Revolution in progress? Continuity and change in Ukrainian politics

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Ukraine has become known for episodes of dramatic political change. The massive street protests which forced President Viktor Yanukovych from power in 2014 have been dubbed the 'revolution of dignity' – a name which reflects Ukrainian citizens' desire for change that is deep, enduring and beneficial for the whole of society. Yet, the Ukrainian political system has also demonstrated considerable capacity to resist the kind of 'fundamental reordering' which the country requires if it is to become a stable and prosperous democracy.

To what extent have the old rules of Ukrainian politics been re-written since the 'revolution of dignity'? It has become axiomatic to say that Ukraine has achieved more reform progress since 2014 than in all the previous years of its independence. Moreover, the identity fault-line that used to divide voters in southern and eastern Ukraine from voters in the west and centre has been disrupted by Russia's gross violation of Ukrainian sovereignty in Donbas and Crimea: it seems that the Russian threat and territorial incursions have in some ways strengthened Ukrainian national unity. Familiar challenges do remain, however. Unaccountable elites continue to extract rents via weak and corrupt state institutions and state-owned enterprises. Vested interests influence political decision-making at the highest levels, which holds back reform and undermines public confidence in political processes.

This 'virtual' special issue of East European Politics & Societies and Cultures is an opportunity to reflect on recent developments in Ukrainian politics in the context of existing scholarship. Ten articles have been selected for the special issue from previous volumes of EEPS, grouped around two broad themes: (1) understandings of the Ukrainian nation, and (2) institutions of the Ukrainian political system. This introductory essay discusses how the selected articles contribute to our understanding of Ukrainian politics and society. Each article in the 'virtual' collection serves as a reference point against which change and continuity since the 'revolution of dignity' can be assessed.

Understandings of the Ukrainian nation: Identity, language and memories of the past

Yitzhak Brudny and Evgeny Finkel describe post-Soviet Ukraine as a place where different visions of national identity have coexisted, without any side becoming strong enough to impose a single vision on the country as a whole. They associate 'Western Ukrainian identity' with a desire for independence, use of the Ukrainian language, and strong anti-Communist feelings. 'Eastern Ukrainian identity', in contrast, assigned little importance to these issues and tended to coincide with support for close relations with Russia. Brudny and Finkel argue that competition between these visions generated an intense public discussion which ultimately strengthened Ukraine's democratic prospects, because it led substantial sections of the elite and public to adopt a democratic and liberal Ukrainian identity. They contrast Ukraine's experience against that of Russia, where a liberal-democratic national identity failed to become popular.

With remarkable foresight, Brudny and Finkel predicted in 2011 that President Yanukovych would fail to turn Ukraine into 'a softer version of Putin's Russia', because resistance from the elite and general population would force him to abandon his authoritarian agenda – perhaps via 'another Orange-style uprising'. The events of 2013–2014 seem to corroborate their argument that anti-imperial (anti-Russian) identification plays a vital role in keeping Ukraine from authoritarianism. Brudny and Finkel conclude by asserting that Ukraine is moving 'irreversibly' along a European path of development, which its Western-oriented elite has embraced with determination. In 2017, elite acceptance of the 'European path' as a declarative ideal certainly appears irreversible; Ukrainian politicians cannot plausibly promote the alternative 'Eurasian path' while Russian forces are occupying Crimea and destabilising Donbas. Whether the elite's declarative enthusiasm for Europe will eventually translate into the irreversible establishment of 'European-style' rule of law and social welfare, however, is more of an open question.

Ukraine's 'macro-regional' differences are also considered in an article by Oleksandr Reznik, who compares their role in the Orange revolution against their role in the more recent 'revolution of dignity'. Reznik observes that a similar proportion of Ukrainian citizens – roughly one fifth – participated in each protest movement. In both 2004 and 2013–2014, protest participants were significantly more likely to come from western and central regions than the south or east; they were more likely to support the idea of Ukraine joining the European Union, and to oppose the idea of integrating with Russia. However, two points of difference are noteworthy. 'Language identity' (identifying as a Ukrainian-speaker rather than a Russian-

speaker) was a significant predictor of participation in the Orange revolution, but it was not found to be significant in the 'revolution of dignity'. Meanwhile, support for multi-party democracy was a significant predictor of participation in the 'revolution of dignity', but not of participation in the Orange revolution. Reznik interprets this as evidence that the Orange revolution was primarily a 'cultural-ethnic' revolution, unlike the protests of 2013–2014, which were characterized by stronger commitment to democratic principles.

