Research Article

Aram Terzyan*

Towards Democratic Consolidation? Ukraine After the Revolution of Dignity

<https://doi.org/10.1515/openps-2020-0015>

received April 29, 2020; accepted June 2, 2020.

Abstract: This paper explores the challenges and opportunities of post-Maidan Ukraine's democratic consolidation, with a focus on its attitudinal, behavioral and institutional dimensions.

The study suggests that Ukraine's transition from a hybrid regime to a consolidated democracy involves addressing a series of societal and institutional issues, ranging from transformation of paternalistic culture to institutional development of political parties and civil society organizations (CSO). Institutionalization is essential for shifting from charismatic appeal or rule to well-established institutions that translate leader's vision into policies sustained by appropriate structures, rules, and procedures. The study enquires into the intricacies of democratic consolidation in post-Soviet countries, amid constraining conditions stemming from deep-rooted authoritarian legacies.

Keywords: Ukraine; Democratic consolidation; Civil society; Democratic support; Institutionalization.

1 Introduction

This article analyses the process of democratization and democratic consolidation in post-Maidan (also known as a Revolution of Dignity) Ukraine. In doing so, it presents a framework for exploring the attitudinal, behavioral and institutional dimensions of democratic consolidation.

There has been a tendency among students of post-Soviet studies to treat the Ukrainian Maidan as the last anti-Soviet or even first “postcolonial revolution,” that challenged nonconfrontational, conformist, and “emotionally positive” approaches to the analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet society and culture.¹ Gerasimov (2014) has framed the Maidan as a “postcolonial revolution” “because it is all about the people acquiring their own voice, and in the process of this self-assertive act forging a new Ukrainian nation...”² Some observers go even further by claiming that “a new Ukraine was born on the Maidan,” by means of demonstrations that not only brought a new government to power but changed the people and their outlook.³

Shevtsova (2014) contends that the Ukrainian events of late 2013 and the first half of 2014 reflect the crisis of the post-Soviet political model, resting on personalized power, with a decided tilt toward repressive rule.⁴ Meanwhile, it is increasingly challenging to maintain autocratic rule in a country, where youth-driven, social media-powered society refuses to abide by “post-Soviet rules” and craves for democracy.

As a matter of fact the Maidan Revolution is a demonstration of Ukraine's strong resilience and persistence in asserting its democratic and European orientation. Yet the “choice for Europe” does not smoothly translate into substantial Europeanization and full-fledged democracy building. Clearly (2016) notes that the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine would provide grounds for great optimism and would even be hailed as triumph of democracy over authoritarianism – leading Ukraine to its rightful place as a free, democratic state in Europe.⁵ Yet, as a result of lingering authoritarian malpractices, including rampant corruption and “invincible” oligarchy, Ukrainians would end up disappointed.

Some observers have pointed out a series of hindrances to post-Maidan democratic consolidation, ranging from the constraining effects of authoritarian legacy to the residual influence of oligarchy.⁶ It is argued that a myriad of domestic

*Corresponding author: Aram Terzyan, Eurasia Institutes, Los Angeles, California, United States, E-mail: aramterzyan@gmail.com

factors (the weakness of institutions and civic organizations) and external elements (the conflict with Russia) have been considerably impeding post-revolution state building in Ukraine, thus leaving the key problems that hinder national development unsolved.⁷

Nevertheless, Volodymyr Zelensky's rise to power in 2019 seems to introduce a new model of democratic governance, as opposed to the system, through which five consecutive presidents had come up. While his reform agenda has provided grounds for optimism, the question remains as to whether it will make a significant difference, by defeating systemic corruption, completing deoligarchisation and thus, transforming the country into a consolidated democracy.

Despite the fact that Ukraine's post-Maidan state building has recently become a subject of analysis, there has been little attention to the various aspects of country's democratic consolidation. This article contributes to the debates through exploring the attitudinal, behavioral and institutional dimensions of democratic consolidation. On the basis of these observations, this article seeks to address the question: what are the core behavioral, attitudinal and institutional challenges to Ukraine's democratic consolidation?

This paper is an in-depth case analysis, that uses policy analysis and process tracing to examine the core dynamics of post-revolution transformation and democratic consolidation in Ukraine.

