws of Ukraine with the presence of representatives of the region and the national authorities. However, the elections shall only take place after people who fled because of the war return home. It is necessary to hold elections after people rebuild their homes and return to normal life,"* said Velmozhnyi.



### **1.2.3. Oleksandr Sukhov — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (Our region, electoral district 107)**

Oleksandr Sukhov is a colleague and partner of Serhii Velmozhnyi. Prior to the election, he worked at Velmozhnyi and Partners law firm and was an assistant to the MP Serhii Shakhov.

Sukhov expressed his attitude regarding the conflict in Donbas in the vaguest words about the need to achieve peace. The MP won his electoral district thanks to the distribution of sugar and cereals.



#### 1.2.4. Oleksandr Lukashev — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (OPZZh, electoral district 113)

Before becoming a MP, Oleksandr Lukashev worked as a lawyer and taught at the Yaroslav the Wise National Law University.

Like other members of the Shakhov's team, Lukashev won through bribery. In his district, before the elections, pensioners could receive 'charitable aid' in the

form of 5 kilograms of sugar. The packages were printed with the inscription "Peace to our land. Lukashev O.O. Serhii Shakhov's team."

Lukashev's pre-election rhetoric was vague and populist, and in general his agenda can be described as "for all the good things and against all the bad things." Lukashev noted that *"the main demand of voters in district 113 is the restoration of peace,"* and also stated that he was going to the Parliament to *"revive the destroyed welfare state."*



#### 1.3. Serhii Haidai — Head of Luhansk Regional State Administration

Head of the Luhansk Regional State Administration. Previously he was the Head of Mukachevo District State Administration. He is considered a member of the team of former Luhansk Governor Hennadyi Moskal.

As a representative of the vertical of presidential power, Serhii Haidai publicly expresses the same attitude on the conflict in Donbas as Volodymyr Zelenskyi and

generally supports the official course. In particular, Haidai calls the ORDLO the "occupied territories" and believes that their reintegration in Ukraine will be difficult.

*"We need to integrate the occupied territories and people who have been brain-washed around the clock for five years. Therefore, we need to walk a long way and convince these Luhansk residents that we do not divide Ukrainians into 'right' and 'wrong',"* he said in an interview.

Serhii Haidai is in conflict with the Member of Parliament from the Servant of the People party Maksym Tkachenko, who unofficially oversees Luhansk region. This fact complicates the work of the political force in the region. At the moment, Haidai and Tkachenko pay for publications in regional media, Telegram channels and social networks criticizing each other.



#### 1.4. Maksym Tkachenko — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (Servant of the People)

Member of Parliament from the Servant of the People party who unofficially oversees Luhansk region, but due to a conflict with the Governor he could not take control of the situation. Since the conflict with Serhii Haidai has not yet been settled, and the local elections will take place in few months, it is rather difficult to predict how Tkachenko will get out of this situation.

Until 2014, Maksym Tkachenko was organizing concerts and tours of famous artists in Luhansk, and was far from politics. Therefore, he did not have the necessary experience and knowledge to organize the relevant processes. Since the parliamentary elections in 2019 and since the Servant of the People party came to power, a strong regional organization of this political force has not been set up in Luhansk region. At the moment, the ruling party in the region still does not have a clear understanding of how the lists for local elections will be formed, which candidates will be included there, and how the process will be organized.

Maksym Tkachenko frames what is happening in Donbas the Russian aggression, and believes that after the return of these regions under the control of Ukraine, people who have not taken part in illegal actions should work in the local authorities.

*"In the temporarily occupied territories of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, elections will sooner or later be held under Ukrainian legislation with the participation of international organizations, and our fellow citizens of Ukraine living in the uncontrolled part and internally displaced persons who return home will make their choice. And as a result of this choice, the current heads of hospitals, schools, universities, theaters of Luhansk, Donetsk and other cities may find themselves in the new Ukrainian Luhansk and Donetsk local authorities. These are those who did not take any part in illegal actions, but remained on that territory as hostages of the situation ... Therefore, I ask you not to divide the country, but to sew it together — after all, this is our chance to free the territory of Ukraine from the aggressor,"* Tkachenko wrote on his Facebook page.



#### 1.5. Ihor Butkov — member of the City Council of Sievierodonetsk

Ihor Butkov is a businessman from Sievierodonetsk who has increased his influence in recent years and has come to be regarded as the unofficial 'master' of the city. Butkov himself is a member of the City Council and has no positions in the executive branch. At the same time, remaining in the shadows, he actually controls the City Council.