Whereas Brudny and Finkel see benefits in contestation over Ukrainian national identity, Reznik makes the point that deep-seated identity divisions will complicate democratization within Ukraine's 'original frontiers'. Losing control of Crimea and the separatist-held parts of Donbas has altered the dynamics of electoral politics in Kyiv. Roughly 1.8 million voters in Crimea are unlikely to take part in Ukrainian elections for the foreseeable future; a further 3.2 million voters used to be registered in those areas of Donbas where voting failed to take place in 2014 for security reasons. Even if some of the internally displaced people (IDPs) from these areas register to vote elsewhere, the political parties which used to appeal to Ukraine's 'pro-Russian' voters have still lost the heartland which previously provided up to 40 per cent of their support. It will no longer be possible for Ukrainian politicians (or their 'oligarch' backers) to secure power at the national level by campaigning on 'pro-Russian' positions in foreign and language policy; in fact, such positions are likely to be an electoral liability. One can hope that this will spur parties and candidates to start campaigning on substantive economic and social issues instead of geopolitical ones. However, a more immediate consequence is that the centre ground of Ukrainian politics is shifting westward. Residents of Donbas and Crimea, many of whom have 'cultural identities that are the opposite of those held by participants of the 'revolution of dignity', are likely to find this westward shift alienating, particularly after their immersion in the strident anti-Western propaganda which Russia and its proxies have been disseminating for the duration of the conflict.

Language has always been a major element of the 'East-West' axis in Ukrainian politics. The article in this collection by Volodymyr Kulyk provides a nuanced account of the 'diverse and rather ambivalent preferences' which Ukrainians held on language policy prior to the 'revolution of dignity'. Kulyk draws on survey and focus group data to argue that Russophones in Ukraine hoped for a policy of bilingualism which, in practice, would allow them to remain unilingual: by insisting on their right to rely exclusively on Russian, they made implementation of real

bilingualism problematic. Ukrainian-speakers, for their part, aspired to see Ukrainian 'dominant in all domains', but most of them were prepared to tolerate widespread use of Russian on condition that Ukrainian retained priority status in symbolic areas of public life, and that their right to use Ukrainian was respected.

Since 2014, the conflict with Russia has been fuelling two contradictory arguments in Ukraine, which Laada Bilaniuk sums up as 'language does not matter' versus 'language matters'. According to the first argument, the language a person speaks should not be taken as a symbol of ethic or political allegiance. Bilaniuk gives the example of a slogan, 'yedyna krayina – yedinaya strana' ('one country [in Ukrainian] – one country [in Russian]', which has been popularised during the conflict via Ukrainian television channels and public billboards. The argument that 'language does not matter' fits with the finding, discussed above, that participation in the 'revolution of dignity' was not related to language identity. The fact that thousands of Ukrainians from 'Russian-speaking' areas have voluntarily taken up arms in Donbas to defend their country is said to have boosted the concept of Russian-speaking Ukrainian patriotism – a change from previous years, when Ukrainian patriotism was more closely associated with speaking Ukrainian. The vast majority of Ukrainians continue to have at least passive fluency in both languages, and many can easily switch between the two, sometimes barely being aware that they are doing so.

On the other hand, the argument that 'language matters' has also been salient since 2014, because the language issue has taken on stronger security connotations. There is evidence that citizens who prefer to consume media content in Russian are significantly more likely to support the Russian government's narrative than citizens who prefer Ukrainian-language media and those who have no preference. The perception that Ukraine's vulnerability to malign Russian influence is at least partly attributable to widespread use of the Russian language has fuelled several legislative changes, most notably the new quotas for Ukrainian-language content on radio and television. Meanwhile, some formerly 'Russian-speaking' Ukrainian citizens have been converting to Ukrainian in their daily life of their own volition, as an expression of national allegiance. Bilaniuk echoes the findings of Kulyk in observing that neutrality in language choice is always elusive. Tolerant bilingualism may be the norm in people's day-to-day social interactions, but heated political debates around the language issue are unlikely to diminish "in a society at war with a neighbour using language as a partial justification for that war".

