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Ukraine

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UKRAINE

(Ukrayina)

By Jeffrey K. Hass, Ph.D.

The independent nation of Ukraine was born on December 1, 1991, when Russia's Boris Yeltsin, Belarus's Stanislav Shushkevich, and Ukraine's Leonid Kravchuk agreed to disband the Soviet Union and create the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Since then, Ukraine's political history (much like its economic history) has been marked by the confusions, contradictions, and conflicts that go hand in hand with state building. Overshadowed on the world stage by its "bigger brother," Russia, Ukraine nevertheless has tried to forge its own path in terms of policies, political structure, political culture, and political identity.

The Ukrainian economy has been in a state of crisis since 1992. As an integral part of the Soviet economy, agriculture figured importantly; Ukraine contributed one-fourth of Soviet agricultural production. The military-industrial sector was also vital to Ukrainian output; one of the world's largest rocket-producing complexes is in Ukraine's Dnipopetrovsk. Ethnicity has been an important part of Ukrainian politics—eastern Ukraine has a strong Russian component, while Ukrainian nationalism has its home in the west. However, tensions have not led to confrontations (except for a brief moment when Crimea considered secession).

HISTORY

On August 24, 1991, after the failed putsch attempt by Soviet hard-liners, the Ukrainian Parliament declared Ukraine independent of Soviet authority. Soon afterward, Leonid Kravchuk defeated Vyacheslav Chornovil in the December 1991 presidential race. Kravchuk and the Verhovna Rada (Ukraine's parliament) now faced the tasks of reforming the Ukrainian economy and building the institutions of government and state bureaucracy. While nodding to the necessity of economic reforms, President Kravchuk focused early on building the image of Ukraine the nation and on creating the powers of the executive and political coalitions. In April 1992 parliament approved constitutional changes granting the president the power to name his cabinet of ministers. Further, Kravchuk called for presidential control over local councils and executives to give him the power to control the country more directly, and he also called for the creation of a State Council (of which the president would be chairman). As a result of Kravchuk's political games, parliament's conservatism, and the inability of any of the political actors to implement economic reforms, the political atmosphere became polarized, with Kravchuk's personality and actions at the center of a growing maelstrom.

Under increasing criticism for Prime Minister Fokin's inability to implement economic reforms, Kravchuk replaced him with Leonid Kuchma, a people's deputy and general director of the Southern Machine Construction Factory in Dnipropetrovsk. In November 1992 Prime Minister Kuchma secured emergency powers for six months, giving him in theory more power than President Kravchuk. However, such powers in practice were of little use in the face of a conservative

parliament that retained important powers for itself, such as the power to veto the prime minister's emergency decrees. Tensions over power and policy led to a split between president and prime minister. Because of this split, the refusal of parliament to extend the period of emergency powers, and the falling economy (punctuated by strike waves in Donbass in June 1993), Kuchma resigned three times, his third resignation accepted by parliament in September 1993.

In 1993 the economy continued to deteriorate while no real reforms were implemented. Confrontations between Ukraine and Russia over the Black Sea Fleet flared from time to time, and Crimean nationalism surged along with Russian nationalism. The height of political tension was reached in June 1993, when strikes swept through the radical Donbass in eastern (i.e., pro-Russian) Ukraine (home to miners' strikes that wracked Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union in 1989 and 1990).

The March 1994 elections brought left-wing parties into power, and a split between the more Socialist and pro-CIS east and the nationalist west became apparent. Kravchuk, who needed to expand beyond his western base into the east, appointed Vitalii Masol as prime minister, an appointment viewed as a sop both to the leftist parliament and to the left-leaning eastern provinces.

In the June and July 1994 elections Ukrainians chose Leonid Kuchma, who issued presidential decrees putting him in charge of the government and subordinating regional councils to presidential authority—implementing changes Kravchuk had only discussed. The year 1995 saw more political instability as parliament and the president quarreled and a vote of no confidence forced a cabinet reshuffle. Finally, a new constitution was approved in the Verhovna Rada on June 28, 1996, after a 16-hour all-night discussion of final points.