The council members controlled by Butkov are part of the Sievierodonchany council group. With their help, Butkov managed to dismiss the city Mayor Valentyn Ka-



zakov, who was elected in 2015, and put his secretary in the leadership of the City Council who began to perform functions of the head of Sievierodonetsk.

Igor Butkov's area of interest is currently limited to his hometown, so he rarely speaks out on general Ukrainian political topics. He expresses his attitude to the conflict in Donbas rather abstractly. Butkov believes that Donbas needs peace, but does not go into details of how he sees the process of achieving it.



### 1.6. Serhii Shilin — Mayor of Lysychansk

The current Mayor of Lysychansk who won the elections in 2015. Initially, he was a protege of Serhii Dunaiev who helped Shilin in the elections. However, later Shilin and Dunaiev split, and at present, the Mayor of Lysychansk is in a state of enmity with the group of Yuriy Boyko. At the same time, Shilin does not control the City Council as its members continue to be affiliated with Dunaiev and Boyko.

The councillors controlled by Dunaiev made several attempts to dismiss the Mayor (through the same procedure as Butkov did in Sievierodonetsk), but every time they did not manage to get enough votes for this. Due to the confrontation between the Mayor and the council members, Lysychansk is managed extremely ineffectively. The city's roads are in poor condition, the city suffers heating problems in winter and water supply problems in summer. The councillors and Mayor Shilin are shifting responsibility for the problems of Lysychansk onto each other.

The interests of Mayor Shilin are generally limited to Lysychansk, and he speaks little on general Ukrainian political topics. Shilin's attitude to the conflict is limited to general words about the need to conclude peace.



### 1.7. Serhii Khortiv — Mayor of Rubizhne

Mayor of the city of Rubizhne. Initially, like Serhii Shilin, he was considered a protege of the group of Yuriy Boyko, but over time he broke off relations with this group and is now in a state of enmity.

In 2014, Serhii Khortiv supported the illegal formations of the so called "LPR" and took part in blocking the advance of the Ukrainian military through Rubizhne on 22 May 2014. Then, the advance of the Ukrainian Armed Forces convoy was blocked by civilians, after which the

military were shelled from an ambush by the militants. Several soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were killed.

Despite numerous testimonies from local residents who told about Khortiv's participation in this incident, he did not bear any responsibility for this. After being elected mayor of Rubizhne, Khortiv no longer expressed openly anti-Ukrainian statements and made no illegal actions.

Before breaking up with Boyko's team, Serhii Khortiv took part in political actions of his political force and advocated peace at the cost of concessions to Russia and granting the ORDLO broad autonomy within Ukraine. After the break, he stopped commenting on the issues of war and peace.



### **1.8. Volodymyr Struk — ex-Member of Parliament of Ukraine, businessman**

Former MP from the Party of Regions and businessman from the village of Yuvileinyi (now the territory controlled by the so called "LPR"). In the spring of 2014, he openly supported the militants, including financing the "militia" of the village of Yuvileinyi, which he openly reported in television reports on the TV channel he controls. He attended meetings with the so-called "people's governor" Valeryi Bolotov, as well as with the Member of Parliament from the Party of Regions Oleh

Tsariov who supported the militants.

However, after the outbreak of hostilities, Volodymyr Struk moved to the Government-controlled territory and was able to avoid responsibility for supporting separatism. In 2019, Struk tried to run for Parliament in the 113th single-mandate district in Luhansk region. In this district, Struk owns a brewery in the city of Kreminna, and he counted on the support of residents, but lost and took only third place.

In response to journalist questions about cooperation with the militants in 2014, Volodymyr Struk replied that he was not a separatist and was a patriot of Ukraine.

*"How can you say that I am a separatist? I love my country, I love my native Ukraine,"* he said in 2019.



## 2. Donetsk region

### 2.1. Rinat Akhmetov's group



#### 2.1.1. Rinat Akhmetov — oligarch

The richest person in Ukraine, the owner of SCM, DTEK, Metinvest and Schakhtar Football Club, Akhmetov de facto remains the most influential person in Donetsk region, where he controls a number of large, city-forming enterprises with thousands of employees.

Rinat Akhmetov's orbit of influence includes a number of recognizable politicians and business people, the so-called "Donetsk group," some of whom are quite self-sufficient and independent actors.