2 Understanding democratic consolidation

While the end of the Cold War posed a tremendous challenge to authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet Union and beyond, the authoritarian legacy has been long interfering with their transition to democracy. In much of the former Soviet Union, new regimes combined electoral competition with varying degrees of authoritarianism. Levitsky and Way (2010) frame such regimes as competitive authoritarian - as a hybrid regime type.⁸ Terry Lynn Karl (1995) introduced the term "hybrid regime" to refer to a state that contains both democratic and authoritarian forms of rule.⁹ Diamond (2015) calls hybrid regimes as pseudo-democratic, 'in that the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks the reality of authoritarian domination'.¹⁰ Levitsky and Way (2002) note that competitive authoritarian regimes fall short of both democracy, as well as of full-fledged authoritarianism. Although elections are regularly held and for the most part are free of massive fraud, incumbents invariably abuse administrative resources, creating an unlevel playing field between government and opposition.¹¹ As a result, the centralization of power, weak rule of law, along with considerable limits on political freedoms and civil liberties are common in hybrid regimes.

While Ukraine's political system would be long falling into the category of hybrid regimes, the 2014 Maidan Revolution in Ukraine sparked optimistic commentaries about country's gradual transition from competitive authoritarianism to a consolidated democracy.

Originally, the term "democratic consolidation" was narrowed down to describing the issues of making newborn democracies stable and immune to the threat of authoritarian "reverse waves".¹²

Linz and Stepan (1996) offer a middle-of-the-road definition of a consolidated democracy: Constitutionally, a democratic regime is consolidated when governmental and nongovernmental forces alike throughout the territory of the state become subject to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the bounds of specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.¹³ Behaviorally a democratic regime in a territory is consolidated when no significant national, social, economic, political, or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or turning to violence or foreign intervention to secede from the state.¹⁴ Attitudinally, a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion, holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life in a society such as theirs, and when support for anti-system alternatives is quite small or more-or-less isolated from prodemocratic forces.¹⁵

Given that mass level attitudes towards democracy are viewed as the building blocks of democratic stability and fundamental elements of a functional democracy, much of the literature on democratic consolidation has centered around the establishment and promotion of democratic values and attitudes.¹⁶

Gunther and Montero (2006) stress the necessity of clearly separating such attitudes into three different clusters, which they call democratic support, political discontent, and political disaffection.¹⁷ These three sets of attitudes

have quite different behavioral correlates or consequences: a lack of fundamental support for democracy is strongly associated with votes for anti-system parties; political discontent is clearly linked with votes against the incumbent party or governing coalition; and political disaffection is part of a broader syndrome of alienation and disengagement from active involvement in the political.¹⁸

Schedler (1998) notes that over time the “mission” of democratic consolidation has expanded, incorporating crucial tasks, such as party building, neutralization of anti-system actors, decentralization of state power, promotion of civil society organizations, judicial reforms, as well as alleviation of poverty and economic development.¹⁹

One of the key elements of democratic consolidation is institutionalization, aimed at translating individuals’ visions into policies sustained by appropriate structures, rules, and procedures.

This comes down to “transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms and contingent solutions . . . into relationships that are reliably known, regularly practiced and normatively accepted”.²⁰ Clearly, it is in this context that the advancement of a vibrant civil society and competitive party politics with well-institutionalized political parties and civil society organizations acquire critical relevance.

Building on the literature on democratic consolidation, this study specifically explores behavioral, attitudinal aspects of democracy consolidation in post-Maidan Ukraine, focusing on the issues of institutionalization and civil society consolidation.

3 Attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of democratic consolidation

Relevant attitudes towards democracy are of several different kinds and have differing but significant impacts on democratic performance. In terms of democratic support, which is indeed critical to democratic consolidation, it is noteworthy that positive attitudes towards democracy and integration with the West have remained robust in Ukraine even amid the economic downturn facing the country from 2013 to 2015. Namely, the escalating crisis in Ukraine inflicted immense economic suffering on the Ukrainian population, fraught with rising unemployment that rose from over 8.5 to 11 percent²¹, as well as a sharp decline (12 percent) in GDP.²² Despite the economic slowdown and ensuing discontent, over three quarters of respondents in the UNASIS July 2017 poll said that democracy was important to them personally, while less than 15 percent did not find it important.²³ This level of democratic support is consistent with the results of the surveys, conducted in 2012, 2014, and 2016. More importantly, democratic support is 5-10 percent higher in these surveys, than it was in those conducted from 2002 to 2009.²⁴