Historical memory sits alongside language as the second essential component of the 'East-West' axis. Two contributions in this 'virtual' special issue focus on Ukraine's contested past. [David Marples discusses](#) contradictory understandings of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) which have competed for ascendancy since the late 1980s. Historians and authors of the Soviet period depicted 1940s OUN-UPA insurgents as "traitors who fought against their own people and in collaboration with the German invaders", selectively emphasising OUN-UPA atrocities. However, in western regions and Ukrainian émigré circles, the insurgents were regarded as 'heroes fighting oppression' and "selfless warriors prepared to give up their lives for the cause of an independent Ukraine". Marples describes how this 'heroic' interpretation began to gain ground from the first months of Ukraine's post-Soviet independence and became increasingly common in official and educational publications. He argues that one form of propaganda (nationalist) replaced another (socialist). Politicians such as former president Viktor Yushchenko embraced nationalist 'heroes' from the OUN-UPA to boost their standing with core voters, while the Ukrainian population remained divided on the issue.

Many Ukrainians who associate themselves and their families with the Red Army and Soviet World War II partisans are alienated by narratives in which the actions of OUN-UPA are equated with a continuous liberation struggle against Russia, ending in 1991. This problem is highlighted by Marples and discussed further in the [contribution by Ararat Osipian and Alexandr Osipian](#). Osipian and Osipian observe that citizens in the west and centre of Ukraine are inclined to see the south and east "as an agent of Russia or the empire that intends to swallow Ukraine and convert Ukrainians into Russians". Conversely, citizens in the south and east are concerned about their compatriots in the west pushing to 'break the old ties with Russia' and forcefully impose 'Ukrainianisation'. The authors describe how this reciprocal inter-regional distrust was exploited by Ukrainian political parties and candidates, who repeatedly built their campaigns around visions of the past instead of developing appealing, distinctive visions for the country's future. It was an effective tool for mobilising the electorate, but corrosive to national unity in the long run.

The political elite's habit of playing on the logic of the 'two Ukraines' prior to 2014, rather than transcending it, created ideal conditions for Russian propagandists, whose prolific, emotional accounts of pro-Nazi 'Banderites' seizing power in Kyiv apparently found ready audiences in

Donbas and Crimea. Since 2014, the Ukrainian authorities under President Petro Poroshenko have continued to promote an unhelpfully narrow interpretation of history, which might win them short-term political dividends but does little to facilitate much-needed informed debate or reciprocal empathy between citizens in opposing historical 'camps'. New legislation sweepingly outlaws any "public denial, especially in the mass media, of the criminal nature of the Communist totalitarian regime of 1917–1991 in Ukraine". OUN-UPA leader Stepan Bandera once again has official approval: in the ultimate snub to the 'aggressor state', Moskovskyy Prospekt (Moscow Avenue) in Kyiv has been renamed Prospekt Stepana Bandery (Stepan Bandera Avenue). Moreover, a large-scale programme of de-Sovietization has seen thousands of other streets, villages, towns and cities renamed, and Communist-era monuments removed.

As with the new language legislation, proponents of these measures argue that they serve national security interests, in addition to symbolic historical justice. Ukraine's failure to question its Soviet heritage in previous years is said to have left the population vulnerable to Russian manipulation. The mass renaming exercise did not generate much in the way of public protest. However, the moves to 'de-Sovietize' are very much an elite priority and not a popular one: surveys suggest that most Ukrainians would rather have left the Communist-era place-names as they were. Russia's violation of Ukrainian sovereignty has united the majority of Ukrainian citizens against Putin and the Kremlin, but it has not sealed all the rifts in their memories of the past. The heavy-handed way in which the current government is interpreting history for its citizens, instead of encouraging thoughtful debate, effectively reinforces Russian propaganda messages about the 're-writing of history'. Such an approach will make it harder to convince residents of Donbas and Crimea that the democratic credentials of the government in Kyiv are genuine.

Institutions of the Ukrainian political system: Parliament, judiciary and the media

The success of the 'revolution of dignity' will probably be judged in the long term on the extent to which it delivers transformation in Ukraine's political institutions. The article by Paul D'Anieri selected for this 'virtual' special issue draws attention to important structural constraints which shaped how those institutions functioned prior to 2014. D'Anieri observes that Ukraine's regional diversity served as a barrier to the concentration of power by a dominant majority in parliament. The fact that no party managed to build strong cross-regional appeal or to establish an effective organisational base nationwide meant that parliamentary majorities almost

always required a coalition. Moreover, elites from different regions were constantly competing with one another, so that whenever a leader or party associated with one region tried to 'take over', they would always encounter resistance. Another constraint on the consolidation of power was the underperforming economy, which tended to sap support for political incumbents. Ukraine lacks the kind of abundant natural resources (for example, big hydrocarbon reserves) which enable authoritarians in some parts of the world to buy themselves popular legitimacy. Ukraine's incumbent power-holders were also unable to use belligerent foreign policy or a manufactured external threat to legitimise an authoritarian takeover – because there was no national consensus on who the 'enemies' were.