Akhmetov is the owner of a number of large enterprises in the uncontrolled territory, and therefore is interested in regaining control over them. In addition, the Opposition Bloc political party controlled by Akhmetov's group can count on the support of the residents of ORDLO and therefore, in order to increase his political influence, Akhmetov is also interested in the reintegration of ORDLO.

In the spring of 2014, Rinat Akhmetov secretly supported the formations of the so called "DPR" and so called "LPR" and advocated for Ukraine to negotiate with them, while rejecting the possibility of forceful suppression of pro-Russian protests. However, after the armed groups seized several assets belonging to Akhmetov, his rhetoric changed dramatically, and he began to publicly oppose the so called "L/DPR" formations. But at that time the situation in the region was no longer controlled by the businessman or the Ukrainian authorities.

After Ukraine lost control over the ORDLO, Akhmetov for some time still controlled his assets in these areas and tried to influence events in the non-Government-controlled territory. With the help of his charitable foundation Let's Help, he distributed humanitarian aid to the residents of ORDLO, thus gaining the loyalty of the local population. But in March 2017, armed groups banned the activities of a charitable foundation in the ORDLO.

Rinat Akhmetov believes that Donbas should return to Ukraine through negotiations.

*"Donbas is in his heart forever, and he sees it happy only as part of a united Ukraine. Mr. Akhmetov is sure that it is critical that everyone should come to peace, and peace should be sought at the negotiating table,"* the statement which was circulated on behalf of Akhmetov by his press secretary reads.



### **2.1.2. Borys Kolesnikov — ex-Member of Parliament of Ukraine, business partner of Rinat Akhmetov**

Businessman and politician Borys Kolesnikov have friendly and business relations with Rinat Akhmetov. However, at the same time, Kolesnikov remains a completely independent actor and has significant financial resources, the amount of which is estimated at several hundred million dollars.

In the past, Kolesnikov was considered one of the most influential political actors in Donetsk region, but in recent years, his political influence has declined.

While in 2014, Kolesnikov was able to help his protege Denys Omelianovych win the single-mandate district in Kostyantynivka and Druzhkivka (where Kolesnikov and Akhmetov own large factories), in 2019 even Kolesnikov himself could not win elections in this district and lost to the Mayor of Druzhkovka Valeryi Hnatenko.

Like Rinat Akhmetov, Borys Kolesnikov owns assets in the uncontrolled territory of Donbas and is interested in seeing the ORDLO back under Ukrainian control. In addition, Kolesnikov has business interests in the Russian Federation and takes a pronounced pro-Russian stance. Since the early 2000s, the politician has consistently defended the idea of federalization of Ukraine and believes that in order to achieve peace with Russia, it is necessary to agree to Moscow's conditions and consolidate a non-aligned status (with regards to NATO) in the Constitution.

*"It is necessary to formalize the non-aligned status of Ukraine in the Constitution. Our country has a very advantageous geographical position, but we are being used as a contact line. The role of Ukraine is to be a bridge connecting the West and the East. And it is the non-aligned status that will allow us to become an equal partner of Europe, Russia and Asian countries,"* said Borys Kolesnikov in 2019.<sup>9</sup>



### **2.1.3. Vadym Novynskyi — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (Opposition Block, electoral district 57), business partner of Rinat Akhmetov**

Like Borys Kolesnikov, Vadym Novynskyi is a business partner of Rinat Akhmetov, with whom he owns Metinvest. He is one of the richest persons in Ukraine. According to the financial company Dragon Capital, Novynskyi's fortune is estimated at \$1.7 billion.

In the 2019 parliamentary elections, he ran for the Verkhovna Rada in the single-mandate district in Mariupol, and won the elections.

Novynskyi is a native of Russia, and advocates for close cooperation with the Russian Federation and the implementation of the Minsk agreements in the Russian interpretation of this document, which involves first holding elections in the ORDLO, and then transferring control over the border to Ukraine.