NDI Ukraine’s 2018 nationwide survey further confirms positive trends, by suggesting that demand for a fully-functioning democracy remains high and stable (84 percent).²⁵ Moreover, there is a growing support for gender equality in political life, as more than half of Ukrainians (52 percent) support the equal participation of men and women – or more women than men – in political life.²⁶ Furthermore, NDI’s 2019 nationwide survey, completed in May 2019, shows a considerable increase in optimism and positive attitudes, associated with the newly elected president in particular and with the country in general.²⁷ Most remarkably, demand for a fully functioning democracy has increased throughout the whole country, including by ten percent both in the South and in the East. Similarly, there is a growing demand for gender equality in political life (62 percent).²⁸

These surveys show considerable consistency in terms of Ukrainians’ growing democratic support that positively correlates with declining political discontent. It follows, that even in the midst of major economic problems and considerable economic discontent, the Ukrainian public opinion firmly believes that democracy is the best path to step down.

Essentially, the high demand for EU membership that is over 55 percent²⁹ can be viewed as an indicator of democratic support. More than 70% of Ukrainians recognize the EU’s fundamental values and identify with the values of human rights, individual freedoms, rule of law, peace, economic prosperity, etc.³⁰

Moreover, both the proponents and opponents of Ukraine’s European integration agree on the indispensability of the European values and find them as guiding principles for state-building.³¹ Not surprisingly the EU remains the most desired partner in the Ukrainian public consciousness, deemed capable of transmitting a number of political values to Ukraine.³²

Another remarkable indicator of the democratic support is low demand for far-right anti-system political parties. This specifically applies to the activism of marginal far-right groups, including ‘the Right Sector, Svoboda’, the National Corpus, along with extremist groupings such as Brotherhood, OUN Volunteer Movement and others, that would spark concerns across the Ukrainian civil society and beyond. While their efforts at moving from margins to mainstream have not struck a chord with the Ukrainian population, they have strenuously strived to disseminate their illiberal ideas, and thus move their radical agenda forward.³³ Motivated by the desire to “purge” the public space of everything that they find detrimental or unfavorable to a nation at war, these extremist groups would target religious, ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as liberal activists and human rights defenders.³⁴ In effect, the conflict with Russia has allowed for their rebranding as “patriots” with some legitimizing effects on their activities. Nevertheless, despite their “radicalizing effect” on some nationalistic segments of Ukrainian society, none of the far-right parties managed to overcome the passing barrier to enter the Parliament. The electoral alliance comprised of Svoboda the Right Sector and National Corps won only 2.15 percent of the vote.³⁵

While there has been negligible public support for far-rightists and they are highly unlikely to gain greater political power, the advancement of robust civil society organizations is essential for making the Ukrainian society more immune to such extremist groups and their illiberal ideas.

In terms of both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions, it is noteworthy that a major impediment to democracy consolidation is lingering post-Soviet “informality” in the form of behavioral practices, such as tolerance towards informal governance, the use of informal connections and networks in exchanges of favors, corruption, etc.³⁶ The latter has long inflicting huge suffering on the country by condemning it to underdevelopment and inability to implement reforms. Even though it would be an exaggeration to regard graft as a lifestyle, the deep-rooted behavioral practices do not tend to fade away smoothly and swiftly. Clearly, while passing laws and implementing reforms may be straightforward, erasing historical mentalities and behavioral practices is more complex. Hence, it is impossible to neglect the residual influence of informal institutions, cultural norms, values, and ethics.

The results of the 2018 USAID/ENGAGE Anti-Corruption Poll demonstrate that while citizens regard political corruption of the highest echelons to be the most serious problem, everyday corruption that respondents themselves come across in their daily lives is perceived as a less serious problem (81.6% of respondents named it a very serious or rather serious problem).³⁷ That said, citizens condemn high-level corruption but regard petty corruption as a “justifiable evil.”³⁸ While a great many respondents see a determination to defeat corruption among ordinary people (72.7%), mass media (47.3%) and NGOs (41.9%), there is a series of barriers to people’s participation in anti-corruption campaigns. The reasons include the disbelief in the possibility of major breakthroughs through such actions (71.8% of respondents), lack of sufficient guarantees protecting personal safety of participants (70.9%) as well as low trust in the ways that government copes with corruption.³⁹

This picture is linked to the elements of political disaffection as a result of low trust in public institutions and civil society organizations, compounded by the adverse effects of an authoritarian legacy. Meanwhile, breaking with the “culture of corruption” and “informality” is essential for democracy consolidation.