In the background, economic decline and rising western nationalism helped the rise of leftist sentiments throughout Ukraine, leading Kuchma to dismiss his acting prime minister, Marchuk, for being too far to the left. Marchuk was replaced by the first deputy prime minister, Pavlo Lazarenko, leading to a shakeup in the cabinet and a later government restructuring. In the wake of clearer rules of power, Kuchma pushed reform, helping slow economic decline and set the stage for increased investment. While temporary relapses occurred, Kuchma's reforms helped bring in IMF loans and international investment. To augment his own power, Kuchma attempted to play the *kompromat* game—the threat of using compromising materials against opponents to gain advantage, a tactic used well by Russia's Vladimir Putin and company. He also tried to shape the political arena so that his party and heir to the presidency would lead Ukrainian politics, to assure his own continuing influence and safety from future prosecution. However, Kuchma was better at copying than implementing the tactics of Russia's political elite. Opponent Viktor Yushchenko, Kuchma's former prime minister, managed to organize the largest coalition in the Rada after 2002 (Viktor Yushchenko Bloc—Our Ukraine). Only because Our Ukraine could not form a majority and create a government did Kuchma maintain any influence in the Rada: Kuchma had to rely on allies in the Communist Party and the For Ukraine bloc to create a parliamentary majority friendly to the president. Head of Ukraine's Central Bank from 1993 to 1999 and architect of monetary reform in 1996 (lowering of inflation and the introduction of a new currency, the hryvnia), Yushchenko served as prime minister from December 1999 to April 2001. During his tenure he improved fiscal discipline, legislated land reform, lowered state subsidies to struggling enterprises, and increased state support of financial discipline and Ukraine's investment climate. His popularity and support of increased transparency in government earned him Kuchma's suspicion, and the two fell out in 2001. At this point Yushchenko set out to challenge Kuchma—much as Kuchma had challenged and defeated his presidential boss, Kravchuk, after those two had fallen out.

While Kuchma indicated that he would not seek a third term in office, he apparently did not want to leave without guarding his influence and position afterward. To this end he tried to promote his head of presidential administration, Viktor Medvedchuk (among Ukraine's most powerful oligarchs). However, despite Kuchma's attempts at media control, the voting public remained wary of Medvedchuk, and Kuchma turned to Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych to be his new means to defend his interests and influence after leaving office. The Yushchenko camp repeatedly reported that the Kuchma-Yanukovych camp were carrying out underhanded tricks, for example, passing around fliers attributing fascist views to Yushchenko. More generally, forces in the state loyal to Kuchma tried to increase control of the media—for example, suddenly cutting the transmission of television coverage of a commemoration of journalist Georgii Gongadze's death. News also leaked about presidential directives prescribing what type of news was acceptable for broadcast, with the threat of harassment by the tax

authorities or other state bodies against those failing to comply (similar to Vladimir Putin's tactics in Russia).

In the autumn of 2004 Viktor Yushchenko suffered what he and his camp claimed was an assassination attempt through poison. His pock-marked face—apparently the result of dioxin poisoning—was a visible reminder of the dangers of presidential politics in post-Soviet Ukraine. At the end of November 2004 the election was held, and early polls showed Yushchenko heading toward victory. However, the final returns showed Yanukovych the winner. Immediately crowds gathered at Freedom Square in Kiev to protest against what was framed as electoral fraud. Reports quickly emerged about fixing of vote tallies throughout Ukraine and links to Russian advisers and Russian money. Meanwhile, the numbers of protesters in Kiev swelled to over 100,000, thanks in part to efforts by organizers, some of whom had experience with formal democratic politics and mobilization in Serbia, and to financial support from local businesses, who helped pay for food and medical aid for protesters. After several days and mounting pressure, the Ukrainian Supreme Court—Kuchma appointees known for independent thinking—declared the election null and void because of procedural improprieties in voting and counting. They ruled for a repeat of the election on December 26. Yanukovych protested, but to no avail. In December, Ukraine became increasingly polarized between the north and west (Yushchenko's base)—more Ukrainian in identity and desiring closer ties to Europe—and the south and east (Yanukovych's base)—more Russified and desiring closer links to Russia. Rumors of a potential split between east and west emerged but remained no more than occasional mutterings. Yushchenko comfortably won the rematch with Yanukovych.