<sup>9</sup> <https://dnl.dn.ua/news/politicheskyy-vzglyad/boris-kolesnikov-oppozitsionnyy-blok-vernet-mir-donbassu>

In addition, in December 2019, Novynskyi introduced his own bill on the special status of Donbas, in which he proposed to create a separate administrative-territorial unit on the basis of ORDLO — the interregional territorial association Donbas with its executive authority (the executive committee of Donbas interregional territorial association).<sup>10</sup>



#### **2.1.4. Tetiana Bakhtieieva — ex-Member of Parliament of Ukraine**

Ex-Member of Parliament of several convocations from the Party of Regions from Donetsk. She could not get into Parliament in the 2019 elections, but she continues to actively participate in regional politics. In January 2020, Bakhtieieva, together with other former MPs from the Party of Regions who lost their influence after the events of 2014, launched the NGO Compatriots — People Born in Donbas in Donetsk region. Bakhtieieva

proclaimed that the main goal of the organization is to achieve peace in Donbas, reintegrate the region into Ukraine and restore it.

However, Tetiana Bakhtieieva's organization was not noted for any specific actions. And after several visibility events, it stopped all its activity.

Tetiana Bakhtieieva stands for direct negotiations between the Ukrainian authorities and representatives of the illegal formations of the so called "L/DPR," for granting Donbas a special status and lifting the economic blockade from the ORDLO.



#### **2.1.5. Musa Mahomedov — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (electoral district 45)**

Former CEO of Avdiivka coke plant owned by Rinat Akhmetov. In 2019, Mahomedov became an MP of the Verkhovna Rada in electoral district 45 that includes Avdiivka.

Unlike other MPs from the Akhmetov's group, Mahomedov has pro-Ukrainian views, calls Russia an aggressor country, and considers the special status of Donbas a temporary compromise, the ultimate goal of which should be the full integration of the region into Ukraine according to Ukrainian laws.

*"We must build a transitional model that can function for a certain period of time under the control of international peacekeeping forces, followed by full integration according to Ukrainian law,"* Mahomedov said in an interview with Donbas Realia in autumn 2019.

<sup>10</sup> [http://opposition.com.ua/ru/news/-vadim-novinskiy-predlozhit-novuyu-redaktsiyu-zakona-ob-osobom-statuse-donbassa\\_4115/](http://opposition.com.ua/ru/news/-vadim-novinskiy-predlozhit-novuyu-redaktsiyu-zakona-ob-osobom-statuse-donbassa_4115/)



### **2.1.6. Vadym Boichenko — Mayor of Mariupol**

He is the Mayor of Mariupol where two largest metallurgical plants in Ukraine are located — MMKI and Azovstal, owned by Rinat Akhmetov and Vadym Novynskyi. In the past, he was a top manager of both plants.

In the 2019 elections, being the Mayor of Mariupol, he openly campaigned for the Opposition Bloc party controlled by Akhmetov and Novynskyi and personally for Vadym Novynskyi in the single-mandate electoral district.

In 2016, Vadym Boichenko advocated for granting the ORDLO a special status and consolidating it in the Constitution, which generally coincides with the position of Moscow.<sup>11</sup>



### **2.1.7. Ruslan Trebushkin — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (electoral district 50), ex-mayor of Myrnohrad**

Former mayor of Pokrovsk (formerly Krasnoarmiisk) and Myrnohrad (formerly Dymytrov) of Donetsk region. Now he is a Member of Parliament from the Opposition Bloc party controlled by Rinat Akhmetov and Vadym Novynskyi.

In 2014, he openly supported the so called "DPR" militants, opposed the ATO and called the Ukrainian government a 'junta.'

*"The reality is that today our civilians are being physically destroyed, and behind this is the junta that seized power and unleashed a war against the Ukrainian people. We were called the bandits, terrorists and traitors, and they unleashed a large-scale Ukrainian propaganda. As a result, residents of central and western Ukraine fully support the ATO in the southeast of the country. People are being brainwashed, because the majority of Ukrainians today consider it quite normal to kill civilians,"* Trebushkin said on 14 May at the 77th session of then-Dymytrov City Council.

However, after the Ukrainian military regained control over Dymytrov and Krasnoarmiisk, Trebushkin abruptly changed his rhetoric and began to take a patriotic pro-Ukrainian position. In 2018, on his initiative, a monument to the Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych, the author of the Christmas Carol song, was erected in Pokrovsk. In 2019, Trebushkin said that the 'Ukrainization' of Donbas would help attract investment to the region.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <http://novosti.dn.ua/news/257533-mehr-maryupolya-vystupaet-za-predostavlenye-donbassu-osobogo-statusa>

<sup>12</sup> <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/561626.html>



## 2.2. Yuriy Boyko's group

Yuriy Boyko comes from Luhansk region and has never had any influence in Donetsk region. However, recently, in connection with Boyko's transformation into a national-scale politician, a group of people was developed in Donetsk region that is guided by Boyko and the party he leads (OPZZh) that has a fairly high rating in the region.