At the same time, D'Anieri notes that Ukraine's weak institutions provided "few barriers, and many possible levers" for the abuse of power. He describes Ukraine as a society "in which rules are very weak constraints on the behaviour of actors", because any rule can be changed and there are no reliable means for the enforcement of deals. In this environment, political actors tended to deploy the tools of patronage-based 'machine politics' – most notably, selective law enforcement, control of the economy, and control over government jobs – to manipulate ostensibly open and democratic political process.

Civil society, western donors and reform-minded politicians have been making concerted efforts since 2014 to challenge the patronage-based system of machine politics and strengthen the rule of law within Ukraine's political system. Important achievements so far include reforms in the gas sector (where the removal of subsidies has stemmed a major channel for private enrichment at the state's expense) and the banking sector (where the closure of dozens of banks represents an attack on the machinery of corruption). Over 100,000 Ukrainian officials – including the president, members of the cabinet, MPs, judges, prosecutors and civil servants – are now obliged by law to submit online declarations of their wealth. If they fail to do so honestly, or fail to account for the source of their wealth, this should now be caught by the new National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC) and investigated by the new National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU). NABU has already begun to take on some powerful figures, including former head of the State Fiscal Service Roman Nasirov and MP Mykola Martynenko, a key sponsor of the People's Front party.

At the time of writing, NABU's investigations are yet to result in a high-profile conviction and the targets of anti-corruption probes are putting up fierce resistance (for example, Martynenko

was freed on bail, against the wishes of investigators, after three ministers, a deputy head of the Central Election Commission, and 17 MPs stepped up to be his guarantors). Which side will come out on top remains to be seen.

The extreme difficulty of bringing top-level officials to justice for corrupt practices is linked to flaws in Ukraine's judicial system and its parliamentary electoral system. The judiciary and parliament are two institutions where much-needed reforms have been promised, but are struggling to make progress. The article by Wolfgang Tiede and Oscar Rennalls selected for this 'virtual' collection identifies long-running problems in Ukraine's judicial system and makes several proposals on how to bring the Ukrainian judicial system into line with international standards. These include de-politicizing the appointment of judges, raising the penalties for subversion of judicial decision-making, and improving staffing and funding levels.

Since 2014, Ukraine has adopted a Strategy for Judicial Reform that begins to address these issues and others. Under constitutional amendments introduced in 2016, judges can now be appointed to 'lifetime' positions, thus limiting the ability of president or parliament to influence judges' careers. At the same time, it has become possible to dismiss judges who fail to accurately declare their assets, or fail to pass a newly compulsory review of their competence, integrity, and adherence to ethical standards. These changes are meant to increase professionalism and reduce scope for corruption. New legislation 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges' has initiated the creation of a brand new Supreme Court, for which judges are being selected via a competitive process overseen by a Public Integrity Council of civil society representatives. The same legislation provides for the establishment of a dedicated anti-corruption court to hear cases of high level corruption (when heard in existing courts, corruption cases tend to get delayed or sabotaged). Implementing all these reforms has been far from a smooth process. For example, the Ukrainian leadership is attempting to substitute the anti-corruption court with less independent anti-corruption 'chambers'; and there are concerns that most judges appointed to the new Supreme Court will be 'old blood' from the previous, corrupt system. Even in the best-case scenario, renewal of the system will take years to complete. Yet the steps taken so far already exceed all the reform efforts from prior to 2014, which Tiede and Rennalls described in their article.

Just as vital as judicial reform – and proving equally difficult – are reforms to Ukraine's parliamentary electoral system. This 'virtual' collection contains two contributions about the

Ukrainian parliament, one from Elena Semenova and another from Maksym Kovalov. Semenova analyzes the characteristics of all the 1,768 individuals who held parliamentary seats between 1990 and 2007. She observes a very low proportion of MPs coming from the inteligentsiya (such as teachers or professors); substantial proportions coming from professional political backgrounds (e.g. as party or trade union employees) and the civil service; and a large proportion – over 30 per cent – coming from business and large enterprises. Semenova links the high number of MPs with a business background to Ukraine's regional 'clans', whose political and economic interests are represented by such MPs. She finds that businessmen and managers not only have higher chances of entering parliament, but also of staying there for multiple terms. Meanwhile, women were severely underrepresented in parliament during the studied period: just 8 per cent of Ukrainian MPs were women in 2007.