The System of Government

Ukraine is a democratic republic with a unicameral legislature. The Ukrainian political structure resembles the three branches of government characteristic of Western systems: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. The executive branch is responsible for implementing policy, for setting Ukraine's overall political course, and for supervising relations with foreign states. The legislature is responsible for passing laws and for checking the powers of the executive. The judiciary has the duties of addressing legal recourse, defending civil rights, and resolving legal disputes.

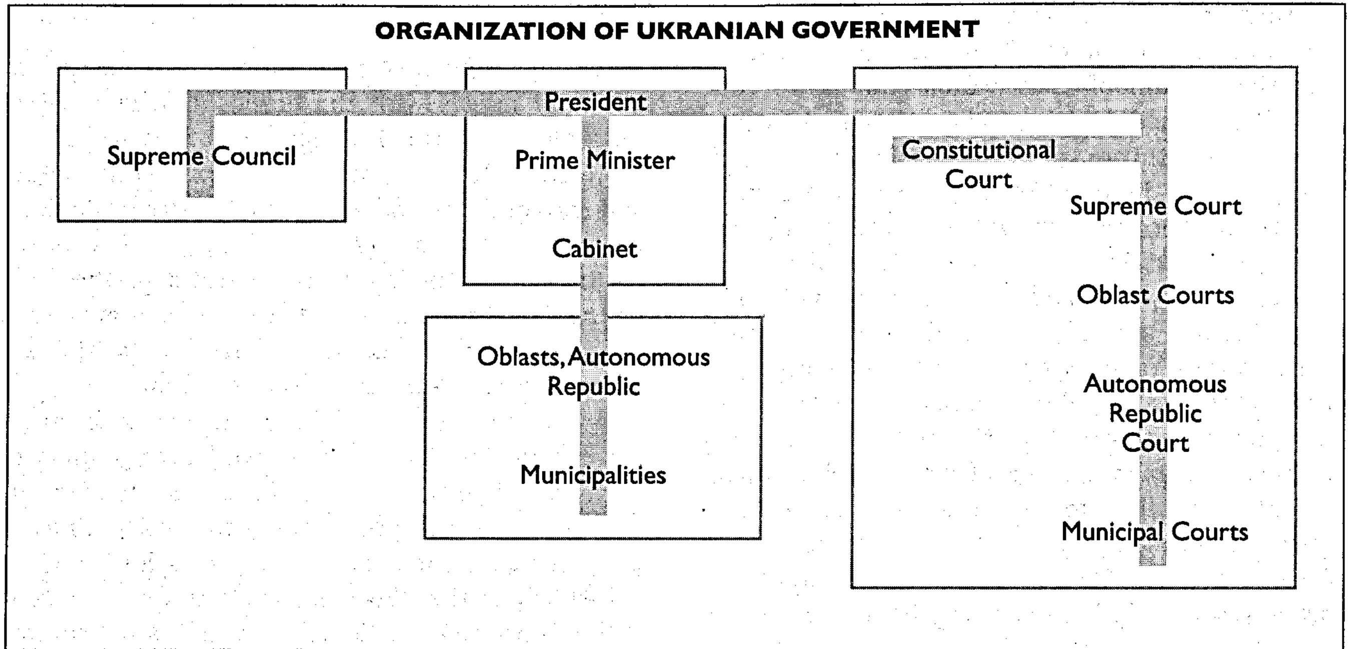
EXECUTIVE

According to the 1996 constitution, ultimate executive authority resides with the president, who is elected for a five-year term. The president represents Ukraine in foreign affairs; appeals to citizens with "annual and extraordinary statements"; organizes or liquidates ministries; revokes acts of the Council of Ministers; creates courts and appoints one-third of the judges of the Constitutional Court; declares national emergencies and mobilizes armed forces (declarations of war must be submitted to the Verhovna Rada); and vetoes laws passed by the Rada. Further, according to the constitution, citizens may not "infringe upon the honor and dignity of the president." The president may be impeached if a special Rada commission finds the president guilty of treason or some major crime and two-thirds of the 450 members vote for indictment. If the Constitutional Court finds the special commission's procedures and conclusions in line with law, the Rada may, with a three-fourths vote of 450, officially impeach the president.