### **2.2.1. Natalia Korolevska — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (OPZZh) and Yuriy Solod — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (OPZZHh, electoral district 47)**

Natalia Korolevska and her husband Yuriy Solod are from Luhansk region. However, after the events of 2014, most of their assets remained in the uncontrolled territory. After that, Solod and Korolevska moved their political activity to Donetsk region — specifically, to Sloviansk. In this city, Yuriy Solod twice managed to win elections in the single-mandate district, mainly thanks to his wife whose recognition is much higher than that of Solod.

Considering that the married couple had property and business interests in the ORDLO (before the war, Solod and Korolevska were engaged in the coal and scrap metal trade), the politicians are personally interested in being able to work in certain areas again.

Both Korolevska and Solod are members of the parliamentary faction of the OPZZh party and support the official line of this party on resolving the conflict in Donbas, which generally coincides with the position of Russia. Namely, they are in favor of granting ORDLO a special status within Ukraine in the form in which Moscow wants it.

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*"We all have one goal — to establish peace in Ukraine, so we must make every effort to implement the Minsk agreements. If they spell out the issues of granting special status to certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, then we must get together and take the necessary decisions for the sake of peace,"* Natalia Korolevska said.



### **2.2.2. Valerii Hnatenko — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (OPZZh, electoral district 49)**

Former Mayor of Druzhkivka, and now an MP from the OPZZh party. In 2014, as the Mayor of the city, he collaborated with the militants of the Russian saboteur Igor Girkin, spoke at separatist rallies and helped the militants organize an illegal referendum in the city on secession from Ukraine.

In 2019, he ran in the single-mandate district for the Parliament and won, beating Borys Kolesnikov.

Like the leaders of the OPZZh, he advocates for direct negotiations with the so called "DPR" and "LPR" militants and granting of special status to ORDLO on Russia's terms.



### **2.2.3. Nelia Shtepa — ex-Mayor of Sloviansk**

Former mayor of Sloviansk, widely known because of the events of the spring of 2014. For cooperation with the so called "DPR" militants, Nelia Shtepa came under investigation and was in jail for several years, but she was not sentenced for 6 years.

Due to her stay in a pre-trial detention center, she was unable to participate in the mayoral elections in 2015. However, she is still popular in Sloviansk and has a high

rating. In 2019, by agreement with Natalia Korolevska and Yuriy Boyko, she did not run for Parliament in the single-mandate district in Sloviansk and supported the husband of Korolevska, Yuriy Solod.

In her public speeches, Shtepa expressed her support for the OPZZh party and stated that it was this political force that offered the most feasible action plan for the return of Donbas.



### **2.3. Oleh Nedava — ex-Member of Parliament of Ukraine**

Former MP from the Petro Poroshenko Bloc faction. A native of Yenakiievo, associated with Yuriy Ivaniushchenko (crime boss from Yenakiievo, ex-MP from the Party of Regions).

In Donetsk region, he heads the franchise of the party Our Region. Competes with Natalia Korolevska and Yuriy Solod for control over Sloviansk. In the 2019 elections, he ran for Parliament in the single-mandate district in this city, but lost.

During the election campaign, Nedava has repeatedly made statements that he intends to unite Donbas and called on the authorities to fulfill the Minsk agreements. But he did not offer any specifics and limited himself to general statements.



### **2.4. Maksym Yefimov — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (electoral district 48), a large businessman from Kramatorsk**

A large businessman from Kramatorsk, a rising star of the Ukrainian oligarchy. In the last convocation of the Parliament, Yefimov was a member of the faction of the



Petro Poroshenko Bloc. In 2019, he won the single-mandate district in Kramatorsk as a self-nominated candidate.

In 2018–2019, Maksym Yefimov became the owner of a number of assets that previously belonged to Oleksandr Yanukovych, including Donbasenergo.

Currently, he is the most rated and influential politician in Kramatorsk and claims control over the city. Yefimov expects to fight for Kramatorsk in future local elections, having promoted his affiliates to power.

Yefimov considers himself more a businessman than a politician, rarely makes political statements and does not like publicity. Yefimov did not make high-profile and dubious statements regarding the conflict in Donbas, he took a generally moderate pro-Ukrainian attitude throughout the conflict.