One of the biggest challenges is overcoming the residual influence of oligarchy, given that oligarchs tend to selectively support new laws and reform that seem conducive to maintaining and increasing their wealth and fiercely oppose to those that may somehow jeopardize their positions.⁴⁰

Even though there have been changes in the balance of power among the biggest oligarchs in Ukraine since the Maidan Revolution, curbing its residual influence remains an urgent priority. Studies show that during Poroshenko’s presidency, the sharing out of monopolies among leading business groups continued with slow progress on de-monopolization.⁴¹ While Poroshenko was trying to balance various oligarchic interests, he continued to be one of those he tried to manage. Meanwhile, Poroshenko’s perceived conflict of interest furthered fuelled public distrust of the government.⁴² Some observers note that what describes the Ukrainian oligarchs is their tendency to apply the “rule by law” rather than “rule of law.” Meanwhile, in conditions of systemic and in particular, judicial corruption, the law becomes a purchasable commodity.⁴³

Not surprisingly the EU has been giving great weight to defeating oligarchy, routinely emphasizing that there could be no meaningful progress on the implementation of the Association Agreement if the oligarchy keeps exerting tremendous influence over the Ukrainian economy, politics and media.⁴⁴ While Zelensky’s government’s reform agenda provides grounds for optimism, the process of deoligarchisation considerably depends on broader economic, political and legal reforms, that would lead Ukraine down to the path to consolidated democracy.

Overall, while broad democratic support for post-Maidan political and economic transformation seems promising, one of the biggest challenges involves eradicating the culture of corruption and “informality.” Clearly, the improvements in attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of democratic consolidation are critical to completing the process of overcoming the residual influence of oligarchy.

4 The Institutional dimension of democratic consolidation

It is hard to underestimate the importance of institutional resilience of democracy, with effective, well-established political parties as essential institutions of a democratic society.

Meanwhile, Ukraine’s party system does not seem stable enough to support the democratic consolidation of the country. As a matter of fact, Ukraine’s post-Soviet institutional legacy, characterized by lack of legitimacy, stability and durability, would be long unfit to serve societal interests, thus obstructing country’s democratic development.⁴⁵

Studies show that despite the advances in democratization following the Maidan revolution, the essential features of Ukraine’s party system have not undergone significant changes. As a result, the institutional bases of the Ukrainian party-political landscape and parliamentary politics have not been solidified.⁴⁶ The factors hindering institutionalization of political parties, include their organizational weakness, characterized by uncertain ideological platforms, frequent name changes, financing, lack of accountability and poor communication with their voters. Not surprisingly, there has been low level of trust in and identification with political parties across the Ukrainian society.⁴⁷

The lack of ideologically driven political parties has led to a situation where the political and ideological preferences of Ukrainians are ambiguous and most people have a hard time identifying themselves either with left or right parties. Moreover, an all-Ukrainian survey suggests that considerable part of respondents (nearly half of them) would be willing to vote for a newly created political party, while a third of them find party members critical to determining what party they would vote for.⁴⁸ That said, when determining their political preferences, Ukrainians tend to focus more on individuals rather than on ideologies or party programs.

Essentially, a low level of trust in political parties has not been uncommon in post-Soviet countries. Decades of monopolization of the electoral arena by communist parties would be followed by the emergence of populist parties, thus casting a negative light on political parties across post-Soviet societies.

According to the survey conducted by Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies, the most trusted government and public institutions are the president of Ukraine (79% of respondents), the Armed Forces of Ukraine (74%), the least trusted ones are the judicial system as a whole (72%), local courts (66%), political parties (63%), as well as anti-corruption agencies.⁴⁹ This survey suggests that there is a long way ahead to shift from charismatic appeal or rule to well-established institutions that translate a leader’s vision into policies sustained by appropriate structures, rules, and procedures.⁵⁰

Essentially, like many other post-Soviet countries, Ukraine is faced with “party presidentialization” syndrome – a remarkable indicator of an insufficient institutionalization of party politics. The inherent unsustainability and instability of the Ukrainian regime has been vividly manifested in mass mobilizations against Leonid Kuchma regime in the 2004 Orange Revolution, and similarly by the mass protests that led to the collapse of Viktor Yanukovich regime in 2014.⁵¹

While, there is no denying that Ukraine is undergoing large-scale reforms during Zelensky’s presidency, Inna Sovsun, a member of the Ukrainian opposition party Holos (Voice) notes that the centralization of power remains a significant problem as it is unclear who the next president will be and how he or she will use or misuse that power.⁵²