Directly under the president is the prime minister and the cabinet, or Council of Ministers. The president appoints the prime minister, whose term of office depends on the good graces of the president. The duties of the prime minister and the Council of Ministers concern fundamental implementation of policy and maintaining the day-to-day operations of the state bureaucracy. The prime minister's aides include a first deputy prime minister, a general deputy prime minister, six deputy prime ministers for special areas (e.g., economic reform), heads of the various ministries (agriculture, coal, culture, defense), and chairmen of state committees. Ministers are appointed by the president and serve unless the Rada passes a vote of no confidence or until presidential elections, at which point the Council of Ministers must resign.

The duties of the prime minister and Council of Ministers concern drawing up and implementing economic and social policies, such as on finances and prices, on employment policy, on education, on environmental issues, and on culture. Ministers are responsible for directing the workings of executive organs throughout Ukraine (the state bureaucracy) and managing state property. Further, local state administrations, which exercise executive authority at the local level, are subordinate to and appointed by the ministries and the president.

One interesting aspect of Ukraine's executive is the position of the prime minister. Usually the prime minister is appointed by and answerable either to



the president (strong presidential system) or to parliament (systems with weak presidents and strong parliaments). Ukraine stands in between these two: the prime minister and cabinet answer to *both* the president and parliament, either of whom can appoint or dismiss. This places the cabinet in a difficult position: it has to appeal to the interests and demands of two bosses, president and parliament, and it can get caught in the crossfire. This accounts in part for more frequent cabinet turnovers than in many other post-Socialist countries. It also means, however, that the cabinet could potentially play parliament and president off against each other, as it stands in the middle and could argue to each boss that it must satisfy the other for any policy success. Overall, this institutional setup has not aided political stability.

LEGISLATURE

The highest legislative body in Ukraine is the Supreme Council (Verhovna Rada). The Rada is made up of 450 members. Originally they were all elected through individual races, but in October 2001 a new electoral law took effect that split membership in the Rada: half of its members are elected in individual races and half by party lists (as in Russian elections). While not all 450 places were filled in the first elections, the Rada can meet if a quorum of places (two-thirds, or 300) is filled.

The main power of the Rada at present resides in the legislative duty of adopting laws and the state budget. Further, the Rada holds the power to declare war, to impeach the president, to appoint and dismiss the head and half of the members of the Ukrainian National Bank, and to select one-third of the membership of the Constitutional Court. The Rada monitors the activities of the ministers and with one-third support (150 votes) can introduce and, with a majority vote (226), pass a resolution of no confidence in the prime minister and cabinet. The president can dissolve the Rada if, within 30 days of a single regular session, plenary sessions cannot be convened for whatever reason; however, the president cannot dismiss the Rada in the last six months of his term.

Legislation is introduced in the Rada and, if it receives majority support, goes to the president for his signature. (If the Rada passes legislation, the speaker signs it, making it official.) The president has 15 days to sign or veto the legislation; after 15 days the legislation is considered official law. In the case of a veto, the Rada can reconsider the legislation and, if 300 members support it, the bill becomes law and the president must implement it within 10 days.

JUDICIARY

Ukraine's judiciary suffered from the same problem as judiciaries throughout the CIS that followed the Soviet model of a judiciary as an appendage of the state. The creation of the new Ukrainian government required restructuring the judicial system.

The courts in Ukraine are the primary administrators of justice. Ukraine follows a continental system,

where judges hear arguments for individual cases and then rule according to the legal code; there is no formal role for legal precedent (as in an Anglo-American judicial system). The Ukrainian system does allow for trial by jury in criminal cases. With the exception of the Constitutional Court and Supreme Court, court decisions emanate either from a jury or from the judge of the particular court, depending on the level of the court and the issue at hand.