Whereas Semenova examines who wins election to the Ukrainian parliament, Kovalov focuses on how they get there. His article provides a detailed and rather depressing account of the manipulative practices that were used in the 2012 parliamentary election, explaining how the 'mixed' electoral system facilitated fraud. Ukraine has tried out a full gamut of electoral systems during its independence. In 1994 all MPs were elected in single-mandate districts by a simple majority. In 1998 and 2002 a 'mixed' system was used: half of the parliamentary seats were decided by simple-majority voting in single-mandate districts, while the other half of the seats were allocated to candidates from party lists, based on proportional representation (PR). At the 2006 and 2007 elections, all MPs were elected via party lists in a fully PR-based system. Then for the 2012 elections, President Yanukovych managed to restore the 'mixed system' from 1998 and 2002. Kovalov argues that restoration of the 'mixed' system undermined democratic standards, because election results in single-mandate districts – where small margins determine who wins – are easier to rig than the PR results. He highlights various techniques that were used to skew electoral outcomes, including 'clone candidates' (when a genuine candidate in a single-mandate district has to compete against someone with an identical or similar name); 'technical parties' (which aim simply to divert votes from rivals, rather than win seats for themselves); corrupt election commissions at the district and precinct level (filled with representatives from 'technical' parties who sell their influence to the main parties); the deliberate invalidation of ballot papers by election commission members before and after voting; and delays in reporting results.

Kovalov concludes that restoration of the mixed electoral system in Ukraine had a profound and negative effect on the 2012 election results: it facilitated violations and helped the Party of Regions to secure 42 more parliamentary seats than it would have won under the full PR system. He notes that the magnitude of fraud was higher in 2012 than in 2006 and 2007 (when the PR system was in place) and suggests that Ukrainian democracy would benefit if the full PR were reintroduced.

Electoral system reform was supposed to become a priority for the new government after the 'revolution of dignity'. The coalition agreement, signed between five pro-European parties in late 2014 as they formed a governing majority, contains a pledge to abolish single-mandate districts in favour of a PR system with 'open' party lists. There is broad consensus within Ukrainian civil society that a full PR system with 'open' party lists would make it harder for corrupt candidates to buy their way into parliament, and would give voters – rather than party elites and oligarchs – more control in choosing which individuals represent them. Unfortunately, however, no real progress has yet been made in this reform area and senior officials are predicting that the next parliamentary elections, scheduled for 2019, will take place under the rules of the existing 'mixed' system. Some progress has been made in reforming other aspects of legislation governing parties and elections. For example, political parties must now publish reports about their financing, and those with seats in parliament have begun to receive funding from the state budget, which is supposed to make them less dependent on oligarchic backing. Yet, electoral manipulation of the kind described by Kovalov is likely to remain a problem unless political will can be found to change the system itself. Ukrainian democracy has benefited greatly from the 'fresh blood' of energetic new MPs elected from civil society backgrounds in 2014 – but they remain outnumbered by the old 'managerial' class of MPs described by Semenova. Women remain severely underrepresented: just 12 per cent of Ukrainian MPs are women in 2017.

The mass media are another institution in Ukraine where oligarchic influence has consistently been strong over the years, to the detriment of democracy. D'Anieri describes the majority of major media outlets in Ukraine as "controlled by or connected to large business interests"; Kovalov discusses how media owners during Yanukovych's presidency "forced their media to impose self-censorship as a sign of support for the ruling regime". Oligarchic dominance of the TV market is not likely to wane quickly. Since the 'revolution of dignity',

billionaires have maintained their editorial influence over all the most popular TV channels, which rarely criticise the president, but readily attack anyone who threatens the business interests of their owners. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian media environment has seen important positive developments in the past few years. Laws have been passed to establish a public broadcaster, UA: Pershyy, which is being created from the old state-controlled channel Pershyy Natsionalnyy. The new online channel Hromadske, run by a journalist collective, is producing high-quality investigative documentaries and more with funding from Western donors. The Ukrainian media system does not lack plurality, and there is good quality journalism available to most citizens who have the knowledge and inclination to look for it.