In effect, Ukraine finds itself in an unprecedented situation, where due to its overwhelming majority in the parliament, the president’s party can put forward and pass any law with no compromise. Volodymyr Zelensky capitalized on his huge popularity and through snap elections significantly consolidated his power. He is largely treated as a “savior” capable of turning Ukraine’s plights around and putting it on the path to prosperity and democracy. Meanwhile, the huge power in the hands of a charismatic leader is fraught with power abuses in the absence of powerful opposition. There has been a strong tendency in Zelensky’s discourse to style his regime as the “people’s government” or the “people’s servant” that introduce a new form hyper-democratic interaction between state and society.⁵³ The Ukrainian President has tended to distance himself from his predecessors and other presidents due to his resolve to bring people

to power “who will serve the people.”⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the success of democratic reforms in Ukraine significantly depends on its shift from a charismatic leadership to functional democratic institutions. This, in turn, depends on Zelensky’s government’s political will to further institutionalize state-building by subjecting it to institutional performance and strength.

5 Civil society as an agent of democratic consolidation

While civic activism has been critical to the 2014 Maidan Revolution a question remains as to if the civil society has evolved into a powerful agent of democracy in Ukraine. Clearly, a vibrant civil society has long been thought to be a crucial instrument for political change in countries in transition and a key component of a democratic society. It is hard to underestimate the role of a civil society in democratic consolidation. Diamond (1994), emphasizes the ways in which a civil society can contribute to democracy consolidation: 1. Civil society “restrains” and monitors the state’s power that may be misused or abused. 2. Civil society mobilizes citizens and stimulates their political participation. 3. It is an arena, within which reciprocity is learned and enforced, civic norms of tolerance, trust and compromise are generated. As a result, it facilitates peaceful regulation of conflicts through the process of participation. 4. Civil society enables to articulate and represent interests outside of political parties. 5. It mitigates conflict through cross-cutting or overlapping interest. 6. Civil society recruits new leaders and equips them to participate in political life. 7. It improves the quality of democracy through election-monitoring, human rights-monitoring and public corruption-monitoring. Moreover, it disseminates alternative information, thus lowering the possibility of state censorship or state-controlled biased information, especially in respect to human right violations. 8. Civil society reinforces democratic legitimacy and governance, by making it accountable, inclusive and responsive.⁵⁵

Therefore, all these functions of the civil society suggest that it is a powerful agent of democracy.

Studies show the Ukrainian civil society has been consistently standing up for its European choice even after the Revolution of Dignity. More specifically, civil society organizations have been actively promoting and overseeing reforms that would lead to the implementation of the Association Agreement with the European Union. The largest and most influential reform network – the Reanimation Package of Reforms (RPR) has brought together NGOs, reform groups and experts, who form, develop and promote a reform agenda, targeting anti-corruption, judiciary and economic transformations. The core objective of the RPR is supporting implementation of reforms that lead to fundamental political and economic transformations.⁵⁶ Remarkably, on the eve of the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections RPR prepared a “to do list” for the president’s reform agenda aimed to ensure the new government’s unshakeable commitment to consistent implementation of the Association Agreement.⁵⁷ Such initiatives suggest that the Ukrainian civil society organizations move beyond the victory in the street and pursue victory in town halls and elections.⁵⁸

The EU reports would emphasize Ukrainian civil society’s continuous positive role in the promotion and monitoring of reforms, focusing specifically on the areas of human rights, anti-corruption, healthcare, energy, decentralization, etc.⁵⁹

While the boosting actorness of civil society organizations creates an optimistic outlook on their potential contribution to democratic consolidation, further development of their institutional capacities and networks to influence policy making and reform implementation is essential.

Studies show that the path to a vibrant and consolidated civil society has two main dimensions. The first dimension comes down to the changes in the very nature of civil society relations with the state and society and its potential and ability to foster reform, or what is often referred to as “change on the outside.”⁶⁰ This has a lot to do with increasing their impact on public policy, through intensifying their interaction with public institutions and actors and most importantly, through engaging more with their constituencies. It has not been uncommon for post-Soviet societies to perceive civic associations as threat to the state’s power and stability, along with the belief that the state bears the ultimate responsibility for the wellbeing of the society.⁶¹

A survey shows that most respondents welcome the state’s active involvement in issues like social guarantees and display inclinations toward paternalism, while neglecting the responsibility of society members for addressing such problems. Interestingly, despite their distrust of state institutions, Ukrainians still prefer to delegate the function of wealth distribution to the state.⁶²