The Constitutional Court and Supreme Court stand at the apex of the judicial system. The Constitutional Court decides matters pertaining to questions or violations of the constitution; other courts, with the Supreme Court at the top, serve to mediate conflicts, serve justice in cases of violation of law, and hear petitions and appeals.

Judicial bodies are located at the local level and handle local cases involving criminal misdeeds, disputes between parties, and attempts at recourse. Ukrainian courts, like those throughout the CIS (and in much of the world), are hampered by backlogs of cases, by vagaries in legal codes, by weak mechanisms for enforcing court decisions, and by a dearth of qualified, professional legal personnel.

Judges for the Constitutional Court are appointed by the president and by the Verhovna Rada. For other courts, judges are recommended and then elected by the Verhovna Rada and have life tenure in the job unless they violate constitutional restrictions, such as belonging to a political party or suffering loss of citizenship.

Judges are legally independent, but informal pressure is often exerted on judges to make "favorable" decisions. This has been one of the more egregious aspects of corruption plaguing Ukraine.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ukraine is a republic composed of 24 provinces (oblasti), one autonomous republic (Crimea), and two municipalities with oblast status (the capital Kiev and Sevastopol, in the Crimea). Each oblast is headed by a governor with an oblast legislature.

The Electoral System

Under Ukrainian election law, half of the 450 seats in the Rada are allocated to parties able to gain 4 percent or more of the national electoral vote. A party gaining more than 4 percent is entitled to a number of seats equal to the proportion of votes of the total votes cast for parties overcoming this 4 percent barrier. (Thus a party receiving 5 percent of the party-based vote might get more than 5 percent of the seats allocated to party lists.) Places are filled in the order candidates appear on the party lists. The remaining 225 seats are still filled via direct election rather than via party list. All citizens age 18 and over are eligible to vote.

The Party System

Ukraine's party system, like systems elsewhere in the post-Communist world, remains in flux, with little grassroots organization or firm structure. The majority of registered parties are basically inactive, and many candidates to the parliamentary elections have no formal party affiliation. Active parties are usually too small to garner much support, and so the tendency is for parties to unite in coalitions or blocs. Party discipline should not be taken for granted, and so party strength cannot be measured solely by its representation in the Verhovna Rada. Regardless, the more important parties structure the political action in the legislative branch, and their political ideologies range from moderate Communist and leftist to moderate right-wing and nationalist.

ELECTIONS, VERHOVNA RADA, MARCH 30, 2002

Party	% vote (party list)	seats
Viktor Yuzhchenko Bloc Our Ukraine	23.6%	112
Communist Party of Ukraine	20%	102
For United Ukraine	11.8%	21
Electoral Bloc Yuliia Tymoshenko	7.2%	21
Socialist Party of Ukraine	6.9%	24
Social Democratic Party of Ukraine	6.3%	24
Unity	1.1%	4
Democratic Party of Ukraine/Democratic Union	1.2%	4

Note: The number of seats is based on results of the party list and individual races. Parties that do not overcome the electoral barrier can still gain seats from individual races.

Major Political Parties

VIKTOR YUSHCHENKO BLOC OUR UKRAINE

(Blok Viktora Yushchenka Nasha Ukraina)

Our Ukraine is an umbrella coalition of anti-Kuchma pro-reform parties. As a result, it contains many diverse ideologies, although some similar beliefs run through most parties here, such as anti-Communism and holding bases in western Ukraine. (Recall that Kuchma is from the somewhat Russified eastern Ukraine.) The Liberal Party is based in eastern Ukraine, particularly Donetsk, and represents business interests (especially coal). Other member parties are based in western Ukraine, and are more nationalist. Some nationalist groups are more radical, such as the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, whose rhetoric can be radical but whose actions in opposition to Kuchma are more restrained. One of the more historical members of Our Ukraine is Popular Front (Narodni Rukh), founded in 1990 as the first major non-Communist organization. Rukh is nationalist and right-wing, but inclines more toward being pro-reform and pro-West rather than xenophobic. Rukh supports Ukraine's entry into NATO and the European Union. Membership in the Viktor Yushchenko Bloc includes the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, Liberal Party, Youth Party of Ukraine, Ruch, Christian-Popular Union Party, Party of Reform and Order, Republican Christian Party, Solidarity, Ukrainian National Movement, and Forward Ukraine.