## 2.5. Heorhii Skudar — ex-Member of Parliament of Ukraine, owner of NKMZ

Heorhii Skudar is a typical 'red director' who has successfully privatized the largest Kramatorsk plant — Novokramatorsk Machine Building Plant (NKMZ). In the past, he was considered the most influential person in Kramatorsk and was elected several times as an MP from the Party of Regions. However, recently, due to his age, he lost the championship in the city to Maksym Efimov.

In 2014, Skudar's NKMZ plant was engaged in the repair of equipment of the so called "DPR militants," for which the plant's management was accused by the SBU of aiding terrorists. However, eventually the case ended in nothing, and nothing was proved.

Heorhii Skudar always adhered to the pro-Russian sentiment due to the fact that the products of the NKMZ plant were mainly in demand in the countries of the former USSR. In his opinion, the conflict in Donbas should be resolved as soon as possible at the cost of concessions to Russia so that trade relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation would resume and the products of Ukrainian enterprises could be sold in Russia.

At the same time, in 2014, when the situation in Donetsk region was still uncertain, Skudar stressed that if Kramatorsk ended up in the conditions of an unrecognized state, it would be disastrous for its industry.

*"If there is only a buffer state here like Transnistria or Karabakh, then for NKMZ, an enterprise that operates on the world market, it will be a disaster. For manufacturers of small and uncomplicated products, this will not be a problem. And we ship goods weighing 300 tons. And such a situation will be absolutely lifeless for us,"* stated the NKMZ owner..



## 2.6. Anatolii and Serhii Blyzniuk — politicians and businessmen from Kramatorsk

The Blyzniuk clan is the third influential force in Kramatorsk. Anatolii Blyzniuk was one of the most significant actors in Donetsk region in the 2000s, when he headed the regional council and the regional administration, but gradually lost his influence. His son Serhii tried to build a political career and ran for Parliament in the single-mandate in his hometown, however, he lost and after that stopped political activity, focusing on business. The Blyzniuk family continues to own a number of large assets in Kramatorsk and claims political influence, but at the same time does not cooperate with any of the prominent political forces.



Anatolii Bliznyuk in his interviews spoke in favor of Donbas remaining as part of a "united, unitary Ukraine," that is, in fact, he opposed the Russian scenario of legalizing the so called "D/LPR" in form of broad autonomy.

"I believe everything will get better. We will definitely see Donbas a part of the united Ukraine. No other way," said Anatolii Bliznyuk in an interview with 112 channel in 2015.

## 2.7. Oleksii Reva — Mayor of Bakhmut

Mayor of Bakhmut (formerly Artiomovsk), who has been in charge for 30 years (since Soviet times).

During the events of the spring of 2014, he provided tacit support to the separatists and helped to hold an illegal "referendum" in the city. When the militants removed the Ukrainian flag from the City Council building and raised the so called "DPR" flag in its place, Reva agreed with this, calling it a compromise.

Later, during the fighting around the city, Reva left Bakhmut for some time. He returned to the city after

the situation had stabilized and began to take a pronounced pro-Ukrainian position.

In the 2019 presidential elections, he openly supported the then-current President, Petro Poroshenko, explaining this by the fact that he considers the decentralization reform to be very effective.

*"I have decided for myself. I have made a decision and I will vote for the current President of Ukraine — Petro Poroshenko. To put it simply, mayors no longer walk with outstretched hands and do not travel to Kyiv to beg for funds. Decentralization allowed Bakhmut to receive enough funds to implement infrastructure projects,"* said Reva.



During Poroshenko's presidency, Reva supported the official point of view of Ukraine regarding options for resolving the conflict in Donbas. After the change of power, he did not speak publicly on the topic of conflict settlement.



## **2.8. Pavlo Kyrylenko — Head of Donetsk Regional State Administration**

During his entire tenure as the Head of Donetsk Regional State Administration, Pavlo Kyrylenko did not become a prominent political figure. He can be called a typical technocrat whose public activity fits into the framework of strict officialdom.

Like in the neighboring Luhansk region, there is no active cell of the Servant of the People party in Donetsk region, and the ruling party behaves rather passively in the region. At the same time, the Governor does not deal with party building issues and performs only technical functions assigned to him.