One aspect of Ukraine's media environment that has changed particularly rapidly since the 'revolution of dignity' is the level of Russian involvement and influence. The final article included in this 'virtual' special issue is my own, which investigated how Russian media owners and media partnerships affected news coverage about Russia that was produced for Ukrainian audiences in 2010–2011. That article drew attention to complexities of Russian involvement in the Ukrainian media: it pointed out that not all news providers in Ukraine can be neatly categorised as either 'Russian' or 'Ukrainian', because some are financed, overseen, and produced by a combination of individuals in or from both Ukraine and Russia. Overall, news providers in Ukraine that had a Russian shareholder or partner were found to be more restrained in their criticism of Russia than comparable news providers without such Moscow connections. However, in some cases, commercial interests and the demands of local audiences were influencing editorial policy at least as much as demands from Moscow.

My article from 2014 argued against viewing 'Russian' media in Ukraine (and indeed elsewhere) through the analytical lens of 'soft power'. This is not just a question of whether the adjective 'soft' is appropriate for describing their intended and actual impact. It is also because the soft power framework obscures diversity among 'Russian' media and the substantial influence of local pressures on content in some cases. Moreover, the soft power framework fails to allow for the fact that all media outlets, whatever their origin, are likely to evoke a range of responses from diverse (elite, mass and minority) audiences. To focus exclusively on the media's capacity to softly 'attract' is thus to ignore the bigger picture of varied reactions and counteractions that ensue when political messages cross borders from one country to another.

Since the outbreak of conflict in Donbas, the Russian media have more commonly been described as weapons of 'hybrid war' than as tools of 'soft power'. The perception that Russian propaganda poses an existential threat to Ukraine has led the government in Kyiv to introduce a raft of measures aimed at minimizing the exposure of Ukrainian media consumers to any kind of Russian content. First, the transmission of major Russian TV channels on Ukrainian cable networks was banned; later, quotas were introduced to reduce the amount of Russian-made content any broadcaster could include in their schedule. Most recently, Ukraine has attempted to block access to popular Russian social networks and the Yandex search engine. Most Ukrainians are increasingly cut off from – and put off by – Russian media platforms and their 'pro-Kremlin' messages. Recent surveys indicate that virtually no-one (less than 2 per cent) in government-controlled Ukraine trusts Russian television as a source of information about the conflict. As I suggested in my original article, there is little reason to believe that Russian TV has a strong 'persuasive' effect in Ukraine. In fact, the opposite seems to be true: tendentious and misleading Russian reporting has alienated millions of Ukrainian citizens and provoked the Ukrainian government into taking effective countermeasures, which have greatly reduced Russia's capacity to influence Ukrainian public opinion.

Continuity and change in the aftermath of 'revolution'

In the years that followed the Orange revolution, a recurring question addressed in the literature was whether the events of 2004 deserved their 'revolutionary' epithet. The same question is likely to be asked about the 'revolution of dignity'. The articles showcased in this collection constitute a useful point of reference for scholars and students who seek to investigate the extent of continuity and change in Ukrainian politics after the extraordinary events of 2013–2014.

The regional differences in national identity, language use and historical memories that are described within this collection are far from losing their salience in Ukrainian politics. On the contrary, identity, language and memories of the past have acquired heightened security connotations for Ukraine in recent years, because Russia is using them to justify its support for separatism in Donbas and Crimea. The security context, along with the removal of voters in Crimea and separatist-held Donbas from the electoral equation, has shifted the centre of Ukraine's politics 'westward' and allowed 'de-Russifying' and 'de-Sovietizing' policies on language and memory to proceed rapidly against much weaker opposition than in the past. These

changes are welcomed by people who hope Ukraine will 'escape' Russia's orbit – but they risk strengthening resistance to reintegration among citizens in the occupied territories.

The huge challenge facing Ukraine's democratic reformers is underlined by the articles in this collection that deal with institutions of the political system. Ever since the early 1990s, networks of patronage have shaped behaviour and decisions in the Ukrainian parliament, judiciary and media – enriching the elite and diverting state resources away from development. The 'revolution of dignity' brought some energetic new political actors into parliament, whose efforts (with support from civil society and Western governments) have delivered greater transparency and accountability in important areas. However, many 'old faces' at the highest levels are clearly reluctant to abandon patronage as a mechanism for retaining power and wealth. Elections remain vulnerable to the same kind of manipulation they suffered from in the past; the new court system may be undermined by the habits of old judges who cannot all be replaced overnight; the oligarch-owned TV channels continue to attract bigger audiences than smaller, newer, more independent media. Thus, the changes that have occurred in Ukrainian politics since 2014 have certainly been radical – but they are yet to secure the irreversible establishment of well-functioning democracy.

NOTES

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45. J. Szostek, "Russia and the News Media in Ukraine: A Case of 'Soft Power'?", East European Politics and Societies 28, no. 3 (2014): 463–486.

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