ELECTORAL BLOC YULIA TYMOSHENKO

(Viboirsy Blok Yulii Tymoshenko)

Hailing from eastern Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko is the leader of the Motherland Party, which claims to organize over 100,000 people (although the degree of involvement of this mass is likely to be rather low). Her successes as vice prime minister for energy propelled Tymoshenko's image and ambitions, but this earned her Kuchma's jealousy, and his informal political machinations drove her out of the government. In 2001 she led the parliamentary democratic opposition calling for Kuchma's resignation and soon was arrested (although the charges were later dropped as groundless). In 2002 Tymoshenko organized a coalition of smaller populist and social-democratic parties, which won 21 seats in the 2002 election. The basic program of this electoral bloc is reenergizing the Ukrainian "nation." While not steadfastly pro-market, the coalition accepts markets as necessary. To make markets less destructive, the electoral bloc supports increased legal support for justice and support for stronger cultural and spiritual development of the Ukrainian people and its sense of nationhood. This coalition is made up of the Ukrainian People's Party Assembly, the Ukrainian Republican Party, the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Party, and the All-Ukrainian United Patriots.

FOR UNITED UKRAINE

(Za Edinu Ukraiinu)

For United Ukraine is a coalition of parties representing organized economic interests. This coalition is made up of Agrarian Party of Ukraine, People's Democratic Party of Ukraine, Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine, Regional Party, and Labor of Ukraine. One of its more important members, Agrarian Party of Ukraine, represents collective farm leaders. The Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine represents heads of large firms (private and state-owned). The coalition's goals are social-democratic, left-leaning, and include: more effective and generous social and pension provision for the weaker in Ukrainian society; increased autonomy and voice for Ukraine's regions vis-à-vis the center; support for Ukrainian family's and children; support for employment in the industrial and agricultural sectors; increased state support for small business and entrepreneurship; greater attention to ecological concerns; improved "social rights" to pensioners and invalids; support for developing Ukrainian culture; and closer ties to Europe.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF UKRAINE (SPU)

The Socialist Party was created in 1992 in response to legislation making the Communist Party formally illegal. Gathering strength from eastern Ukraine, the Socialist Party stresses a slower market transition, with more state regulations and a halt to privatization. The SPU has also called for closer ties with Russia and the CIS and championed the Russian language for equal status with Ukrainian. (Ukrainian is currently the official state language; Russian is recognized as a legitimate language but is not required for holding high office.) Socialists and their Communist brethren have often cooperated in parliamentary elections and in parliamentary procedures, making up the largest bloc within the Rada.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF UKRAINE (CPU)

The CPU is one of the larger parties of Ukraine. Temporarily outlawed after the failed August 1991 coup, the CPU secured the right to organize as a party on October 5, 1993. Like the Socialists, the Communists have their political base camp in eastern Ukraine. Headed by the party chairman, Petro Symonenko, the Communists have called for more state control in the economy, increased support for social entitlements, closer ties with Russia and the CIS, and opposition to private property in land.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF UKRAINE (SDPU)

The SDPU was founded in 1990 and in that same year split into two factions, the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine and the United Social Democratic Party of Ukraine. The United Social Democratic Party veered to the left, advocating democratic socialism in its more Soviet form. The SDPU faction moved to the right, advocating social democracy over unadulterated Socialism. In debates in May 1992 over whether to join the New Ukraine coalition, the "mainstream" of SDPU decided to join with the coalition "Congress of National Democratic Forces," leaving a rather emasculated SDPU trying to ally with other social democrats, especially the Party of Democratic Rebirth of Ukraine.