Similarly, surveys show that there is a somewhat paternalistic attitude towards European values, in Central and especially Southern and Eastern Ukraine. The respondents would often claim that it is the government's duty to ensure human rights and everyone's equality before the law, as well as to create opportunities for self-realization, etc. Overall, respondents in Eastern Ukraine are more inclined to believe that values shared by EU-Europeans and most Ukrainians should be implemented from the outside and installed by the state.⁶³ By contrast, respondents in Western Ukraine have a better understanding of the values shared by the EU-Europeans and avoid reductionism to statism, while acknowledging the duties of ordinary citizens.⁶⁴ Clearly, greater engagement and effective communication with various social groups is pivotal to squashing public misperceptions of CSOs and their activities. Thus, the "change on the outside" is critical to reducing the apathy of the wider public and stimulating their political participation.

The second crucial dimension is "change on the inside," pertaining to the nature of civil society per se i.e. with the way it is organized and operates. This in turn, has much to do with the institutional and professional development of CSOs that would equip them to influence policy making. At the organizational level institutional development includes enhancing organizational capacities for governance, improving decision-making and conflict management skills, as well as clarifying organizational mission, identity and values. This is particularly important as a great many CSOs in Ukraine were established in response to certain narrow needs or funding priorities without a well-defined mission, strategic plans and a strategy of impact.⁶⁵ That said, they would largely fail to represent interests and address the specific needs of their constituencies.

In conclusion, a well-informed observer aptly notes that "strong, autonomous societal organizations and networks may not always be democracy's allies, but their absence is almost always democracy's enemy".⁶⁶ Therefore, it is hard to underestimate the importance of robust CSOs in terms of Ukraine's democratic consolidation.

6 Conclusion

This article contributes to the existing literature and ongoing debate regarding the anatomy of democratic consolidation in former Soviet Union hybrid regimes, by examining the case of post-Maidan Ukraine. Based on the previous discussion, there are three main concluding observations to make regarding the attitudinal, behavioral and institutional dimensions of Ukraine's democratic consolidation.

Firstly, and in terms of the attitudinal dimension of democratic consolidation, there has been broad public support for democratic state-building across the Ukrainian society since the Maidan Revolution. One of the remarkable indicators of democratic support is low demand for far-right radical political parties, as well as high demand for EU membership. The EU has been largely viewed as a "role model" identified with the values of human rights, rule of law, peace, economic prosperity, individual freedoms, etc.

Secondly, and in terms of behavioral dimension of democratic consolidation, a major impediment to democracy consolidation is lingering post-Soviet "informality" in the form of behavioral practices, such as tolerance towards informal governance, the use of informal connections and networks in exchanges of favors, corruption, etc. The latter has long condemned the country to underdevelopment and inability to implement reforms. Even though it would be an exaggeration to regard graft as a lifestyle, it takes a long time for deep rooted behavioral practices to change. While passing laws and implementing reforms may be straightforward, erasing historical mentalities and behavioral practices is more complex. Thus, fighting against the "culture of corruption" is an integral part of anti-corruption policies. Arguably, the improvements in attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of democratic consolidation are critical to completing the process of overcoming the residual influence of oligarchy.

Thirdly, and in terms of institutional foundations of democratic consolidation, one of the biggest challenges involves increasing institutional capacities of political parties and civil society organizations. The factors hindering institutionalization of political parties, include their organizational weakness, characterized by uncertain ideological platforms, lack of accountability and poor communication with their voters. As a result, there has been low level of trust in and identification with political parties across the Ukrainian society. This has led to "party presidentialization" – a situation where the voters tend to pay more attention to leaders, rather than to principles of political parties. While Zelensky remains immensely popular, the logic of democratic consolidation requires to shift from charismatic appeal or rule to well-established institutions that translate leader's vision into policies sustained by appropriate structures,

rules, and procedures. As for civil society organizations, along with their institutional development, it is essential for them to engage more with their constituencies, thus contributing to their democratic socialization. It has not been uncommon for post-Soviet societies to perceive civic associations as threat to the state's power and stability, along with the belief that the state bears the ultimate responsibility for the wellbeing of the society. Not surprisingly, studies show inclinations toward paternalism across the Ukrainian society, coupled with misconceptions about civil society organizations. Therefore, CSOs have a critical mission of breaking down lingering misperceptions and transforming citizens from spectators into actors.

Future research is essential to account for further dynamics of Ukraine's democratic consolidation.

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