As a representative of the presidential vertical of power, Pavlo Kyrylenko expresses an official point of view regarding conflict resolution in Donbas.

*"The return of peace, occupied territories and prisoners of war is the main principle not only of the President of Ukraine, but also my position, which the staff of the Regional Administration supports,"* Kyrylenko said.

The Governor also stressed that the Ukrainian authorities would not sign any agreements with the so called "DPR" and "LPR."

Kyrylenko's influence in the region is currently limited to his position, and after his resignation, he will obviously cease to play any significant role in regional politics.



## **2.9. Serhii Syvokho — a public figure**

Serhii Syvokho is a popular TV presenter, and more recently, a politician, a member of the current President's team. He is widely recognized in the Donbas.

After the victory of Volodymyr Zelenskyi and his political force in the elections, Serhii Syvokho was predicted to have a successful political career and work with Donbas issues. In October 2019, Serhii Syvokho was appointed advisor to the Head of the National Security and Defense Council. However, the very first steps of Syvokho in the new field were extremely unsuccessful.

The rhetoric of Syvokho, who called the war in Donbas an "internal conflict" and spoke of the need to create a "platform of reconciliation," while ignoring the fact of the Russian military presence in eastern Ukraine, coincided with the main theses of Russian propaganda. It caused irritation and rejection among the patriotic public, which reacted indignantly to every statement by Syvokho. In addition, the society was annoyed by the very fact that a comedian and showman is involved in national security issues, as he evidently lacks knowledge about the field of work entrusted to him.

As a result, all the activity of Syvokho brought nothing but negative to the authorities, and ended with the dismissal of the showman from the post of adviser to the Head of the NSDC. The Head of the President's Office Andrii Yermak called Syvokho's work "clumsy."<sup>13</sup>

The showman himself promised to continue working on the "national platform of reconciliation," but so far, Syvokho has not demonstrated any activity in this direction. Also, it is not clear how exactly the creation of such an organization in Ukraine will lead to a settlement of the conflict with Russia, which de facto controls the ORDLO.



### 2.10. Serhii Taruta — Member of Parliament of Ukraine (Batkivshchyna party), businessman

A prominent businessman and politician, the former Governor of Donetsk region, now a Member of Parliament from the Batkivshchyna party. After the events of 2014, he suffered significant financial losses and lost its influence in Ukrainian politics. He made attempts to create his own political force "Osnova" aiming to win the votes of the inhabitants of the southeastern Ukraine. However, his political project did gain popularity.

In the spring of 2014, he was appointed the Head of Donetsk Regional State Administration, but was unable to keep the situation in the region. He tried unsuccessfully to cooperate with the so called "DPR" militants. He publicly announced cooperation with members of the armed formation Oplot of Oleksandr Zakharchenko on 8 May 2014.

"This is the group that is ready to help us in the protection of the main facilities today. This is the Oplot group, and today they are helping ensure security, including of Donbas TV channel. Therefore, we found a dialogue with them, we agreed with them that they will not participate in the seizures anywhere," Taruta said at his press conference.

After the Verkhovna Rada adopted the law on the special status of Donbas, Taruta said that the adopted law was vague and called it a betrayal.

*"And what about us? Did they sell us? Where are we, in Russia or Ukraine? What were we fighting for? What did our military die for? What is this new formation about? Where is its border in Ukraine? Will it remain open or not? We will have two Donetsk regions, or one Donetsk region, and inside there will be some kind of incomprehensible union of "DPR" and "LPR"? Are "DPR" and "LPR" terrorist organizations, or not? When will we see the arms laid down? We didn't see this either,"* said Serhii Taruta in the autumn of 2014.

Later Taruta called the Minsk agreements ineffective and suggested changing their format.

<sup>13</sup> Ермак: Сивохо — не зрадник, але його платформа була зроблена незграбно, [https://lb.ua/news/2020/06/17/460069\\_ermak\\_sivoho\\_predatel.html](https://lb.ua/news/2020/06/17/460069_ermak_sivoho_predatel.html)

*"Minsk does not work, meetings take place once or twice a month. I suggested Vienna format instead of Minsk. It is necessary to reformat the negotiation process, to ensure that there are special representatives from Germany, France and Ukraine. On an ongoing basis, negotiate in Vienna together with the OSCE and together with the European representative," Taruta said in 2017.*

Currently, Taruta oversees the direction of Donbas in the Batkivshchyna party and the organization of local elections in the region.