PARTY OF DEMOCRATIC REBIRTH OF UKRAINE (PDRU)

Founded in 1990, the PDRU has its origins in the Democratic Platform movement within the Communist Party of Ukraine. This movement, centered in Kharkiv, found the Communist Party too dogmatic and antireform and viewed Rukh as too nationalistic, and so PDRU was born. PDRU leaders and members are champions of market reforms; because of this and because they avoid nationalist rhetoric, PDRU positioned itself in opposition to President Kravchuk and voiced early support for the policies of the former prime minister and later president Leonid Kuchma. The PDRU also does not shy away from supporting closer economic links with other CIS nations, particularly Russia. PDRU was an initial founder and supporter of the New Ukraine coalition but later withdrew its support. At its September 1993 party congress, PDRU was torn by conflicts between opposing wings: social democratic versus liberal, eastern versus western members, Ukrainian versus Russian members. PDRU hopes to be able to create centrist blocs, thus avoiding a parliamentary and political tilt to either extreme. Democratic Rebirth has had a decline in fortunes as other pro-democracy blocs have emerged around charismatic or popular individual figure, which Democratic Rebirth lacks.

RUKH

Rukh was the first significant opposition movement to the Communist Party of Soviet Ukraine, founded in 1988 as a democratic popular front known as the Ukrainian People's Movement for Restructuring (perestroika). Because of its status as first-comer, Rukh was able to become the most important party among center-right democratic and nationalist forces. Rukh has supported Ukrainian independence and has taken a nationalist stance on several issues; however, Rukh is not radically nationalist. In February 1993 Rukh officially registered as a political party. It had a membership of 50,518 on the eve of the 1994 parliamentary elections.

Rukh leadership tries to portray the party as a "constructive opposition." Throughout the transition period, Rukh has supported Ukrainian statehood and nation- building but has not employed extreme nationalist language to the same degree as other rightist groups. Rukh has also called for economic reform, including selling state industries, implementing more rapid market reforms, and attracting foreign investment. To maintain representation in parliament, Rukh has taken part in various coalitions, from the Bridge (Most) coalition in 1996 to the Viktor Yushchenko Bloc in 2002.

NEW UKRAINE

Founded in January 1992, New Ukraine was created by center-left parties with two goals: to offset the growing power of nationalist Rukh and to generate support for market reforms. With their political bases in the east, center-left parties had witnessed the collapse of the industrial economy of the more Russified eastern portion of the country; however, these centrist parties did not share the state-centered solutions of the Socialists or Communists. Hence, New Ukraine brought together both center-left politicians and economic/business elites to push for privatization and market reforms. Further, New Ukraine strongly campaigned for the resignation of Prime Minister Vitold Fokin because of his inability or unwillingness to push for economic reform, for early parliamentary elections, and for improvement of ties with the CIS and particularly with Russia. With

support from the eastern regions, New Ukraine backed Leonid Kravchuk as prime minister and later in the 1994 presidential election. New Ukraine later become the "party of power" allied with Leonid Kuchma. Its fortunes waned in 2002, as opposition to Kuchma gathered strength.

Minor Political Parties

There are numerous minor parties in Ukraine, many of which are aligned with one of the major coalitions. Smaller parties holding seats in parliament include the Unity Party and the Democratic Party of Ukraine/ Democratic Union.

Other Political Forces

While the armed forces served as a prop for Communism in East Europe, the armed forces in the Soviet Union proper were subject to strict civilian control. This tradition continued in Ukraine, and even during the tense days in December 2004, when crowds gathered in Kiev and some local political elites talked of secession from Ukraine, the heads of the armed forces publicly noted that they would not intervene in the political process. Trade unions, also sometimes a political force elsewhere, have not been active. Partly this is a legacy of Soviet Communism, under which unions were co-opted and controlled by the Communist Party. Unions were not able to improve their position once Communism fell, and economic decline and financial problems for industrial enterprises have led to some deindustrialization and weakening of union membership. Civic organizations and associations are underdeveloped, although there has developed a greater sense of opposition and awareness of the need for balance among political forces than in neighboring Belarus and Russia. where civil societv is weak.

National Prospects

Although the political situation in Ukraine at its founding in 1991 was characterized by inconsistencies and confusion, both the political and economic spheres stabilized after Leonid Kuchma became president. A new constitution was ratified, a new Verhovna Rada was elected, and relations with Crimea were normalized.

However, Ukraine's problems surrounding its search for identity and institution-building remain. The search for a Ukrainian identity is an ongoing concern for Ukrainians, since there is a lack of cultural unity within the country. Ukraine's boundaries do not correspond to ethnic lines: they are administrative creations, drawn up by Stalin. Eastern Ukraine has closer cultural ties to Russia, whereas western Ukraine has closer cultural ties to Eastern Europe, to which Ukraine belonged before being absorbed by the growing prerevolutionary Russian empire. Given these differences, the Ukrainians in the eastern part of the country do not feel the need to create a unique Ukrainian national identity, while those in the western part want to forge a Ukrainian state but are threatened by the east's lack of enthusiasm and by Crimean separatism.

The second aspect of the development of national identity concerns how identity is defined. At present, Ukrainian nationalism is defensive in nature, a double reaction against Moscow and Soviet control in the late 1980s and against the threat of Russian imperialism in the 1990s (as seen in conflicts with Crimea and with Russia over the Black Sea Fleet, supplies of oil and natural gas, and control of the Soviet nuclear arsenal). However, defensive nationalism does not create, at least immediately, a concept of what the nation *is*. While defensive reactions certainly can push a people to create their own identity (as in France or Russia), this path takes longer.

This is not to say that Ukraine is in danger of becoming an intolerant fascist state. Quite the contrary: since 1995 the vocalism of right-wing parties has been balanced by the actions of president and parliament to focus on less nationalistic issues such as delineating institutional powers and repairing the moribund economy. Kuchma's pro-CIS feelings were balanced by dedication to an independent Ukraine; language issues were resolved by giving Ukrainian primacy but allowing other languages to be used in everyday life, creating the foundation for a multicultural state. Ukrainian nation-building could take a turn in the direction of intolerance, depending on economic performance, the decisions of political elites, and the actions of neighbors such as Russia or of dissidents in the Crimea. But Ukrainian identity may well come to contain a unique component combined with genuine tolerance.

Certainly the strengthening of the presidency under Kuchma and the clarification of the rules of power that took place during his term are victories for institution-building, but they constitute only a start. As in most CIS nations, Ukraine faces the task of creating democratic institutions and new bases of

authority compatible with a market economy. Over time, political actors have created rules for the political game—a new constitution being the cornerstone—and have learned trust and compromise. However, with enforcement still questionable and with political habits and practices still new, there will be some instability in the near term.

There is hope, nonetheless. The executive and legislature appear to have reached an accord of sorts on setting policies and reducing conflict. The politics of building national identity—with its potential for ideologically driven conflict—has given way to the politics of building consensus and a stable, working polity. Finally, Kuchma tried by legal and less-than-legal means to augment presidential power, but his opposition managed to organize successful resistance in society and the Rada—in contrast to Vladimir Putin's successes in controlling the media and legislature and increasing presidential control of politics.

The victory of Viktor Yushchenko and his public supporters in November–December 2004 against electoral fraud, and victory in the second election, has been at the least a minor victory for democracy. Whether Yushchenko can successfully prosecute corruption from the Kuchma regime and create more open, transparent politics and policymaking has yet to be seen—even the most honest politician in post-Soviet politics faces incredibly powerful and entrenched interests among managers, new capitalist elites, and federal and regional state officials and politicians feathering their nests with bribes and other spoils of power. However, Ukraine has had two successful presidential challenges—Kuchma versus Kravchuk and Yushchenko versus Yanukovych—and segments of society mobilized quickly against Yanukovych's attempt to steal the election. This suggests that there may be some hope for political reform and development, and perhaps movement into the European Union and NATO in the future.

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